

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The Reach Approach was conceived out of the glaringly obvious truth that the human condition is a complex, multi-factorial one. Therefore, if we are to really address our issues/challenges and find sustainable solutions it is necessary to look at all aspects of being human. Even though the problem may emerge in one dimension of our lives, the reality is that the consequences will reverberate through the other dimensions too. Therefore, if we only look at the presenting issue, the part most readily seen, there is always the danger that the problem will continue to afflict us in other ways. It could be compared to breaking off the head of a weed, leaving the root system in place which will inevitably produce more weeds at a later date. This analogy accurately describes the human story. If we only deal with what we can see, then the impact and consequences for the other aspects of our lives will go unchecked and therefore unaddressed. This is why we believe in a holistic, integrative and person specific way of working. Let us define what we mean by these three terms.

Holistic: This is now a word many will be familiar with, and it is rightly reclaiming its place in the field of medicine and physical and mental health. As the term suggests one needs to look at the whole person in order to create the best outcomes. The whole person for us means mind, body and spirit and understanding how these three aspects interface with the environment. So, the primary focus for us as therapists working with clients' concerns isn't only to look at what currently disables individuals but also to consider how it affects other dimensions of their lives. If we don't look there, we will almost certainly miss the fact that large parts of the individual's solution lie in each of these areas. So, on the face of it the problem may appear to be psychological, but the solution may need to be addressed within the context of the person's environment, diet and nutrition as well as looking at distorted patterns of thinking. For us, therefore, working holistically is vital when trying to identify sustainable solutions.

Integrative: An integrative approach in the world of counselling and psychotherapy is generally understood to mean the embroidering of different psychological disciplines, emphasising those aspects that are compatible and complimentary, in a way that offers the client the best options for their problems. We too have certainly integrated in this way, but for us integration goes further than this because as we have already said (see Reach Approach) we do not believe that talking therapies are the panacea for all ills. As made clear in the previous paragraph, we attempt to deal with the whole person and so for us integration is about employing those other schools of thought, disciplines and approaches that address the mind, body and spirit. Talking therapies are generally addressing the mind. Some arguably address the spiritual dimension although where that is the case it is often only at the margins and talking therapies that do address the body in some way, don't always have strong links to the other two. So essentially what you have is the mind, body and spirit being treated almost as separate entities as if they bear no relationship to each other when in fact they depend on one another for their existence and optimum health. This is why we focus on mind-body medicine, phytotherapy (therapeutic use of plants), orthomolecular medicine (using precise nutrients for specific problems), hydrotherapy (therapeutic uses of water), psycho-aromatherapy (understanding the power of fragrance in the healing of the mind), just to name a few. This, for us, is the real meaning of integration.

Person Specific: Although the Reach Approach has what many would describe as a structured way of working, some may even say a directive approach to therapy, we believe that without proper scrutiny and understanding of the model these definitions simply overlook the fluidity, creativity and adaptability of the model. A person specific way of working means it is possible to adapt the programme to each individual and his or her set of concerns/challenges. No two people take the journey in the same way, so although the 4 stages are the same, the experience is unique. It is this versatility that makes the approach very powerful and effective because this is not a ‘one size fits all’ philosophy. The model never loses sight of the individual.

Undoubtedly there is a structured approach (see Reach Approach, Life Map Work, Hall of Shame, Dark Room Work and Lifestyle) and with that a sense of direction, but we would argue this is exactly what is needed to help create sustainable solutions. Our experience, knowledge and research clearly illustrate that most of what a person initially brings to therapy is his or her symptoms, with the cause often being out of view. Although the individual’s initial panic, despair or desperation might at first cry out for an immediate antidote, most are in fact looking for much more than a quick fix. At first that may be enough but invariably, when the immediate issue has been resolved and the dust has settled, most people want to know how they can prevent or protect themselves from any future ordeal. This is where a holistic, integrative and person specific way of working has proven to be a valuable approach.

Structure does not mean the therapist is controlling the outcome, it’s like having an A-Z for a place to which you’ve never travelled before; it simply helps you to find where you’re going more easily. Each of the four stages (Life Map Work, Hall of Shame, Dark Room Work and Lifestyle) offers individuals the opportunity to tell their story, to be heard and understood and as a result, make more sense of their lives. Shame work enables individuals to understand their dysfunctions, patterns and negative tendencies which still influence and control many of their moods, attitudes, responses, and perceptions. Having ventured down the road of understanding, most of us ache for a solution. The solution is often not found by the head (intellect) alone. It requires a journey of the heart (Dark Room Work). This is a process where once you have unravelled your ‘stuff’ (anger, fears, doubts, trauma etc.) you are gently encouraged to embrace your discoveries and realisations under the canopy of compassionate guidance and supervision. For most of us, facing our demons is very challenging, it is also equally liberating, as the emotional thorns that were causing the pain are gradually removed. Lifestyle then offers a range of tools, strategies and skills that enable individuals to reclaim healthy control over their lives. Too often we have seen therapy simply offering individuals a meal to help them on the long road ahead. Wouldn’t it be better to teach the person how to cook for themselves? We stand quietly confident in the knowledge that this framework does offer sustainable solutions, which means the person does not have to keep coming through the revolving door of therapy. They, in fact, can take back control of their lives and are able to move forward with self love and self respect. The Reach Approach is a unique way of working that addresses the complex, integrated nature of the human state. It acknowledges the subtleties of the ‘mind-body-mood’ relationship and offers knowledge, support, and invaluable resources in the pursuit of personal excellence. Who amongst us does not want to be the best they can be?