

The McGill Domestic Violence Clinic

The McGill Domestic Violence Clinic (MDVC) is a state of the art facility for service provision and student training. It provides counselling on issues related to all forms of violence in intimate relationships and the effect such violence has on families and their social networks. For over 30 years the Clinic has trained graduate students from the disciplines of social work, counselling and psychology, providing them with expertise in individual, couple, family and group therapy using the most up-to-date intervention strategies. In addition to group work, which is the central focus of the clinic, graduate student interns work with men, women, and where appropriate, their partners or families. At the Clinic, interns receive specialized instruction in the Needs ABC Model (Caplan, 2008, see: www.needs-abc.com) which espouses an integrative process oriented, emotion-focused pro-feminist approach. Through the School of Social Work student interns also take Violence Against Women (SWRK 628) to deepen their appreciation of the theoretical debates and substantive issues that shape the field of intimate partner violence

The treatment model used at the MDVC is the Needs ABC Model (Acquisition and Behaviour Change). The Needs ABC Model is distinguished by its emphasis on the emotion-focused relational needs behind maladaptive behaviours, rather than the behaviours themselves, and by its flexibility in terms of applications to clients in a range of personal and therapeutic settings.

The focal point of the Needs Acquisition and Behaviour Change model (Needs ABC) is the understanding that clients (couples and adolescents) enter the treatment setting when their individual relational needs are not being met. The Needs ABC approach to working with clients proposes an integrated method of understanding what the client's relational needs are, both within and beyond the therapeutic setting. The Needs ABC integrated approach combines therapeutic approaches also described in cognitive-behavioural and motivational work (Ellis, 1997; Miller and Rollnick, 1991, Jacobson, 1996), narrative therapy (White, 1990; Myers-Avis, 2004) and emotion-focused treatments (Greenberg and Johnson, 1988; Greenberg and Pavio, 1997).

At base, Needs ABC approach rests on the belief that, once emotional needs have been ascertained, a plan for meeting them can be readily established, utilizing the most applicable aspects of the various above-named approaches in combination with a strictly client-focused agenda.

A fundamental premise of this model is that it is the need that drives the emotion and it is the emotion that drives the behaviour. Once the clients' therapeutic goals have been clarified and the emotions that drive their behaviours understood, the process of collaborative problem-solving can begin. This workshop explains the benefits of the Needs ABC integrated approach and proposes options for intervention within the therapeutic setting that can help clients to feel emotionally safe, to identify and clarify

their relational objectives, participate more authentically and see the bigger picture of problem-solving strategies.

Caplan, T. (2008). "Needs-ABC: A Needs Acquisition and Behavior Change Model for Group Work and Other Psychotherapies." London: Whiting & Birch.

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