

## INTRODUCTION

A search of 'personality disorders' in Amazon comes up with almost 3000 book titles (July 2010). Clients who receive a diagnosis of personality disorder are seldom happy with such a verdict and clinicians upon being informed that their next client has a diagnosis of personality disorder are rarely looking forward to the encounter. Without any doubt, people with a diagnosis of personality disorder often make their own lives and those of people close to them very difficult. They also pose significant difficulties for clinicians trying to assist them. In this book, we want to focus on an idiosyncratic approach to clients with a diagnosis of personality disorder as opposed to a categorical approach. Our approach will be based on individualised analyses of the specific personal, interpersonal and societal problems of clients and not on a categorical approach, whereby a client is offered programmatic and protocolised interventions when they are deemed to fulfil the criteria of a specific diagnosis.

Our cause is to convince the reader to see through the DSM/ICD diagnoses and observe the development, maintenance and functionality of the client's problem presentation while using the underpinning theory and practice of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). To assist us in our cause we invite the reader to take a transdiagnostic perspective on the phenomenon of personality disorder (Chapter 1). We will also postulate that CBT for personality disorders is 'just CBT and nothing special', like driving a big car on a long, narrow and winding road is just driving, but it should be done very slowly and carefully. In working with personality disorder it is essential to ensure the basics of CBT are done right (Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5). In Chapter 6 we present a range of core interventions in working with personality disorders. Clients with a diagnosis of personality disorder are often (based on their history) sceptical about what a psychological therapy can do for them and clinicians may need to pay specific attention to how they engage and motivate clients (Chapter 7 focuses on engagement strategies and motivational interviewing). In working with clients who have been diagnosed with a personality disorder, the therapists need to understand their work in the larger context of societal perspectives on deviance, the cost of personality disorders to society and the evidence for psychological interventions; in Chapter 8 we will reflect on these issues. Working

as a psychological therapist with personality disorders opens up a whole range of pitfalls, some of which are reviewed in Chapter 9.

Rather than presenting completely new ideas, our aim is to use the evidence, where possible, to underpin individualised CBT for people with a diagnosis of personality disorders. The examples used in the book are amalgamated examples of clients we have worked with and the names have of course been changed, as have essential details.