Rorschach Test: Psychotherapy and Brain Function

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Many psychotherapies attempt to enhance patients’ problem-solving capacities, interpretation of images, and regulation of affective states. What areas in the brain play a role in these functions?

What is your first impression of this ink blot and why? Tell us in the comments box below.

Discussion

Studies suggest that therapy alters brain function in patients suffering from major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, PTSD, and borderline personality disorder.

Many psychotherapies—such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectic behavior therapy (DBT), psychodynamic psychotherapy, interpersonal psychotherapy (BPD)—attempt to enhance patients’ problem-solving capacities, self-representation, and regulation of affective states. The brain areas that play a role in these functions include the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, ventral...
anterior cingulate cortex, dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, ventral and dorsal subregions of the medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex, precuneus, insular cortex, amygdala, and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex.

For more information, please see "How Psychotherapy Changes the Brain," by Hassee Karlsson, MA, MD, PhD, on which this writeup was based.

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