

*Section: Modern PPT practice***POSITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY IN ACTION: THE “DYNAMICS” METHOD FOR FORMULATING BASIC CONFLICTS****Ali Eryilmaz**

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**Abstract**

Positive psychotherapy is a therapy model that stands out with its analytical and humanistic features. According to the positive psychotherapy approach, one of the important conflicts is the basic conflict. The conflicts between the concepts developed by the clients form the basis of the basic conflict. In order to solve the basic conflicts of the clients, it is first necessary to formulate their basic conflicts. This study aims to present a systematic model for formulating the basic conflict. In this direction, the DYNAMICS method was developed in the study. In this method, clients go through eight stages and examine their basic conflicts multi-faceted. With this method, clients realize their unmet needs and how they create pathological and healthy patterns to meet these needs. Psychotherapists can also help clients formulate their basic conflicts through this method. Concurrently, this method is compatible with the five stages of positive psychotherapy. The effectiveness of this model investigated by empirical research can be revealed in the future.

**Keywords:** Positive Psychotherapy, conflict formulation, basic conflict, dynamics

**Introduction**

In the psychotherapy process, there are two important needs for clients. The first is the need for change, while the other is maintenance. The simultaneous presence of these two needs in the individual causes internal conflict. Clients with a dominant need for change try to resolve their internal conflicts throughout psychotherapy (Binder et al., 2010). Client characteristics are an important part of their identity and self. Therefore, changing such characteristics is worrisome for clients and is not easy. The equilibrium between change and continuity appears to be a source of internal conflict (Paz et al., 2019). During the psychotherapy process, clients want to experience change. However, at the same time, they may see the changes they have experienced or will experience as a threat to their self, personality, and identity. During the

psychotherapy process, individuals resolve the internal conflicts they experience and make their current self healthier and more harmonious. Due to the aforementioned characteristics of conflict, the psychodynamic approach (Freud, 1959) emphasizes that it is the most important element of the psychotherapy process.

Positive Psychotherapy takes a broader perspective on conflict. In this approach, three main types of conflict are identified: key conflict, actual conflict, inner conflict, and basic conflict (Peseschkian, 1997). Conflict experienced in interpersonal relationships is referred to as actual conflict. It is called key conflict when an individual experiences conflict between abilities such as honesty and politeness. As for inner conflict, inner conflicts are caused by physical or mental symptoms. In this conflict, the individual has difficulty coping with the situation. The

individual experiences helplessness, and the conflict manifests in the body or psychic structure. In positive psychotherapy, the basic conflict's main elements are concepts closely tied to personality and family rules. Since concepts are acquired in people's early developmental stages, they are also called basic concepts. These basic concepts are a theme that emerges in different ways in the lives of individuals. The positive psychotherapy theory states that the basic conflict includes more than one capability (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1997). Capabilities formation is affected by personal experiences and social and cultural surroundings. These differences can give rise to miscommunications and conflicts among individuals. It is essential to understand that the root causes of these conflicts are rooted in the varied capabilities inherent to each person, and such dilemmas cannot be attributed to any single individual (Peseschkian, 1996). Secondary capabilities include talents such as cleanliness, order, punctuality, honesty, courtesy, obedience, justice, and loyalty. These capabilities consist of knowledge and skills that include social norms. Secondary capabilities are effective in initiating and maintaining relationships with other people. Primary capabilities are capabilities such as trust, love, patience, relationships, hope, time, and faith, which emerge as a result of the reflection of the capacity to love.

In psychotherapy, formulation refers to the process by which the therapist structures, summarizes, interprets, and clarifies what the client has shared using specific words. This process makes the client's complex or ambiguous emotional and mental states more comprehensible (Persons, 2006; Weerasekera, 2009). The concept of formulation is defined in different manners within the literature. In this context, formulation is understood as a hypothesis related to the causes, triggers, and sustaining effects impacting an individual's psychological, relational, and behavioral challenges (Kendjelic & Eells, 2007). In addition, formulation is a temporary hypothesis or explanation regarding how an individual faces a specific disorder or condition during a particular period (Weerasekera, 2009). The formulation process includes activities such as explaining, summarizing, and characterizing and contributes to forming a shared understanding between the therapist and the client (Heritage & Watson,

1979). The therapist's goal is to use formulations to express the problems the client is experiencing, discover root causes, and help the client develop a clearer understanding of his or her internal conflicts and relational problems. This process demonstrates that the therapist understands the client and helps the client gain a more holistic perspective on their situation. Formulation involves a process involving a series of steps, such as defining the client's problem, identifying its causes, and gathering evidence related to those causes (Ingram, 2016).

The formulation has many functions, including clarifying problems, providing a general understanding of the issue, prioritizing problems, planning treatment strategies, selecting specific interventions, predicting the effectiveness of interventions, establishing criteria for successful outcomes, and identifying a lack of progress (Dallas et al., 2013). According to the DCP (2011), the formulation helps to recognize gaps in knowledge, determine medical interventions, incorporate cultural understanding, allow the client to feel understood and at peace, enable the therapist to feel secure, establish the therapeutic alliance, emphasize needs and strengths, increase the client's hope, and normalize issues.

When viewed within a psychodynamic framework, the formulation can be viewed as a method for explaining the causes of clients' imbalances and how their symptoms arise and persist. In this vein, formulation serves as both a map and a guide for the selection process in psychotherapy (Aveline, 1999). In Positive Psychotherapy, there is a significant amount of explanation regarding conflicts (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). However, there seems to be limited studies on formulating the basic conflict. This study aims to examine systematic, analytical, and positive psychotherapy-based methods for formulating basic conflict.

## Method

This study generally examines systematic, analytical, and positive psychotherapy-based methods in formulating the basic conflict. In line with this purpose, the study aims to examine the DYNAMICS method that can be used to formulate the basic conflict. This method is evaluated as a cycle consisting of eight stages. The DYNAMICS method discussed in this study is based on positive psychotherapy and an

analytical approach. In addition, empirical studies have also been the sources used in the creation of the DYNAMICS model (Aveline, 1999; Cesko, 2024; Ciesielski, 2024; Eryilmaz, 2020, 2023; Dallos et al., 2013; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016; Weerasekera, 2009). With this DYNAMICS method, understanding the

dynamics of the basic conflict can become a systematic reality for both clients and psychotherapists.

### 2.1. Formulating Basic Conflict with the DYNAMICS Method

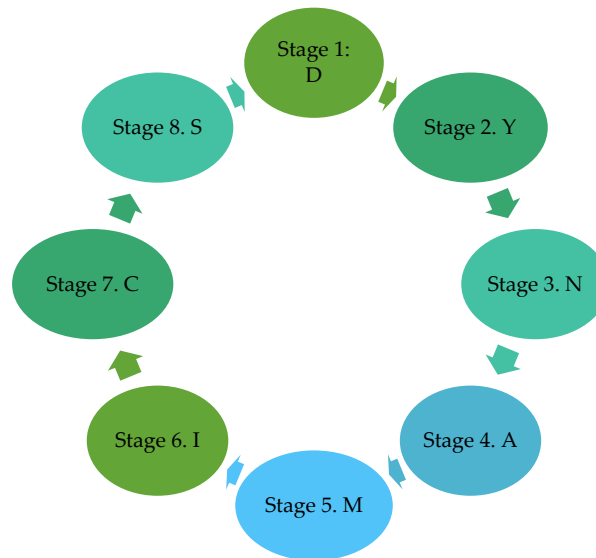


Figure 1. Diagram of DYNAMICS model

The DYNAMICS method is an acronym formed from the first letters of its eight phases. It provides a structured framework for exploring and identifying conflicts. The eight consecutive phases and the names of each phase are listed below. In the later stages of the study, these eight stages are explained with examples from the therapy process.

1. D-Describing Unmet Needs
2. Y-Yielding a Dysfunctional Way to Meet the Needs
3. N-Noting Intermediary Capabilities to Satisfy the Needs
4. A-Analyzing Emerging Psychopathological Patterns
5. M-Manifesting How Capabilities Indicate the Cycle Is Wrong
6. I-Investigating Emerging Secondary Pathologies
7. C-Clarifying the Secondary Pathology Affecting the Primary Pathology
8. S-Studying How Capabilities Are Used to Cope with the Current Situation
- 9.

#### Stage 1: D-Describing Unmet Needs

The first stage is referred to as describing unmet needs. In this phase, the psychotherapist conducts an in-depth examination of the issues

the client brings into the therapeutic process, focusing on identifying the client's unmet or unfulfilled needs about the problems they seek to resolve. These unmet needs are fundamental to the internal conflicts and psychological challenges the client faces. At this stage, the therapist seeks to uncover which psychological needs have remained unfulfilled in the client's life, delving into the root causes of the client's difficulties. This stage also aligns with the **observation distance** phase in Positive Psychotherapy.

Positive Psychotherapy generally acknowledges that unmet needs are typically associated with knowing and loving capacities. These capacities are intrinsic human abilities that enable individuals to establish healthy relationships with themselves and others. Primary capacities, such as patience, time, hope, trust, relationship-building, sexuality, faith, and love, as well as secondary capacities, such as order, cleanliness, punctuality, politeness, honesty, success, reliability, frugality, obedience, justice, and loyalty, are critical to maintaining psychological balance (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). In Positive Psychotherapy, the basic conflicts experienced by individuals are evaluated in terms of which

primary capacities are lacking or have gone unmet (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). Recognizing these unmet needs marks a critical point of awareness in the therapeutic process. In order to help the client develop a clearer understanding of these needs and their effects on their life, the psychotherapist poses three essential questions at this stage:

*What are your unmet needs?*

This question aims to uncover which psychological capabilities of the client have not been fulfilled.

*Why were these needs unmet?*

The second question seeks to explore the underlying causes of these unmet needs. During this phase, the therapist delves into the client's past life experiences, familial relationships, traumas, or deeply held beliefs about themselves and others. Developing awareness of why these needs have remained unfulfilled is an important step in the therapeutic process.

*How has the lack of these needs affected you?*

Finally, the impact of these unmet needs on the client's balance is addressed. Within the framework of Positive Psychotherapy's Balance model, the therapist analyzes how the unfulfilled needs have disrupted the client's psychological equilibrium and overall well-being.

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* The client is a 32-year-old woman who works as a teacher and is married, though she does not have children. She describes her problem as "struggling to maintain a balance between emotions and thoughts in relationships, experiencing difficulty in decision-making, and ending the relationship due to the stress caused by these issues.

*Therapist: What are your unmet needs?*

*Client:* My needs for trust and love were not fulfilled.

*Therapist:* You feel that your trust and love needs were not fully met in your relationships. These needs seem fundamental to your feeling secure and valued.

*Client:* Yes, exactly.

*Therapist: What do you think are the reasons for these unmet needs?*

*Client:* I tend to evaluate the other person more based on their thoughts than their emotions. I focus on inconsistencies and issues that are known but not addressed. Although I expressed these matters clearly, my needs were unmet because the other person didn't address things with the same clarity. We couldn't

communicate in a way that would allow me to feel heard and understood, leading to me overthinking everything even more.

*Therapist:* You're saying that while you tried to clearly express what was important to you, the lack of a reciprocal response or similar clarity from the other person left you feeling that your emotional needs weren't being considered. This imbalance in communication deepened your frustrations and led to even more mental rumination.

*Client:* Yes, that's right. It just kept building up.

*Therapist:* How has the lack of these needs affected you according to the Balance model?

*Client:* The lack of these needs negatively affects me in the traditional sense. I escape from problems by focusing solely on achievements. In the spirituality dimension, I've started paying more attention to religious practices, praying more often, and living in alignment with my values to understand myself better.

*Therapist:* It sounds like you're recognizing the impact of unmet needs on your well-being and exploring spirituality to reconnect with your values and find deeper understanding.

## **Stage 2: Y-Yielding a Dysfunctional Way to Meet the Needs**

The second stage, titled Y-Yielding, a Dysfunctional Way to Meet the Needs, emphasizes that individuals develop dysfunctional ways to meet their needs in life. In this stage, the paths individuals choose may be incompatible with their psychological makeup and can lead to symptoms of psychopathology. It is common for individuals to unknowingly enter into repetitive cycles in their quest to meet their needs, and this is addressed in Positive Psychotherapy (PPT). Therapy assesses individuals' abilities to meet their needs and intervenes in this process. A central element of this phase is exploring how clients have met their needs in dysfunctional ways through their personal experiences and concepts. This phase is also related to the Inventory Phase of Positive Psychotherapy. In the context of situation formulation, it is important to identify the dysfunctional strategies individuals are using. In Positive Psychotherapy, recognizing these unhealthy ways helps individuals break free from harmful cycles.

In this stage, the following questions should be asked to the clients:

***What dysfunctional path do you follow to meet your unmet needs?***

***When you use this dysfunctional path to meet your unmet needs, what feelings and thoughts do you have?***

***How does this dysfunctional path affect you in terms of your Balance model?***

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* 36-year-old male, university lecturer/professor, married, father of one child; challenges: perfectionism, pressure to meet high standards, maintaining academic balance.

Therapist: What wrong path do you take to satisfy the desires you need but are not being met?

Client: I suffer from perfectionism. I constantly strive to improve myself.

Therapist: How does this constant desire for success affect your general health?

Client: I am physically exhausted because I am constantly setting unattainable goals for myself, which leads me to perfectionism.

Therapist: Your perfectionist tendencies are exhausting you.

Client: Yes, I don't know what to do.

Therapist: What emotions and thoughts are you experiencing during this process?

Client: Finishing tasks gives me a sense of accomplishment, but I see myself in a horse race. Constantly running around is tiring me out, and I feel depressed.

Therapist: You are having difficulty in other areas of life

Client: Yes, I am having a very hard time.

Therapist: How is this dysfunctional path affecting your body, your accomplishments, your spirituality, and your relationships?

Client: I get anxious because the goals I set in these dimensions are unattainable. Then, I give up on my goals.

Therapist: You have come to an important realization with yourself. The pressure to be perfect is preventing you from reaching your goals.

### **Stage 3: N-Noting Intermediary Capabilities to Satisfy the Needs**

The third stage leads people to create subjective and individual conditions to fulfill neglected needs, frequently coming about within the utilization of maladaptive methodologies. This conviction may lead them to create reliance issues in connections,

considering that "I must be submissive and faithful to be adored and to feel trust myself." Instead of straightforwardly tending to their center enthusiastic needs, the person utilizes auxiliary capabilities in a broken way, which can result in encouraging passionate trouble. This arrangement adjusts with the stock stage in Positive Psychotherapy. This organization includes investigating essential and auxiliary capacities, as laid out in Positive Psychotherapy (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). The individual may overemphasize secondary abilities such as punctuality or obedience to compensate for unmet primary needs such as love or security. In Positive Psychotherapy, these mechanisms may manifest themselves as avoidance behaviors, suppression of emotional needs, or projection of internal conflicts onto external situations or people. This stage also progresses in harmony with the observational detachment stage in Positive Psychotherapy. From a psychodynamic perspective, these maladaptive strategies are often associated with defense mechanisms; Freud (1959) described these mechanisms as unconscious processes used to protect the ego from anxiety. If an individual feels very powerless (trust ability), they may exhibit very dependent behaviors in their relationships with people (obedience ability). Thus, individuals may feel loved by remaining in a dependent relationship, but this does not help them develop true self-confidence.

Recognizing these dysfunctional methods in Positive Psychotherapy is critical to understanding the emotional conflicts underlying unmet needs.

In this stage, the following questions should be asked to the clients

***What intermediary capabilities do you use to meet your unmet needs?***

***What feelings and thoughts arise when you use these intermediary capabilities to meet your unmet needs?***

***How do the intermediary capabilities you use to meet your unmet needs affect you in terms of your Balance model?***

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* Information about the client: Age: 28 gender: female, profession: PhD student, family status: not married, middle child; challenges: self-esteem and self-worth problems



*Therapist: What intermediary capabilities do you use to meet your unmet needs?*

*Client:* I don't spend time with people because I focus on achievement. I'm always trying to become more equipped.

*Therapist:* It sounds like you are dedicated to your personal and professional growth, which is admirable. However, this intense focus on success and meeting your mother's expectations might be causing you to isolate yourself from others.

*Therapist: What feelings and thoughts arise when you use these intermediary capabilities to meet your unmet needs?*

*Client:* Achievement leads to conditional love; I think I'll only be valuable if I'm successful. As for spirituality and faith, when I discover beliefs through research, I feel happy and at peace. However, hope makes me neglect my relationships and encourages me to focus solely on my success.

*Therapist: How do the intermediary capabilities you use to meet your unmet needs affect you in terms of your Balance model?*

*Client:* Success in my business life takes up a big place in my life. That's why I neglect my body, my relationships, and my spirituality. I have always dreamed of my future self to cope with this situation.

#### **Stage 4: A-Analyzing Emerging Psychopathological Patterns**

The most important feature of this phase is that the clients, together with the psychotherapist, investigate the psychopathological pattern that has emerged. The client is made aware of how the intermediary abilities that the clients use to satisfy their unfulfilled needs cause psychopathological patterns. During the psychotherapy process, dysfunctional emotional and intellectual states associated with psychopathological patterns are also reviewed. At this stage, the effects of psychopathological patterns on the clients' bodies, achievements, relationships, and spiritual areas are examined in depth (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). This stage overlaps with the inventory stage of positive psychotherapy.

The clients should be questioned about the following at this point:

*How do these intermediary capabilities manifest in maladaptive patterns when your needs remain unfulfilled?*

What thoughts and emotions arise because of this dysfunctional framework?

*How is your Balance model affected by this dysfunctional structure?*

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* A 38-year-old male doctor is coping with narcissistic personality features. The client tries to create admiration and superiority for himself with the authority and status of being a doctor. Other doctors and nurses interacting with the client feel comfortable in this case.

*Therapist: What pathological patterns emerge when you use these intermediary capabilities to meet your unmet needs?*

*Client:* I get consumed by the situation when my needs aren't fulfilled. It's as though I can't let go until I've made it right, but this only deepens my sense of being stuck. Then, the frustration builds up into anger— at others—and I end up pushing people away. I isolate myself because I feel like no one would understand, or they'd judge me for not being able to handle things better. But the more I pull away, the worse it gets, and I feel even more disconnected.

*Therapist: What emotions and thoughts do you experience as a result of this pathological structure?*

*Client:* I feel a deep, ongoing hopelessness, which makes it seem like my needs will never be satisfied. I also feel persistently let down.

*Therapist: How does this pathological structure affect you in terms of your Balance model?*

*Client:* Regarding the Balance model, I spend much time on success and the body. However, I have problems with my relationships and spirituality. I think there is no problem with me, but those around me complain about me.

#### **Stage 5: M-Manifesting How Capabilities Indicate the Cycle Is Wrong**

The most distinctive feature of the fifth stage is that the psychotherapist works with the client with the skills that show that the cycle is wrong. Both secondary skills and some of the primary skills show the client that the cycle is wrong. Clients actively use their skills to cope with conflict (Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). This stage is compatible with positive psychotherapy's Inventory and Situational Encouragement stages. An example of this stage is the problem of perfectionism. Perfect individuals use skills such as success,

order, and punctuality to meet their needs for trust and relationships. Justice or honesty skills show clients this cycle is wrong from an experiential perspective. For example, a client may think that although I use the skills of success, order, and punctuality, I still do not trust myself and cannot take part in unconditional relationships. This process, especially the justice skill, can show them that the cycle is wrong, such as giving so much of yourself but not getting anything in return. This stage also aligns with the *Inventory and Situational Encouragement Stage* in Positive Psychotherapy.

The clients should be questioned about the following at this point:

**What capabilities indicate that the pathological cycle you are experiencing is wrong?**

**What emotions and thoughts do these misleading capabilities evoke in you?**

**How do the situations created by these misleading capabilities affect your Balance model?**

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* Information about the client: Age: 27, gender: female, profession: nurse, family status: not married, challenges: shyness, having to express her emotions and ideas.

**Therapist:** *What are the capabilities that indicate to you that the pathological cycle you are experiencing is wrong?*

**Client:** My first ability that tells me this cycle is wrong is justice. My second is honesty. Not being open to my own desires, expectations, feelings, and thoughts means not being honest with myself. It is not fair not to be able to achieve what I want with the tools and skills I use.

**Therapist:** *What emotions and thoughts do these misleading capabilities evoke in you?*

**Client:** I feel very lonely when I am with people. I make myself very small and make them bigger. I feel like I will make a mistake, and they will laugh at me. I feel anger, guilt, and worthlessness toward myself. I have very important and valuable thoughts like everyone else, but I am disappointed that I cannot express them.

**Therapist:** *How do the situations created by these misleading capabilities affect your Balance model (body, success, relationships, and fantasy)?*

**Client:** I sweat. I have rapid heart palpitations. I get paralyzed. I get anxious. I get

bored. I feel like it will never end. I get excited. I think about what would happen if everyone laughed at me. What if I can't say anything, or what if I make a mistake and I'll be embarrassed? I can't perform at my best in classes where I have to give a presentation. I can't be an active participant by staying silent. I always stay silent in classes. Because of this, no one thinks I don't know anything. I have trouble starting close relationships. I'm afraid if this problem continues like this. Because I think I won't be able to do my job. Because my job is a job that depends on talking. I think that in the future, I may be victimized when I can't protect my rights and express myself. If it continues like this, I'm afraid of being alone in the future.

### **Stage 6: I-Investigating Emerging Secondary Pathologies**

This step investigates emerging secondary pathologies and explores secondary symptoms or pathologies that complicate the primary conflict. According to the perspective of positive psychotherapy, secondary disorders are considered to arise as a result of unresolved basic conflicts (Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). The emotional difficulties experienced by the clients are examined at this stage. Failure to resolve the basic conflict brings with it secondary pathologies. In particular, the defense mechanisms that the clients produce against reality feed these secondary pathologies. This stage also aligns with the *Verbalization Stage* in Positive Psychotherapy.

In this stage, the following questions should be asked to the clients:

*What secondary pathologies are these misleading capabilities causing you?*

*What emotions and thoughts do these secondary pathologies evoke in you?*

*How do the secondary pathologies affect your Balance model?*

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* The client is 45. The client's profession is an engineer. The client is a married person with two children. The client has been diagnosed with OCD. The client overuses his cleaning and ordering abilities.

**Therapist:** *What secondary pathologies are these misleading capabilities causing you?*

**Client:** I am experiencing detachment. It's like I'm not myself. I'm becoming more and more alienated from my environment and surroundings.

**Therapist:** What emotions and thoughts do these secondary pathologies evoke in you?

**Client:** I get so angry with myself because I stutter. When I talk to people, I suddenly get stressed and bored.

**Therapist:** How do the secondary pathologies affect your Balance model?

**Client:** I find myself feeling resentful, demoralized, and constantly thinking about myself. I can't focus on my work. Someone says something. I don't hear it at all. I've distanced myself from everyone. I get angry at unnecessary things. Feelings and thoughts of fear and discouragement about the future dominate.

### Stage 7: C-Clarifying the Secondary Pathology Affecting the Primary Pathology

If people do not regulate these pathologies while experiencing primary pathologies, they will find secondary pathologies in their lives. For example, if a client is experiencing social anxiety and this problem continues for a long time, they may also experience secondary problems such as alienation from themselves or low self-esteem. Low self-esteem and alienation from themselves put more pressure on the individual psychologically, and the individual begins to feel the primary psychopathology more intensely. This stage also aligns with the *Verbalization Stage* in Positive Psychotherapy.

From a psychodynamic perspective, primary pathology emerges as a result of unconscious conflicts, whereas secondary pathologies develop due to the individual's inability to cope with these conflicts (Kernberg, 1995; Sandler & Sandler, 2018). In the context of Positive Psychotherapy, the concept of primary and secondary pathologies can be examined through the lens of individuals' attempts to resolve core conflicts in dysfunctional ways. As a result, secondary pathologies may arise alongside the primary issues (Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016). These secondary pathologies not only affect the individual directly but also amplify the impact of the primary pathology.

In this stage, the following questions should be asked to the clients:

**How does the secondary pathology affect the primary pathology?**

**As a result of the secondary pathology affecting the primary pathology, what kinds of emotions and thoughts arise in you?**

**How does the secondary pathology strengthening the primary pathology affect you from a Balance model perspective?**

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections:* The client, now 33, has a background in sociology and works within a public institution. Her significant childhood trauma stems from being abandoned by her family, leaving deep emotional scars that manifest in attachment difficulties. This impacts her ability to form secure and trusting relationships, both personally and professionally. The abandonment likely influences her self-perception, emotional regulation, and approach to intimacy and social bonds. As a result, her attachment patterns might lean towards insecurity, with possible tendencies to avoid closeness or fear abandonment in adult relationships.

**Therapist: How does the secondary pathology affect the primary pathology?**

**Client:** I experience a lack of self-worth (cognitive distortions such as "I am worthless; I am unlovable"). This leads to introversion, depression, and social isolation. There is a heavy emotional state, accompanied by existential problems where I question the purpose and meaning of life.

**Therapist:** It sounds like the secondary pathology—feelings of low self-worth—are reinforcing your primary struggles, leading you to withdraw from social interactions and face a deep existential crisis. These cognitive distortions seem to make you internalize the idea that you are unworthy of love or connection, which may intensify your depressive symptoms.

**Therapist: As a result of the secondary pathology affecting the primary pathology, what kinds of emotions and thoughts arise in you?**

**Client:** I feel sadness, hopelessness, and a sense of meaninglessness in my life. It's as though I'm losing sight of any purpose, and this weighs heavily on me.

**Therapist:** I hear that this experience leaves you feeling overwhelmed with sadness and a loss of hope. The sense of meaninglessness must feel deeply unsettling.

**Client:** I feel understood and accepted here.

**Therapist: How does the secondary pathology strengthening the primary pathology affect you from a Balance model perspective?**



**Client:** I notice somatic symptoms—tension, headaches, and fatigue. I struggle with self-care and feel an increasing sense of hopelessness. However, on the achievement dimension, I do see some improvement, as my sense of inadequacy drives me to achieve more to compensate.

**Therapist:** It's interesting to see that while your emotional and physical balance is being challenged, especially with somatic symptoms and self-care struggles, you're also noticing some gains in the achievement dimension. It seems that perhaps you are using work or success as a way to counterbalance feelings of inadequacy.

### Stage 8: S-Studying How Capabilities Are Used to Cope with the Current Situation

Clients have to cope with primary pathologies that are strengthened by secondary pathologies. In this case, clients draw strength from primary and secondary capabilities. As the positive psychotherapy approach advocates, they immediately resort to the capabilities they have in order to cope with conflict. Applying these abilities is very closely related to the principle of hope, which is a very important principle of positive psychotherapy. Clients turn to this type of coping process in order to solve all problems. This stage also aligns with the *Broadening Goals Stage* in Positive Psychotherapy. In Positive Psychotherapy, the focus is on helping clients recognize and utilize these capabilities effectively so they can restore balance in their body, fantasy, achievement, and relationship domains.

In this stage, the following questions should be asked to the clients:

*What capabilities do you use to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology?*

*As a result of using these capabilities to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology, what kinds of emotions and thoughts arise in you?*

*How do the capabilities you use to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology affect you from a Balance model perspective?*

*Example from the Psychotherapy Process with Therapist Reflections: The client is a 38-year-old single male who exhibits symptoms of dissociative disorder.*

He describes feeling emotionally alienated, often disconnected from his emotions, and

struggling with an overwhelming intensity of thoughts. This mental overload is accompanied by a constant need for control as he attempts to manage anxiety and uncertainty. These symptoms affect his relationships and daily functioning, creating a persistent internal struggle to cope with his dissociative experiences.

**Therapist:** *What capabilities do you use to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology?*

**Client:** I use my capacities related to order, hope, and faith. My life is more structured and less anxious when there is order. Hope gives me confidence that I can improve. My faith gives me the fortitude to overcome obstacles.

**Therapist:** *As a result of using these capabilities to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology, what kinds of emotions and thoughts arise in you?*

**Client:** Staying within a controlled area makes me feel safe and relaxed. Being aware of my situation and trying to find ways to manage it gives me hope.

**Therapist:** It's powerful that you find safety and relaxation through maintaining control. It suggests that you are actively engaging with your experiences rather than avoiding them, which is essential for progress.

**Client:** Yes, exactly.

**Therapist:** *How do the capabilities you use to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology by the secondary pathology affect you from a Balance model perspective?*

**Client:** I'm looking for ways to relax myself and try to create a safe space, which has led to better sleep and muscle relaxation (body). I find myself withdrawing from my relationships. Because I feel a need to understand myself better and act more in control, my communication and sharing in relationships have decreased (relationship). I am conducting research to solve my problems and understand myself better. I read books and give myself assignments, and I try to gather information from my colleagues about these issues (achievement). My hope and faith increase my spirituality (fantasy).

## Discussion

When the psychotherapy literature is examined in general, it is seen that the formulation is an important goal of the

psychotherapy process. (Eryilmaz, 2020; Dallos et al., 2013; Weerasekera, 2009). This process has various stages. Through formulation, clients see how they cope with the problems they experience and further clarify their complex, ambiguous emotional and mental states (Heritage & Watson, 1979; Weerasekera, 2009). During the formulation process, the therapist helps the client express the problems they experience, discover the root causes, and understand the client's internal conflicts and relational problems more clearly (Davis, 1986). Due to the above-mentioned features, the place of formulation in the positive psychotherapy process cannot be denied. Although there are studies on the importance of resolving the basic conflict in this field (Cesko, 2024; Ciesielski, 2024; Eryilmaz, 2020; Peseschkian, 1990, 1997, 2016), the number of studies on formulating the basic conflict is very few. This study has contributed to the literature, especially because it presents a formulation method for basic conflict from a systematic and analytical

perspective and a positive psychotherapy perspective.

A summary of the DYNAMICS method related to these points is provided in Table 1. Therapists should pay attention to several important points throughout the process. First, creating an environment that allows clients to express themselves is crucial for establishing a safe and trusting connection. This fosters a space where clients can openly share their internal experiences and feelings. Additionally, it is important to focus on clients' past experiences, relationships, and traumas at every stage to understand the roots of their needs and issues. Therapists should continuously reference the clients' Balance model, identifying factors that disrupt this equilibrium and guiding clients in recognizing the impacts of these factors. Finally, helping clients identify their strengths and resources is essential for enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. This process supports clients in developing healthier coping strategies and regaining their psychological balance.

**Table-1.**  
**Summary of the DYNAMICS Method in Formulating Basic Conflicts**

Stage	Questions to Ask	Therapist Focus Points
<b>Stage 1: D-Describing Unmet Needs</b>	a) What are your unmet needs? b) Why were these needs unmet? c) How has the lack of these needs affected you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage self-reflection on unfulfilled psychological capacities.</li> <li>- Explore past experiences and model dimension influences.</li> <li>- Assess the impact on the client's balance.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2: Y-Yielding a Dysfunctional Way to Meet the Needs</b>	a) What dysfunctional path do you follow to meet your unmet needs? b) When you use this dysfunctional path, what feelings and thoughts do you have? c) How does this path affect you in terms of your Balance model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase awareness of dysfunctional coping strategies.</li> <li>- Facilitate emotional awareness related to these behaviors.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: N-Noting Intermediary Capabilities</b>	a) What intermediary capabilities do you use to meet your unmet needs? b) What feelings and thoughts arise when you use these capabilities? c) How do these capabilities affect your Balance model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify intermediary capabilities</li> <li>- Reassess how these capabilities contribute to maintaining balance.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 4: A-Analyzing Emerging Psychopathological Patterns</b>	a) What pathological patterns emerge when you use these capabilities? b) What emotions and thoughts do you experience from these patterns? c) How do these patterns affect you in terms of the Balance model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Help clients recognize maladaptive behaviors and thought patterns.</li> <li>- Address the emotional and cognitive impacts of these patterns.</li> </ul>

Stage	Questions to Ask	Therapist Focus Points
		- Examine disruptions to balance in key life areas.
<b>Stage 5: M-Manifesting How Capabilities Indicate the Cycle Is Wrong</b>	a) What capabilities indicate to you that the cycle is wrong? b) What emotions and thoughts do these capabilities evoke? c) How do situations created by these capabilities affect your Balance model?	- Identify strengths that signal dysfunction. - Explore emotional responses to misleading capabilities. - Analyze broader implications of the Balance model
<b>Stage 6: I-Investigating Emerging Secondary Pathologies</b>	a) What secondary pathologies do these misleading capabilities cause you? b) What emotions and thoughts do these secondary pathologies evoke? c) How do these pathologies affect your Balance model?	- Understand the impact of misleading capabilities on secondary issues. - Evaluate the effects of the Balance model on areas of life.
<b>Stage 7: C-Clarifying the Secondary Pathology Affecting the Primary Pathology</b>	a) How does the secondary pathology affect the primary pathology? b) What emotions and thoughts arise from this interaction? c) How does this dynamic affect you from a Balance model perspective?	- Explore the relationship between primary and secondary pathologies. - Assess how this interaction challenges overall balance.
<b>Stage 8: S-Studying How Capabilities Are Used to Cope with the Current Situation</b>	a) What capabilities do you use to cope with the strengthening of the primary pathology? b) What emotions and thoughts arise from these coping strategies? c) How do these capabilities affect you from a Balance model perspective?	- Identify coping mechanisms in terms of capabilities - Explore the implications of these capabilities on Balance model dimensions.

In this study, the explanations regarding the developing DYNAMICS method are given in Table 1 and Table 2. It is necessary to underline a few points when formulating the basic conflict with the DYNAMICS method. First, it is possible to manage this process by including the five stages of positive psychotherapy. Secondly, psychotherapists must establish therapeutic skills and conditions when using this model. Thirdly, psychoeducation may be required on topics such as the basic concepts of positive

psychotherapy, abilities, Balance model, and basic conflict as needed by the clients. Fourthly, progress and speed in the stages should be carried out by focusing on the client. Fifthly, one stage should not be passed to the next without understanding it. Sixthly, individual differences between clients should be considered in the stages of progress. Seventhly, using the positive interpretation technique frequently is necessary to motivate the client.

**Table-2.**  
**The DYNAMICS Model According to Five Stages of Positive Psychotherapy**

<b>Five Stages of Positive Psychotherapy</b>	<b>The DYNAMICS Method</b>	<b>Transition to Positive Psychotherapy's Five Stages</b>
<b>Observing-Distance Stage</b>	Stage 1: D-Describing Unmet Needs	The initial focus on unmet needs aligns with the first stage of Positive Psychotherapy, which emphasizes identifying and understanding the individual's core needs.
<b>Inventory Stage</b>	Stage 2: Y-Yielding a Dysfunctional Way to Meet the Needs	This stage parallels the recognition of maladaptive coping strategies in Positive Psychotherapy. Understanding dysfunctional paths allows clients to gain insight into their behaviors and the underlying beliefs that drive them.
<b>Inventory Stage</b>	Stage 3: N-Noting Intermediary Capabilities	Identifying intermediary capabilities resonates with the Positive Psychotherapy focus on strengths and resources.
<b>Inventory Stage and Situational Encouragement Stage</b>	Stage 4: A-Analyzing Emerging Psychopathological Patterns	Analyzing emerging patterns reflects Positive Psychotherapy's focus on understanding the origins of psychological issues, allowing clients to contextualize their struggles and recognize recurring themes in their experiences.
<b>Verbalization Stage</b>	Stage 5: M-Manifesting How Capabilities Indicate the Cycle Is Wrong	This stage is about awareness and reflection, similar to Positive Psychotherapy's approach of fostering insight into how current behaviors may perpetuate distress. Clients learn to articulate and recognize the implications of their capabilities.
<b>Verbalization Stage</b>	Stage 6: I-Investigating Emerging Secondary Pathologies	Investigating secondary pathologies links to Positive Psychotherapy's exploration of the multifaceted nature of psychological issues. Understanding how these secondary issues complicate the primary pathology allows for a more comprehensive therapeutic approach.
<b>Verbalization Stage</b>	Stage 7: C-Clarifying the Secondary Pathology Affecting the Primary Pathology	Clarifying the interactions between primary and secondary pathologies aligns with Positive Psychotherapy's integrative approach, which seeks to illuminate how different psychological elements interact and contribute to overall well-being.
<b>Broadening Goals Stage</b>	Stage 8: S-Studying How Capabilities Are Used to Cope with the Current Situation	This final stage encourages clients to develop actionable strategies and coping mechanisms, similar to the Positive Psychotherapy goal of fostering resilience and adaptive functioning in daily life.

## Recommendations

It is necessary to underline a few points to consider when using the "DYNAMICS" method in psychotherapy. First, clients must understand the cause-effect relationships regarding the basic conflict they experience. At this point, the formulation of the clients' basic conflicts should be worked on after the clients' awareness is ensured regarding the model dimensions and sources of coping with the conflict. Secondly, since raising awareness regarding the basic conflict is also an intervention method for the clients, it is functional to address this issue in the fourth stage of positive psychotherapy. Thirdly,

the psychotherapist needs to be supportive and guiding in this process. For the therapist to fulfill this function, it is desired that their interpretation and analysis competencies are sufficient. Fourthly, it is necessary to remain loyal to the five stages of positive psychotherapy when formulating the basic conflict. Fifthly, formulating the basic conflict through examples from the clients' real lives will facilitate understanding the basic conflict in the client's eyes.

## Limitations and future directions

There are a few points to consider when using the DYNAMICS method. First, using this model before the clients are ready is not right. Secondly, flexibility can be applied in using the model that is being considered depending on the client's perception capacity. Thirdly, the DYNAMICS model in this study is holistic (Eryilmaz & Doenyas, 2024). However, proceeding with a holistic model for each client may differ due to the client's characteristics, the way they process information, and the nature of the problems they bring. Fourthly, this model may not be necessary for individuals who need supportive psychotherapy. Fifthly, when determining the basic conflict, it is necessary to get momentum from the client, and it would not be right to give a definite number of sessions for its formulation at this point. At this point, the factors determining the number of sessions will be the client's readiness and capacities and the therapist's management of the process. In the future, empirical and experimental studies can be conducted on individuals with different psychological problems using the DYNAMICS model. Thus, the effectiveness of the developed DYNAMICS model can be examined. Sixthly, the psychotherapy process must be managed in a culturally sensitive manner. Using the DYNAMICS model, developed to resolve the basic conflicts of clients from different cultures, and reporting the results with scientific studies contributes to the field.

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