

SEMESTER 4

CC 11: UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

UNIT 2 : EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY
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Humanistic Therapy

- ❑ Humanistic therapy has a lot in common with the philosophy of existentialism.
- ❑ Existentialism emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice.
- ❑ Humanistic therapy takes on many of these beliefs in that it emphasizes self-actualization and self-fulfillment.
- ❑ Humanistic therapists believe in freedom of choice and the power of individuals to shape their own lives.



The origin of Existential Psychotherapy

The **roots of existential psychotherapy** lie in philosophy from the 1800s, and more importantly with philosophers whose work dealt with human existence. Existential theory is a centuries-old philosophy. The philosophers most commonly associated with existential therapy are **Kierkegaard** and **Friedrich Nietzsche**. It embraces personal freedom and choice. It purports that humans choose their own existence and meaning.

European philosopher **Kierkegaard** is thought to be one of the first philosophers of existential theory. Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre followed him and further developed the ideas.

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Existential Therapy

- BASIC DIMENSIONS – OF THE HUMAN CONDITION
 - The capacity for self-awareness
 - The tension between freedom & responsibility
 - The creation of an identity & establishing meaningful relationships
 - The search for meaning
 - Accepting anxiety as a condition of living
 - The awareness of death and nonbeing

Existential psychotherapy is a style of **therapy** that places emphasis on the human condition as a whole.

Existential psychotherapy uses a positive **approach** that applauds human capacities and aspirations while simultaneously acknowledging human limitations.

Existential therapy focuses on free will, self-determination, and the search for meaning—often centering on you rather than on the symptom. The approach emphasizes your capacity to make rational choices and to develop to your maximum potential.

The existential approach stresses that:

- All people have the capacity for self-awareness.
- Each person has a unique identity that can be known only through relationships with others.
- People must continually re-create themselves because life's meaning constantly changes.
- Anxiety is part of the human condition.

These philosophers believed that self-awareness and self-respect were the only way to know your **own identity**. They believed that **personal evolution was necessary because things constantly changed. Life was always evolving**. The only constant was a person's responsibility to decide in the moment what they wanted to be and how they wanted to be it.

What is existential therapy?

Austrian psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl developed this therapy in the mid-20th century. This type of therapy intended to help people find meaning in life. That was the primary purpose of an individual, Frankl believed. It was a precursor to today's existential therapy.

Alongside Frankl, psychologist Rollo May helped shape the practice of a type of humanistic therapy that focused on this concept of existential psychotherapy.

In more recent years, psychiatrist Irvin Yalom established the four givens of existential therapy. These givens, or essential issues, have come to define the problems and roadblocks that prevent people from living their most fulfilled life.

According to Yalom, the four essential issues are:

- death
- meaninglessness
- isolation
- freedom or a responsibility to make the best choices

Existential therapy is designed to help people overcome these essential issues with specific directions, goals, and tools.

How does existential therapy work?

Therapists who practice existential therapy see that their patients embrace their choices and their plans with an eye toward the possibilities, not the past.

Existential therapists believe the past can be instructive. However, it isn't meant to inform anything you currently do or want from life.

Instead, therapists urge patients to use creativity, love, and other life-enhancing experiences to help them make decisions and determine their behaviors for the future. In this process, a therapist hopes to help their patient learn to think and act without concern for anxiety or fear of messing up one's life.

Ultimately, the goal of existential therapy is to help people finding meaning despite natural worries and fears of the four givens. If they're successful, they can live authentic lives filled with self-respect and self-motivation. They can also make choices from places of positivity, not fear.

Existentialism

- Existentialism – An Area of philosophy concerned with the **meaning of human existence**.
- Being-in-the-World – The existential idea that the self cannot exist without a world and the world cannot exist without a person of being to **perceive** it.

Existential Psychotherapy

Is a philosophical method of therapy that focuses on free will, self determination and search for meaning.



Humanistic/ Existential Therapies

- Humanistic therapy
 - Emphasis on people's desire to achieve self-respect
 - Carl Rogers' Client-centered Therapy
 - Nonjudgmental, nondirective
 - Atmosphere of unconditional positive regard
- Existential therapy
 - Emphasis on people's needs to confront questions about meaning and direction of their lives
 - Combine humanistic and psychodynamic techniques
 - Gestalt therapy based on view that people need to get in touch with disowned parts of themselves

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Existential psychology</i>	<i>Humanistic psychology</i>
Subject of inquiry	Human existence	Human self
Ontological position	Existence precedes essence	Essence precedes existence
Temporal orientation	Future gives the present meaning	The “here and now” gives the present meaning
Therapeutic goals	Awareness and acceptance of the human condition	Awareness and acceptance of the human self
Growth motivator	Anxiety	Actualizing tendency
Optimal functioning	State of Being	Process of Becoming
The good life	The search for meaning	The search for self

Thank You

