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**“FROM THE HERE AND NOW” TO THE “NOW WHAT”: AN
INTRODUCTION TO LOGOTHERAPY**

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Abstract

"From the Here and Now' to the "Now What':

An Introduction to Logotherapy

As clinical practitioners working with clients and families, it is widely accepted that cognitive therapy is efficacious. However during recent scrutiny of our practices, clinical social workers are reporting more referrals and issues concerning meaninglessness, emptiness, spiritual confusion and ambiguity. As we encounter the new faces of this emotional and spiritual dilemma, we must press forward the clinical questions being asked, "Now what?"; "Is this all there is?" By moving beyond the "here and now" of cognitive therapy, clinical social workers can attend to this need clients often struggle to verbalize and identify: the void of an ambiguous "big picture." Clients report shifts in priorities and values regarding relationships, employment and approach to life. Although it goes undefined, the symptoms are real: predominantly a quiet yet undeniable musing. There is an emotional and psychological ambivalence stemming from an experience, event, or life transition that has left them seeing the world differently. This questioning and seeking is unsettling and may create motivation to modify one's lifestyle and live for what really matters in their life. Existential therapy (Logotherapy) examines in a directive manner the meaning and purpose of the lives we live. This session will define and review existential perspectives with an introduction to Logotherapy.

Logotherapy: Indicated when people are experiencing:

Loss of direction
Values confused
A shaken identity
Personal alimentation
Boredom, meaninglessness, ambivalent
Priority shifts, direction change

Relationships changed, redefined

Logotherapy: Perspectives

“The role of the therapist is that of an eye specialist rather than that of a painter”

The painter tries to convey to us a picture of the world as they see it...

An ophthalmologist tries to enable us to see the world as it really is.

Widening the visual field of the patient so the whole spectrum of meaning becomes visible

Logotherapy: 3 Basic Assumptions

The Freedom of Will

The Will to Meaning

The Meaning of Life

Freedom of Will:

Individuals have the freedom to choose a positive attitude, even under the most appalling conditions

The therapeutic imperative of recognizing one's capacity to choose, including the extreme, “give up or fight”

The Will to Meaning:

Assumes there is a universal, primary motivation to find meaning

Latent Motivation: suppressed by the survival, pleasure, power instinct

When latent becomes manifest the will to meaning surfaces

The Meaning of Life:

Not the meaning of life in general, the specific meaning of life at a given moment, not abstract but a specific mission, vocation to carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment

“Responsibleness”; for what, to what, or to whom to be responsible

Self transcendence: points and directs us to something, someone, other than ourselves

...a meaning to fulfill or a person to encounter, the more one gives to serve, or to another person to love, the more the meaning of life will be defined

The Meaning of Life

Can be discovered in 3 different ways

1. Creating a work or doing a deed
2. By experiencing something or someone
3. The attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering

Logotherapy on Suffering

...We may find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation...a fate that cannot be changed...transform a personal tragedy into a triumph...

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves

...suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning...

“it takes someone special to forget someone special”

A person's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to

see a meaning in their life...

Logotherapy: The Approach

Welter's Four Step Approach:

1. Distance the Symptoms
2. Attitudinal Change
3. Actual Reduction of Symptoms
4. Orientation to Meaning Before Terminating Counseling

The Approach: Self Distancing

The basis for a healthy resistance in a crisis
grip of the symptoms
Ask thought provoking questions

Loosen the

"you do not need to know the origin of a fire
in order to put it out"

"as if" the symptoms were not present

The Approach: Attitudinal Change

Situations that have no meaning and cannot be changed; ex. 'blows of fate, incurable diseases; irrevocable ending of a career, relationship, life...do not need to control our lives; it is possible to find a meaningful attitude toward a situation that which in itself is meaningless

Meaning does not have to be found in the event itself, but may be discovered through the transformed attitude

The Approach: Actual Reduction of Symptoms

After the client achieves a transformation of attitudes, the symptoms often diminish or disappear; sometimes unexplainable.

The Approach: Orientation to Meaning Before Terminating Counseling

Therapy is jeopardized if the patient gets discharged to a life lacking meaningful content; patient should be filled with a mission and a meaningful life.

Taper off; does not use the word "terminate"; uses the word "leaving"

Logotherapy: 2 Techniques:

Socratic Dialogue and Dereflexion

Socratic Dialogue & Questioning:

- Draw out thoughtful, substantive answers
- Should be specific; "what did you feel" vs how do you feel
- Helps achieve first step: distancing of symptoms
- Metaphoric, suggestions, ponderings toward an answer
- May use humor appropriately
- Helps client become responsible; respond to life

Dereflexion:

- avoids "excessive reflection on ourselves and our condition"
- "sawing the sawdust"
- I cannot get "it" out of my mind"...a regret, predicament, a fear...
- Children are great deflectors
- Timing and pacing: "Circling"
- Patient must feel understood
- Counselor has sufficient information

Can be used in each step; distancing, change of attitudes, reduction of symptoms, and reorientation to meaning

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