

## Transpersonal Psychology

### **Relationships**

Transpersonal Psychology is an approach to understanding the way our minds operate through our relationships with others, resting in the belief that there is something bigger and deeper in the space between which operates upon us. We understand that there is an existential pull that is guiding us towards meaning, connection, and freedom. We all have our own process, and something is connecting your process and my process. We respect that there's a reason we're relating with each other and that there is life force generated by our being together.

The relationship between client and therapist is just as important as the client's other relationships. The space between therapist and client is as sacred and transformative as that space between the client and their issues, their families and friends, etc. Both the client and the therapist change as a result of this relationship. In order for positive change to occur for the client, it must also occur for the therapist on some level, by and through the bonds of our relationship.

### **Psychology Plus**

In the Foreword of *The Textbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*, writer Ken Wilber defines "transpersonal" as "personal plus." He explains that transpersonal work integrates both personal psychology and psychiatry but then "adds those deeper or higher aspects of human experience that transcend the ordinary and the average. Trans translates to "beyond", and personal refers to personality. Therefore, transpersonal psychology is a field of psychology that goes beyond the realm in which the so-called normal personality operates.

Traditional psychology is interested in a continuum of human experience and behavior ranging from severe dysfunction, mental and emotional illness at one end, to what is generally considered "normal", healthy behavior at the other end and various degrees of normal and maladjustment in between. Transpersonal Psychology is a full spectrum psychology that encompasses all of this and then goes beyond it by adding a serious scholarly interest in the immanent and transcendent dimensions of human experience: exceptional human functioning, performances and achievements, true genius, the nature and meaning of spiritual experiences, non-ordinary states of consciousness, and how we might foster the fulfillment of our highest potentials as human beings.

### **Spirituality**

The British Psychological Society acknowledges the central emphasis on spirituality: Transpersonal Psychology might loosely be called the psychology of spirituality and of those areas of the human mind which search for higher meanings in life, and which move beyond the limited boundaries of the personality to access an enhanced capacity for wisdom, creativity, unconditional love and compassion. It honors the existence of transpersonal experiences, and is concerned with their meaning for the individual and with their effect upon behavior. Transpersonal psychology combines a variety of approaches in psychology, including

behaviorism, cognitive psychology and humanistic psychology, along with other disciplines, including Eastern and Western philosophy, mysticism, mindfulness and the world's religions.

## **The Whole Person**

Transpersonal psychologists believe that to be at our peak performance in life, our bodies have to be completely healthy. Medical doctors can help us take care of our physical bodies, and traditional psychologists can help us take care of our minds. Transpersonal psychologists can help take care of the often ignored soul.

Having a healthy mind, body, and soul can lead to a much healthier and happier existence. The field of transpersonal psychology can also help people realize that people are ultimately spiritual beings in physical bodies, and that our consciousness has more than one level. By understanding these concepts, individuals will often have an easier time reaching self-actualization and self-fulfillment in life.

## **Differentiators**

1. Transpersonal psychology doesn't have specific tools or methods.

Transpersonal psychotherapy is rooted in an ideology and a basic humility that operates behind the scenes. It is less about a particular tool or methodology and more about an intention that motivates the intervention.

2. The therapist isn't viewed as the expert.

Rather, the therapist is the facilitator who assists the client in uncovering their own truth and their own process. The only room for expertise is the therapists' ability to reflect the client's own truth back to them with as little of the therapist's own baggage as possible."

3. Transpersonal psychology doesn't judge others' experiences.

Transpersonal psychology is based on the belief that the client and the therapist both have their own experiences and neither is right, wrong, correct or incorrect, healthy or unhealthy. If a client brings an experience into therapy that makes the therapist uncomfortable, he has the ability to look at his own discomfort and work on it and he can even disclose it to the client if that is appropriate.