

**You are encouraged to read the whole book, and please make a proper citation if needed.**

Bugental, J.F.T. (1978). *Psychotherapy and process: The fundamentals of an existential-humanistic approach*. Random House.

1. In this book I will be describing a kind of psychotherapy that is centered on the fact of being alive, that seeks to heighten consciousness, and that tries to work with the fundamental life process of awareness as its main means for bringing to the client the possibilities for richer and more meaningful living. The basic theory of this psychotherapy is called existential because it has to do with the fact of existence. The value orientation of this psychotherapy is called humanistic because it sees the greater realization of the potentials of human beings as the most desirable outcome of the therapeutic work.
2. Being is a process, and the kind of therapy with which this book deals centers around the processes of the client's life, the processes by which the client may change, and the underlying process which is life itself. Psychotherapy of the humanistic-existential orientation is a very personal, subjective, and life-changing experience for both participants.
3. Being levels of therapeutic growth goals:
  - **Growth in personal and interpersonal actualization:** The client finds an increase in the feeling or potency in life as a great deal more of the center of being is taken into one's self and rescued from dependence on the opinions of others or the achievements one piles up. Often the client is moved to make changes in work, in family situation, or in life activities.
  - **Existential emancipation:** The client must face the possibility of genuinely relinquishing the old ways of being, ways which are integrated into the very fabric of personal identity and the world in which that identity is set. Now the client has the possibility of moving into a truly new way of being. This possibility new living is, in its deepest significances, radically different from any previous level. Rather than repairing and bringing the self up to date or even developing a new self, now the possibility opens of breaking free of full identification with the self in any importantly limiting way.
  - **Transcendence:** A core meaning of the term "transcendence" is going beyond" – going beyond, in particular, the dichotomies which we unthinkingly accept as the givens of our lives: good/bad, right/wrong, real/unreal, I/other, health/illness, growth/decline, life/death, God/human.

**Core concepts of the existential-humanistic psychotherapy**

4. Existentialists - philosophers, psychotherapists - make much of the quality of “being there” (*dasein*). **Presence** is the quality of being in a situation in which one intends to be as aware and as participative as one is able to be at that time and in those circumstances. Presence is carried into effect through mobilization of one’s inner (toward subjective experiencing) and outer (toward the situation and any other person/s in it) sensitivities.
  - **Accessibility** comes about from one’s having the intention to allow what happens in a situation to matter, to have an affect on one. It involves a reduction of the usual social defenses against being influenced or affected by others. It implies a measure of trust and vulnerability.
  - **Expressiveness** arises from the intent to let oneself be known by the other in a situation, to make available some of the contents of one’s subjective awareness without distortion or disguise. It implies a measure of commitment and a willingness to put forth some effort.
5. **The fundamental importance of concern:** The experience of distress, pain, or anxiety (not always consciously); the yearning for new possibilities in life; the readiness to make some commitment to self-exploration; and the hope that change within oneself may be the way to realize the desired possibility.
  - **The capacity for dealing with a life concern:** The person having a genuine life concern – experiencing a true sense of dissatisfaction with his or her way of living and a feeling of possibility for it to be different – will act in some fashion to reduce that concern. This general principle does mean that when I have a genuine life concern, I will change my way of looking at things, get into a different life situation, cause the important people in my life to do things differently, learn some new skills, drop some old habits, or in some other way deal with that concern.
6. **Inward searching:** Development of skill in subjective searching is the primary means by which one can overcome the blocks to access to one’s own resources and thus deal most effectively with life concerns.
  - **The process of inward searching:** When a person describes the immediate inner experience of a life concern as fully as possible and with an expectancy of discovery, the inward searching process is set in motion. As the person describes the life concern again and again, the ways in which the free ranging of the searching awareness is blocked will be experienced and disclosed.
  - **The capacity for inward searching:** A therapist facilitates the client’s fullest use of the capacity for inward searching through (a) identifying the resistances which block the search process; (b) through insisting on the

necessity of the client's being as fully and genuinely present as possible; and (c) through persistently taking the client and what the client says with complete seriousness.

- **Respect and genuine caring:** A relation of mutual respect and genuine caring is the ideal medium in which this facilitating process can occur and in which the searching can be best forwarded.
  - **The yield from inward searching:** The person who explores life concerns in this fashion and utilizes the awareness that the search process yields, will emerge with a changed and enlarged sense of identity and power.
7. **Focusing intentionality in inward searching:** The intentionality of the person is a fundamental aspect of subjectivity. It makes possible the directionality of the person, gives rise to an image of the life the person seeks to bring into being.

By this term [intentionality] I do not mean mere intentions, or voluntarism, or purposiveness. I refer to the level of human experience which underlies them, namely man's capacity to have intentions. Intentionality is the structure which gives meaning to experience. It is our imaginative participation in the coming day's possibilities, out of which participation comes the awareness of our capacity to form, to mold, to change ourselves and the day in relation to each other. (Rollo May, 1969, p.80)

8. **An existential-humanistic ideal for the client-therapist relationship**

- Mutuality
- Honesty
- Respect
- Dynamic
- Vital
- Trusting

9. **The guiding principles of effective searching**

- The inner sense of concern is the fundamental element in the process. This focusing of concern aligns the search with one's intentionality.
- At choice points, when several possible pathways open up, only the client's sense of concern can be trusted to point the direction.
- So far as possible the client does well to adopt an attitude of expectancy, of discovering (rather than reporting).
- The client must know right to the marrow that this is an undertaking that is only one's own, that only oneself can carry out, and that this is indeed one's truest opportunity to take direction of one's own life.

- The client must be prepared to follow whenever the sense of concern may lead.
- Recognition, that one can never do this process perfectly or for as long as one may desire, is necessary if the client is going to persist sufficiently to develop the skill and mine it for all it can yield.

#### **10. Phases in the psychotherapeutic process**

- Beginning the development of an alliance
- Arousing and focusing the client's motivation to have centered awareness of being
- Disclosing and working through resistance
- Confronting existential anxiety
- Supporting new learning and new ways of being

#### **11. The basic skill of inward searching**

- Getting present
- Bringing a concern to focus
- Immersion and exploration
- Dealing with resistances
- The therapist's facilitating role

#### **12. Client steps in intensive psychotherapy**

- Making a genuine and major commitment to self-exploration
- Developing an accepting attitude toward oneself
- Lessening concern with usual social controls
- Discovering an enlarged sense of possibility for oneself
- Renewing determination to see the job through
- Enlarging one's sense of identity
- Committing to life-long growth

#### **13. The outcomes of existential-humanistic therapy**

- **Searching – the inner vision:** The discovery or increased appreciation of the inward sense. This is an organismic awareness of one's own unique perspective, of whether incoming experience is congenial to one's being, and of what it is that one intends, wants, or seeks to realize. This sense is an expression of one's whole being and is the basis of an inner solidity and orientation in living.
- **Reclaiming our emotional inheritance:** Emotions are part of the fabric of human relationships. What we do and what we experience matter to ourselves and to those with whom we relate. That fabric of human connectedness means that our identities don't stop with our separate envelopes of skin, but extend to the perimeters of our caring. Caring is the

general form of the particular experiences which are our feelings. The emotionless person is isolated by the very choice that denied the affective dimension of being. Psychotherapy teaches also that an emotional episode is an incident not a lasting condition, and this relieves unnecessary distress for many. Clients often feel that if they were to let go to their anger or their grief, they would never recover perspective. Quite the contrary is the case. Once there is an adequate release of pent-up feeling, then a natural evolution of the emotion takes place. The person who fears emotion will take over blocks this evolution and thus is already taken over by the emotion of fear.

- **Changed perspective on human relationships:** Once the subjective perspective is realized, it becomes manifest that so much of our lives is tragically wasted in fighting demons, which are of our own creation, which are the products of our alienation from our own being, and which are fully overcome only when denied the sustenance of our fear and antagonism. That triumph comes not from combat, but from opening our awareness to our true natures and dispelling the enemy with the light of authentic being.
- **Enlarged sense of identity:** Distinguishes between “I” and “Me”: *Me* is a word used to designate an object of perception, something which we can experience (as contrasted with the experiencing of that object). Thus *me* includes my physical body, my customary patterns of behavior, and my memories of past actions, feelings, and events in my life. The *me* of itself is inert, is unaware, has no power. The *me* is a construction of the I and has no life of its own. *I-process* is a term to designate the subject of one’s being, the be-ing-ness of a human life. *I-process* is a communication device to refer to that which is purely subject as though it were object so that we can talk about it. The *I-process* is the person be-ing, which is expressed through the person’s act-ing, speak-ing, and so on.
- **Feeling greater power in life and changed life intentions:** To be really centered in one’s subjectivity with full presence is to discover conveniently at hand much that is ordinarily unavailable. Also as the pain of one’s distress is lessened and some sense of gaining a foothold on a different way of life emerges, the client begins questioning goals and plans that have been previously unexamined.
- **Freedom:** It is only after we genuinely confronting and incorporating the recognitions that our own identities are solely as processes and that world is quite arbitrary construction of our awareness that we can move toward discovering and appreciating the freedom thus opened to us. If I am but the

process of my being, then I can, and indeed must, remake my life each moment, and I can choose to make it quite different than it has been in the past, for the past is no longer the master of this present moment.