

Psychotherapy Guidebook

CATHARTIC- MEDITATIVE THERAPY

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Cathartic-Meditative Therapy

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Table of Contents

[DEFINITION](#)

[HISTORY](#)

[TECHNIQUE](#)

[APPLICATIONS](#)

Cathartic-Meditative Therapy

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DEFINITION

Cathartic-Meditative (CM) Therapy represents a model of human beings capable of moving from distress and rigidity to liberation from the cumulative effects of pain, oppression, and rigid cultural patterns. All humans are moving naturally toward greater lovingness, responsibility for self and others, creative intelligence, and discovery. The CM therapist knows that the cumulative effects of stress, distress, conflict, oppression, and family and cultural patterns can obscure this naturally expanding state of human beings. The therapist joins with the natural healing and synergistic (cooperative) forces in the person, among which we can include, as a minimum, the urge to discharge painful emotion (such as anger, fear, embarrassment, hurt, boredom) by talking, crying, raging, shaking and trembling, yawning and laughing; the individual's agency (will); the creative, imaginative, problem-solving intelligence of the person; the human's emancipatory drive to overcome all forms of oppression, internal as well as external; our desire for loving and cooperative relationships with all other humans.

Strategies are devised for compassionately and effectively opposing the

client's illusions, rigidities, and repetitiousness, distractability, hatred of self and others, addictions, and other forms of human irrationality. Healing-synergistic actions occur best in those human relationships marked by safety, trust, transcendental love, compassionate understanding, inventiveness, and playfulness. The CM therapist identifies with the spiritual essence, the vital center of awareness in all human beings.

HISTORY

My present synthesis of psychotherapy reflects the dialectic of helping relationships that I have experienced and processed over a twenty-five-year span of clinical work and thinking. The years are much less important than these experiences and my synthesis. My commitments have included: Client-Centered Therapy; Psychoanalysis and Analytic Psychology; Reevaluation Counseling (developed by Harvey Jackins of Seattle; the supporting theory for co-counseling); communicational pragmatics; meditational systems and Psychosynthesis; and body therapies. My relationship to co-counseling (the helping modality in which two persons alternate as client and counselor, exchanging effective help with each other) continues to be of great benefit to me personally as well as in my therapeutic work and thinking.

TECHNIQUE

CM therapy emphasizes emotional release, the meditative attitude towards one's experience, validation and support for the client, and rational thinking and actions.

The most basic technique is the nontechnical, holistic, flexible use of my awareness from moment to moment with my client — how he is experiencing and viewing himself, his world. This free attention of mine works best in the framework of a positive, evolution-oriented model of the person. It is my capacity to see this person in a nonjudgmental way, accurately noting how he is similar and different at this moment from himself and all other persons I have known in the past. The less emotional distress and negative attitudes I have, the more clearly and flexibly I convey my awareness to this person, the client. I think about how my client might feel, think, and act if he didn't have his pain, rigidity, and feelings of powerlessness. His visions of such a utopian future are encouraged.

I am interested in and focused upon my client's painful feelings; his rigid, repetitive thoughts and actions; the person's difficulty in attending to these feelings, thoughts, and actions with nonjudgmental attention; my client's loving, creative, and imaginative strivings; validating and supporting my client as the essence of will, energy, love, and responsibility in his perceptual "sea" of distress and demoralization; this person's mastery, accomplishments, and success.

I am especially active in helping the client experience and release painful emotions with such methods as: focusing; body movements; self-appreciation; role playing; guided imagery; meditation; repetition of phrases and postures that allow for discharge of feelings. Where possible, I train the client in specific meditation work, taking account of his cognitive style, style of emotional control, degree of free attention, and interests. Meditation and other forms of homework are drawn up by a contract method. Homework can include affirmations and other forms of self-appreciation that support positive thought and energy.

The emphasis is on getting the client to do something different in the therapy session and then out in the real world. This something different is new or further discharge of painful feelings, thinking different thoughts and taking different actions, including those with the body. I place less emphasis on reporting interpretations to the client. I do name rigidities in thought and action that I have observed and for which I have created, or inspired the client to create, some useful interruption.

I support my client at all times. I do not support his negative evaluations of himself. I support his essence, his rationality, his creative imagination, and respect his experience of painful emotions. I do not consider his feelings to be a definition of him as a person or a reliable guide for his thoughts and actions.

The dumping of my painful feelings, such as anger, disappointment, fear and embarrassment, on my client seems ridiculous, unimaginative, unfair, and downright inefficient. I take these feelings to an appropriate setting where I can work on them. The therapist can never afford to neglect working on his own case, hopefully using the very methods that he finds helpful when doing therapy with others.

APPLICATIONS

CM Therapy is useful in one-to-one psychotherapeutic work, and with couples, families, and groups. Each member of the group is helped in those communicational patterns that block the effective use of the therapeutic model that has been described here. The goal is to facilitate the use of each member as a helper for the other members of the group. This is the essence of what is done in a co-counseling class.

In addition to the above applications, this model has practical use in other helping relationships, such as health-care worker/patient relationships, supervision, classroom teaching, child rearing and child care work, and in all of our personal relationships. Finally, therapeutic work on the effects of oppression can be facilitated greatly with the use of this model.