

Psychotherapy Guidebook

LIVING THERAPY

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Living Therapy

Gay Hendricks and Carol J. Leavenworth

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Living Therapy

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DEFINITION

Living Therapy is a moment-by-moment, day-by-day approach to uncovering the basic processes of effective living. It is a method to be used by individuals in problem solving and in achieving maximum emotional and spiritual growth. It is also a set of principles and techniques used by therapists with individuals and groups. Living Therapy focuses on the following basic processes to achieve its goals:

1. Awareness and observation of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual processes of the individual
2. Deep experience of self, particularly in the realm of feelings
3. Love and acceptance of self at each point of the living process
4. Identification and integration of wants and needs
5. "Centering," through awareness and incorporation of the inner core so that harmony occurs at all levels of being.

Living Therapy is a personal approach leading to the transpersonal. By

applying the basic processes to the personal issues that arise in living, the individual establishes contact with the inner self, the core from which we have access to knowledge of others and of the universe.

HISTORY

Throughout his training, which included experience in Behavior Modification, client-centered therapy, and numerous body therapies, Gay Hendricks returned repeatedly to the question: what are the basic elements underlying all therapies that create real growth and change? In 1974, after a period of deep meditation in the wilderness, Hendricks formulated the principles that are the foundation of Living Therapy. Based on the original principles, substantial refinements and additions were made by Carol Leavenworth, M.S. Later they were joined by Gary West, M.S.W., David Hubbard, M.D., and others who have contributed to the development of a comprehensive system.

TECHNIQUE

Techniques used in Living Therapy are based on the premise that dissatisfaction and ineffective behavior are a result of denial and resistance to one's current experience. Since most of us are seldom in contact with our core self, we often do not recognize many of our deepest needs for contact and

unity with our environment. These needs are manifested in progressively more dramatic experiences in order to return focus to the core self. Therefore, we experience unpleasant feelings, bodily stress and disease, ineffective thought patterns, inappropriate behavior, and eventually problems in our environment. All of these are creations of the self, designed to bring us back to our own center.

Living Therapy clients are assisted in returning to the level of awareness appropriate for solving the presenting problem. Most often a person's thoughts and behavior are standing in the way of the experience of certain feelings that need to be recognized and lovingly accepted as a real part of the individual's personality. Clients are taught to observe, experience, and love their feelings. They learn to identify real needs and wants as well as appropriate ways of getting needs met.

They are assisted in learning how to stay centered in the here-and-now in order to enhance actualization of emotional and spiritual growth.

Techniques that facilitate this process are varied and include meditation, body work, and homework assignments, such as observing and listing basic feelings (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, joy) experienced during the week.

APPLICATIONS

The basic processes of Living Therapy are being used both in an educational setting with teacher and counselor trainees and in psychotherapy. The approach was developed and stabilized with the “normal neurotic” clientele seen in private practice and in community mental health settings. It is now being used on a limited basis with psychotic out-patients. Specific techniques used vary from client to client. The approach is also being applied in education, with the assistance of curriculum materials that teach the basic processes of effective living.