

Psychotherapy Guidebook

# PHILOTHERAPY

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## Table of Contents

[DEFINITION](#)

[HISTORY](#)

[TECHNIQUE](#)

[APPLICATIONS](#)

# Philotherapy

*Emery Breitner*

## DEFINITION

Philotherapy is a religious form of psychotherapy based on love, faith, and acceptance of one's self. Its aim is helping the patient to be himself in his own environment. To find himself and his place in his world without guilt, pretense, or role-playing.

The goal of Philotherapy is for the patient to accept himself the way he is. To help him to live without hiding, fighting, or pretense. To make him see that he has a basic experience in life, a place, an attitude, a role that he has to accept. That success, health, longevity are not up to him. The aim is to remove the false illusion that he is responsible for everything that is happening to him and around him. To recognize that there are powers stronger than him. That he does not have to control that which is beyond him. That he can find peace in himself within his own world.

## HISTORY

Philotherapy evolved from my (Breitner) dissatisfaction with the

conventional, intellectual, insight-oriented psychotherapy. Anyone following the recent developments and new trends in therapy can see a deluge of new ideas, new doubts and confusions, and can see that we are experiencing a crisis in psychotherapy and in the field of mental health. Many explanations and many theories have been presented recently, but none have brought any solution. One might wonder if any logical approach can be helpful to solve an illogical problem.

After many years of practice, I realize that it makes very little difference how much we know about our problems, since understanding of a problem is not going to change it. Intellectual insight is not going to help us. The therapy I describe is based on an induced regression and intense emotional involvement. It is experiential and existential, rather than intellectual. Because this form of therapy is based on regression, acceptance, and love, I call it Philotherapy.

Philotherapy is based on an assimilative theory of neurosis. That is, we assimilate, incorporate everything — good, bad, and indifferent alike — from our environment. We assimilate love, faith, fear, doubt, and other feelings. They are superimposed on our genetic makeup. This way, we can see neurosis as an assimilated, incorporated, negative experience. The amazing thing about this negative experience I call neurosis is that it stays with us. The experience is painful and unpleasant but we still repeat it. It seems that it is

the only meaningful link we have with our parents.

## TECHNIQUE

Our study extended over a period of five years, including 184 patients. Our technique was based on a strong emotional and supportive relationship between therapist and patient. But the basic question remained: why did it help in one case and not in another? What was the principal therapeutic factor? I have found that those patients who developed acceptance, faith, and an ability to regress showed an improvement during therapy. To be exact, 152 patients showed definite signs of emotional regression, increased acceptance of themselves and their basic experience of life. And faith in God. That is why I would categorize Philotherapy as a religious form of therapy. The technique itself uses self-hypnosis, pharmacotherapy, hypnotherapy, and biofeedback to go back to this basic experience.

## APPLICATIONS

Selection of patients was the first step. We used M.M.P.I., T.A.T., Rorschach, and other projective techniques to choose patients who had ability to develop regression and faith. We have found that Philotherapy was most effective in interpersonal, anxiety-related problems. It was also effective in stress-related disorders, psychosomatic problems, such as peptic ulcers,

hypertension, colitis, and anxiety states, with or without psychosomatic symptoms.

We found our approach least effective in obsessive-compulsive and sociopathic character disorders, where the symptoms were detached from the individual and where patients used denial and reaction formation as a defense.