

Psychotherapy Guidebook



POSITIVE THERAPY

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Positive Therapy

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Positive Therapy

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DEFINITION

Positive Therapy is the systematic selection of life over death. Existential in nature, it assumes man's capacity to recognize thoughts, feelings, and actions that will promote a positive outcome versus a negative one, and to choose the positive course. Well-established principles of human behavior, including cognitive and behavioral principles, are subsumed under the principle of human control. Thus, deep relaxation techniques, biofeedback, cognitive methods, and rational-emotive methods can be accounted for by the principles of Positive Therapy itself. Positive Therapy, then, may be seen as a "master system" under which many long-established concepts can be viewed within a positive existential framework. Positive Therapy is at odds only with negative therapies or negative aspects of therapies that counter man's ability to choose. Psychoanalysis and deterministic models are rejected by the positive therapist.

HISTORY

Positive Therapy has a diverse history with strong roots in William

James's pragmatism, Albert Ellis's Rational-Emotive Therapy, modern self-control principles, European existentialism, and contemporary understanding of human physiology. I have developed it over a period of thirteen years of clinical practice, and, it provides a very consistent framework within which to understand a very wide range of human thoughts, feelings, and actions.

TECHNIQUE

The method of practicing Positive Therapy is best described in the book *Positive Therapy: Making the Very Best of Everything*. The positive therapist operates always with the understanding that "life offers but two alternatives: positive and negative." The therapeutic approach enables the individual to make predictions as to the outcome of his thoughts, feelings, or actions and to select those that will have a foreseeable positive outcome in his life. This aspect of Positive Therapy is derived from William James's pragmatic orientation. There is minimal involvement with the client's history, and the focus is on the present and the future. The relationship between the client and the therapist is as client to consultant rather than doctor to patient. More specifically, the therapist facilitates the client's awareness of negative thoughts, feelings, and actions and provides him with techniques to convert them into positive thoughts, feelings, and actions. Fundamental to Positive Therapy is the concept of the "trap circuit." This is the primary unit of self-destructive thinking, feeling, or acting. Negative thoughts (in the form of

sentences or “movies”) fall within the category of TC I (trap circuit type I). TC II is a designation for behavior that will produce a negative outcome in the individual’s life; TC III describes negative emotional states. These three components, thoughts, feelings, and actions comprise a system in which each component reinforces the other. The positive therapist, then, helps the client become aware of the system within which he is operating, helping him abandon a negative system for a positive one.

APPLICATIONS

Positive Therapy is broadly applicable to most aspects of mental and emotional existence. The principles are very useful in the treatment of anxiety, depression, psychosomatic disorders, marital difficulties, parent-child relationships, and so on. This wide application is possible because of the concept of the positive versus the negative system. For example, psychosomatic disorders, such as headaches, are treated through a combination of cognitive changes, relaxation techniques, and specific behavioral changes oriented toward reducing stress. Interpersonal conflict is viewed within the perspective of low-tension versus high-tension communication. Positive Therapy, then, enables the therapist to approach a very wide range of human concerns within the framework of a highly consistent model.

