

A comparison of person centred and existential therapies



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Although person centred and existential therapies are both humanistic in their approaches both these therapies have many differences as well as similarities in the use of the therapy towards their clients. Yalom agrees with Rogers in that it is the therapeutic relationship that heals. However Yalom helps his clients from a philosophical stance in dealing with their problems. Furthermore this is where existentialism differs from Rogers's person centred therapy Jones, R. (2006). This essay will compare and contrast person centred and existential therapeutic approaches to therapy.

Whereas the person centred approach regards the individual as the authority on their own experience (Mulhauser, G. 2010). In contrast the existential approach views the client as having continual change and transformations throughout their experiences. However the person centred approach provides three core conditions that the client finds useful to aid them in their growth and therapeutic change these are according to Rogers as cited in Jones, R. (2006), the first is unconditional positive regard where Roger regards as the trust the therapist puts in the clients ability to constructive change. Furthermore Roger believed that as well as this trust placed in the client; that the therapists also have their own struggle in that the therapist must be mindful of the client's ability to attain constructive self-direction if that respect is part of their personality. This then makes a critical feature of Rogers therapeutic approach and the relationship in which the client is valued, and respected as a worthy person (Jones, R. 2006). Empathic understanding is the next core condition Rogers as cited in Jones, R. (2006) suggests it is a empathic understanding the therapist shows in understanding and accepting the client's point of view. Furthermore in

understanding the clients' thoughts as well as their feelings the therapist shows understanding it can also shows the client point view is important and accepted. However when Roger talks about the third condition congruence he is saying that the client does not need to " guess what the therapist is really like" (Mulhauser, G. 2010) however the therapist must be in touch with their feelings whilst still have awareness of these feelings which the therapist can communicate if appropriate (Rogers, 1962: 417) as cited in Jones, R. (2006). Which does not mean the therapist can come out with every feeling but must also try to avoid turning it from person centred to therapist centred; with therapists sharing their feelings this can be seen as strengthening the relationship between the therapist and client by being expressed genuinely. Furthermore these three conditions are what Rogers had confidence in that the client was able to use to develop their own identity, which resulted in the client experience of therapeutic change.

Existential therapy on the other hand according to Mulhauser, G. (2010) is about " facilitating the client's own encounter and, to work alongside them in the job of exploring and understanding their values, assumptions and ideals". The therapist is concerned mostly with the client (Mulhauser, G. 2010). The same can be said of person centred approach is very similar by working with the clients own experiences to help them explore and understand their values, assumptions, and ideals. Furthermore this is where both therapies have similarities in that both types of therapies try not to impose their own bias or judgements during therapy or on the client (Mulhauser, G. 2010); this then helps the client to" figure out and expand on their perspective", the main objective in helping the client to live life well.

The clients own assessments of their own experiences and according to Mulhauser, G. (2010) "attributions of value may be replaced by creations partly or even entirely due to the pressures felt from other people". Which Mulhauser, G.(2010) says that the "individual displaces personal judgements and meanings with those of others". This may cause Psychological disturbances which can occur when the person's self-concept clashes with their other experiences. Furthermore according to Mulhuser, G. (2010) the existential approach shows the same similarities with the clients capacity in making "well- informed choices about their own life and the attitude towards it", this however highlights the need for the therapist to "remain in control of their own personal and professional assumptions". He also goes on to suggest that whereas the existential approach is completely symmetric in giving emphasis to self-awareness. In contrast the person centred approach is considered asymmetric in the client self-awareness (Mulhauser, G. 2010). Furthermore he suggests that the existential idea works along similar to the person centred approach in that the "two of us, you and me", are responsible for the coming to grips with the vagaries of life, meaning, and even death" this is where the therapist should concentrate on the client and not themselves. Mulhauser, G. (2010) also says the same about the person centred approach in that the "two of us, you and me" are involved in different accomplishments, here the therapist reassures the client that they are there for them and to accept the client with unconditioned positive regard and to show congruently on them and not themselves (Mulhauser, G. 2010). On the other hand the existential approach wants to understand what it means to be human and what conflicts people face.

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Death for instance is one of the first existential conflicts to be addressed in that being aware of death and the predictability of death as well as some people wishing to be dead life and death is a constant source of anxiety whether it be neurotic, normal or existential. Furthermore when you hear the term death terror this implies a more force of death than the anxiety of death. However the fear of death can be either conscious or unconscious from earlier experiences when growing up as children are preoccupied with death these feelings of anxiety can be repressed to form a defence to cope with this conceivable threats of terror. However this is where psychopathology has failed in its attempts to transcend death Jones, R. (2006).

The second conflict is how people cope with freedom and how this leads to both anxiety and dread due to when people are separated from others can increase our sense of control in assuming accountability in that they become responsible for their own lives and their actions and this is why we give up our freedom by joining groups you can avoid isolation.

On the other hand isolation can cause anxiety and people have always had a deep need for belonging and they want approval of others. Also shown in freedom above people join groups but in doing so may in overtly take on the identity of the group they have joined therefore trading their independence to belong with others, as well as this; isolation can remind the person of how vulnerable they are and their also there morality even though each person has to die sometime but when we isolate ourselves it can lead to , choices which could even lead on to death. This type of solitary life can become a punishment that not only refers to prisons but also the home whereby as a <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparison-of-person-centred-and-existential-therapies/>

child you are sent to your room, as well as being ignored this is used to bring unruly children and adults into line (Jones, R. 2006) .

In conclusion you can see that both these therapies have both similarities and differences. Whereas existentialism focuses on freedom of choice in how a person's life is shaped it also shows us how the client is responsible to their life for self-awareness. With the uniqueness of each individual and how it shapes their own personality; this starts from being a child; also this type of therapy focuses on the present in that the therapist shows and challenge the client that they are responsible for their choices in life. So by existentialism giving this freedom of choice to the client the same can be said of the person centred approach as it also give the client more responsibility in their own treatment and the therapist will steer the client towards self-awareness by letting the client address certain denied feelings by doing this the therapist guides the client to a way of resolving these issues, as the same as existentialism person centred also focuses on the here and now. Both of these approaches don't consider on past events in treating the client and just look at the here and now.