



## **SPIRITUALLY BASED COUNSELLING APPROACH: THE THIRD DIMENSIONAL THERAPY-AN INTELLIGENT SOLUTION TO DEPRESSION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present theoretical paper basically focuses on two things at large. First demolishing the old concept of mental illness as something necessarily destructive and worthcriticizing or hated by replacing it with a new concept that generally more sensitive and intelligent people go into neurosis and it can also be used in a very constructive way to facilitate their spiritual growth and mental wellbeing. Secondly giving the outline and understanding of the Third Dimensional therapeutic approach like what it is? And how it works to facilitate spiritual growth and mental well-being? The paper specially deals with depression with its spiritual aspects.*

**Keywords:** Depression, Spiritual Growth. Third Dimensional Therapy.

The Third Dimensional approach to counseling has transpersonal orientation. Still quite new to academic books, classes in university and research in India, the trace of the history of transpersonal psychology goes far back to the early days of the discipline.

## CONCISE HISTORY OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

William James, often called the first American psychologist, was one of the first to study mystical experiences as psychological rather than religious phenomena. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James (1960) suggested that mystical experiences were at the root of all the world's religions and represented a natural and healthy impulse. He identified four common characteristics of mystical experiences. Freud and his followers, however, dismissed mystical experiences as fantasies and regressions to a womb-like state. Though they dismissed the mystical aspect of life, they did go beyond the normalcy and consciousness. The early Behaviorists, by shifting the focus of psychology from consciousness to behavior, ruled out the scientific study of these experiences altogether.

In spite of these trends, some psychologists maintained an interest in transcendence. Carl Jung was one of the most important. One of his early writings calls the Collective Unconscious the "*Überpersonliche* (Transpersonal) Unconscious." Jung maintained that all people share the Collective Unconscious; through it, we all are connected to each other and the world in a fundamental and dissoluble way. Archetypes, such as the Self, the Shadow, the Hero, and the Divine Child, represent the contents of the Collective Unconscious and are the foundation of transpersonal experiences. While we usually experience such archetypes indirectly through dreams, rituals, and symbols, mystical experiences, he maintained, are direct experiences of archetypes. Jung frequently wrote about spiritual experiences as a sign of mental health and, ultimately, the only relief from neurosis. His influence on transpersonal psychology remains very strong.

By the virtue of the fact that Jung employed the term 'Transpersonal' for the first time and did pioneering research work on the higher realms of existence, he could be entitled as the Father of Transpersonal Psychology.

Abraham Maslow, who was largely responsible for founding humanistic psychology, is also credited with originating transpersonal psychology as a field. He nicknamed it "Fourth-Force Psychology" in relation to the first three forces of psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic psychology. Transpersonal psychology was for him the logical step after Humanistic Psychology. In 1968, he wrote, "I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology, to be transitional, a preparation for a still 'higher' Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman,

centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like." Maslow found that some self-actualizing people had frequent peak or transcendence experiences while others did not. This pointed to an important distinction between self-actualization and self-transcendence. It has been argued that this also points to a movement beyond humanistic psychology to transpersonal psychology. Two of his later books, toward a Psychology of Being in 1968 and The Farther Reaches of Human Nature in 1971, lay out many of his transpersonal ideas and are still worthy of careful study.

Other influential psychologists whose concepts were somewhat transpersonal include Mary Calkins, who advocated a holistic approach to psychology, Karen Horney, who studied Zen and introduced the concept of the "True Self," and Victor Frankl, whose work on the search for meaning was based on the notion of self-transcendence. Carl Rogers included "transcendent spiritual powers" in his list of the characteristics of fully-functioning persons, and Fritz Perls, the developer of Gestalt Therapy, spent time in a Zen monastery. Transpersonal ideas thread their way through a great many psychological theories and methods without being identified as such.

Current theorists are extending transpersonal psychology and, more importantly, connecting it with concepts that are already in wide use in psychology. Such developments include the work of Stan and Christina Grof (1989) on spiritual emergencies, Ken Wilber (1977) on the Developmental Spectrum Model synthesizing various models of cognitive, moral, personality, and spiritual development, and the Ecopsychologists on the integration of Transpersonal Psychology and ecological concerns.

## **TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Transpersonal psychologists seek not only to understand the nature of transpersonal experiences but also to ease human suffering. Thus, they have made contributions to clinical and counseling psychology. Transpersonal psychotherapy is strongly eclectic, drawing techniques and understandings from a wide variety of psychological and spiritual sources. Transpersonal

psychotherapists deal with a full range of psychological problems and use a full range of techniques, including behavior modification, cognitive restructuring, gestalt practices, psychodynamic inquiry, dream-work, art and music therapy, and meditation

Alternatives for dealing with a depressed client provide an example of transpersonal psychotherapy. Psychologists are increasingly recognizing multiple dimensions in the treatment of depression, with biochemical and cognitive approaches most common and successful. A transpersonal perspective adds to these a view that depression might also signal a person's disconnection from deeper sources of meaning and fulfillment. While transpersonal psychotherapists are sensitive to the value of biochemical and cognitive treatment and would use them where appropriate, they also would be aware that depressive symptoms might indicate the need for going deeper into the depression, rather than removing its symptoms. Such a "journey of descent" has been recognized throughout traditional psychologies and in many versions of the "heroic journey."

From a transpersonal perspective, depression can indicate pathology of the personality. Denying the sacred and attaching one's identity to the personality causes suffering, as spiritual systems have taught for thousands of years. Depressive feelings might be a sign of questioning fundamental assumptions about one's separateness and isolation. This, in turn, might open into a greater awareness of one's connection to the universe, a sense of one's intrinsic value, and an unconditional appreciation for one's life. Meditation, ritual, shamanic practices, and other transpersonal processes, along with traditional psychotherapeutic techniques, can support this process.

In order to deal positively with the certain abnormality in the normalcy of life the Third Dimension therapeutic approach is discussed here:

#### **BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THIRD DIMENSIONAL THERAPY:**

- 1) Man is a three-dimensional phenomenon physical, mental & spiritual.
- 2) A satisfactory growth on all the three labels of personality leads to a balanced behavior and joyous living patterns.

- 3) Depression and other psychological disorders show extra sensitivity and vulnerability of mental faculties and structures with a lack of desirable spiritual growth to support it.
- 4) Current rise in the cases of depression rate all over the world is a simple manifestation of neglecting the concept of spiritual growth and training.
- 5) A spiritually strong person can better deal with the environmentally seduced depression and can recover in less time as compared to those with no spiritual backbone.
- 6) An adequate spiritual growth and training program can lead to a better coping mechanism and a long-term relief and cure for the depressive symptom

James Park, (2007). Here differentiates existential depression from psychological depression.

**Table1: Existential Depression: Deeper Than Psychological Depression**

Psychological Depression	Existential Depression
1. Specific, understandable feeling of disappointment or failure.	1. Generalized feeling of low spirits; indefinable, unintelligible, free-floating.
2. Caused by recognizable problems and difficulties; we know why we are depressed.	2. Uncaused, no recognizable source; arises from within ourselves; no channel of approach; we don't know why we are depressed.
3. Temporary—comes and goes with our changing life-situations.	3. Permanent—always present in ourselves, although often repressed.
4. Focused on a specific aspect of our lives; localized, isolatable.	4. Pervades every corner of our being; cannot be isolated.
5. We can overcome it by correcting the cause or simply let it pass.	5. We cannot eliminate it, but we can conceal it or embrace it.

*James Park, (2007). Opening to Grace: Transcending Our Spiritual Malaise. Minneapolis.MN: Existential Books.*

## EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION IN GIFTED INDIVIDUALS

It has been my experience that gifted and talented persons are more likely to experience a type of depression referred to as existential depression. Although an episode of existential depression may be precipitated in anyone by a major loss or the threat of a loss, which highlights the transient nature of life, persons of higher intellectual ability are more prone to experience existential depression spontaneously. Sometimes this existential depression is tied to the positive disintegration experience. Dabrowski (1964).

Existential depression is a depression that arises when an individual confronts certain basic issues of existence. Yalom (1980) describes four such issues (or "ultimate concerns") --death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. Death is an inevitable occurrence. Freedom, in an existential sense, refers to the absence of external structure. That is, humans do not enter a world which is inherently structured. We must give the world a structure which we ourselves create. Isolation recognizes that no matter how close we become to another person, a gap always remains, and we are nonetheless alone. Meaninglessness stems from the first three. If we must die, if we construct our own world, and if each of us is ultimately alone, then what meaning does life have?

The issues and choices involved in managing one's freedom are more intellectual, as opposed to the reassuring aspects of touch as a sensory solution to an emotional crisis. Gifted children who feel overwhelmed by the myriad choices of an unstructured world can find a great deal of comfort in studying and exploring alternate ways in which other people have structured their lives. Through reading about people who have chosen specific paths to greatness and fulfillment, these youngsters can begin to use bibliotherapy as a method of understanding that choices are merely forks in the road of life, each of which can lead them to their own sense of fulfillment and accomplishment (Halsted, 1994). We all need to build our own personal philosophy of beliefs and values which will form meaningful frameworks for our lives.

The isolation is helped to a degree by simply communicating to the youngster that someone else understands the issues that he/she is grappling with. Even though your experience is not exactly the same as mine, I feel far less alone if I know that you have had experiences that are reasonably similar. This is why relationships are so extremely important in the long-term adjustment of gifted children (Webb, Meckstroth and Tolan, 1982).

## **THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF DEPRESSION**

The great spiritual traditions of the world tell us that pain and suffering are rooted in the forgetfulness of our true divine nature-- our separation from the universal source. Psychiatrist Carlos Warter, a pioneer in spiritual psychology and psycho-spiritual integration, shows us how depression can manifest through ignoring or forgetting our true identity as spiritual beings. In treating hundreds of individuals with symptoms of depression, Dr. Warter (1999) recognizes the

validity of each treatment modality, and the importance of looking at the physical, biochemical, mental and emotional causes of depression. To be really effective, however, he has discovered that one must cross into the realm of the spirit to create a truly comprehensive treatment approach. In the majority of depression cases that he treated, according to Warter (1999), the essential problem is that the individual's identity is firmly established in the smaller story of the personality and their larger, divine identity has been 'forgotten.'

The solution, according to Warter, is to help the individual to move from the small, contracted story where depression is able to develop, to the awareness of a larger dimension of one's being, the large or big story of human life. This elevation in awareness entails a fundamental shift in the very notion of which one is, thereby undercutting very basis of the existing depression. In this final chapter, Dr. Warter charts out the spiritual terrain of healing, by combining both eastern and western spiritual traditions, and providing many practical tools and exercises to help us reclaim our wholeness and spiritual birthright.

Instead of judging the feelings of depression it is only to be observed.

For Laing (1960, 1961) madness could be a transformative episode whereby the process of undergoing mental distress was compared to a shamanic journey. The traveler could return from the journey with important insights, and may even have become a wiser and more grounded person as a result.

## **CONCEPT OF DEPRESSION IN RELIGION**

Buddhist religion considers *Birag* to be a necessary condition to enter in the world of spirituality. Infected Buddha have been himself giving training to his people to lose all hopes and interests in worldly pleasure. He founded his whole religion on the concept of: "life is sorrow". Not only Buddhism but also other religions of the east have also given the great regard to the notion of *Birag* considering it to be a great virtue. The concept of *Birag* and depression is somewhat similar. So the question arises whether what is the difference between *Birag* and clinical depression.

Gita, the great holy book of the Hindus starts from the tragic depression of Arjuna. The first chapter of Gita was called *Ajun-VishadYog* as they consider the *Vishad* (depression) of Arjuna to have a capability to be religious and to grow spiritually.

That specific state of consciousness can be achieved either through meditation “a state of non-attachment from body and mind and oneness to universe”.

- 1) As Maslow earlier defined spirituality shows the highest level of development in human in the form of self-actualization.
- 2) Spirituality emerges from gradual development so it can be encouraged through training based programs.
- 3) Spirituality can work as a buffer zone and can provide a better coping mechanism for final manifestation.
- 4) Making people spiritually strong can enable them to cope successfully with stress and other neurotic dysfunctions like depression & anxiety.
- 5) Pseudo Spirituality is a keen desire of ethical perfectionism mental cleanliness with an ignorance of the third dimension of being beyond the existence of body and mind. This kind of Spirituality generally leads to the extra amount of mental tension, which may result in neurosis sometimes.

### **THIRD DIMENSIONAL APPROACH IN COUNSELING**

The therapy or technique, which ultimately leads to the capacity to witness and by doing so developing the third dimension of consciousness, is called the third dimension therapy. In general, all of us have knowledge of only two dimensions of life: body and the mind. Only a spiritually based therapy can grow us towards the knowledge of the third dimension that is the witnessing which provides ventilation to our personality. This, in turn, leads to non-neurotic and non-stressed life patterns.

The whole thing which leads to neurosis first we don't accept our negative tendencies which are real and cannot be avoided; second we accept them as something undesirable and should not be.



For example, when we hate somebody we make a statement inside "I hate him but I shouldn't I should love him". It produces much stress dilemma and guilt conscious. Second, we become very much involved and emotionally affected. For example, when something wrong happens to us we make a statement inside "the worse has happened to me why it always happens to me. I am the most unfortunate". This way we become so much involved in the situation that we can't find a way out of it and become depressed.

If we can eliminate these fixed patterns of dealing with the life a much better lifestyle can be evolved. First, we have to accept our negative tendencies as they are without any 'should', second we have to be a witness to our own negative tendencies. It will provide a space between you and your problems and stress level will decrease. Now it will be much easier to find a solution out of the problem because now you will not conceive it as your own problem and will remain unaffected. It will make you more objective and efficient in dealing with the problem as you are solving the problem of somebody else. It's quite simple and smart technique, that's why I call it an intelligent solution to depression. First accept the depression without thinking it something undesirable, second be witness to it. That's all and that's easy and this easy technique will provide you a great spiritual growth to enjoy a much fulfilling and blissful life.

Witnessing the flow of mind: Witnessing the thought process means to be able to observe the natural flow of the mind, while not being disturbed or distracted. This brings a peaceful state of mind, which allows the deeper aspects of meditation and *samadhi* to unfold, revealing that which is beyond.

A Simple Process:

Witnessing = Observing + Non-Attachment

This is the soul theme and equation of the Third Dimensional therapeutic approach an intelligent solution to depression.

The basic theme of this approach emerges from Patanjali Yoga Sutra and Indian ancient wisdom from Upanishads. More research needs to be done about how these diamond sutras can be used as a psychotherapeutic tool in the modern-day mental health practices for promoting optimal wellbeing nurturance and flourishing of human consciousness.

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