

## THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN ACHIEVING PSYCHOLOGICAL BALANCE

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**ABSTRACT:** The present society is in a continuous change, radical changes taking place on social, political, religious levels, but also in matters concerning science and the environment, changes that have a tremendous impact in every aspect of our lives. All these changes affect our behaviour, our family attitude, education, workplace environment and society in general. In this context, new behaviours and new mentalities are formed. In general, it is impossible for our society to offer security to all of its members – children, youngsters, adults and elderly. Present day society succeeded in altering human quality in a great measure. This world is full of concepts, labels, a world of prejudices where the essence, the well-being of the mankind, health assurance, functional life of human beings from a physical point of view, but also from a mental point of view were lost. An important task is in the hands of those responsible for creating educational, healthcare or well-fare politics. The increasing number of people suffering from mental disorders shows how important the psycho-social environment is, in which human personality is formed and developed. One can contribute in an optimal manner to the development of self-confidence and of positive conceptions, to stimulate and encouraging adequate behaviours, to the development of abilities, important and necessary.

**KEYWORDS:** balance, freedom, mentality, psychological, spirituality.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sometimes life offers a multitude of challenges, or too many point breaks of us. Acquiring equability in a world in which future insecurity still persists, the uncertainty of our workplace, small incomes and all the changes that take place in different areas seem purposes hard to reach. Custom life, the daily routine, financial situations determine the accumulation of human existence frustrations. This stressful and uncomfortable state of mind has a negative impact on everybody, including on our children. Our social and professional frustrations, multiple overstressing situations, affective conflicts, several problems anticipation or their presence in the daily life, can disarray human life. These situations can be seen in many forms and circumstances, in the family life, at

the workplace, in schools, in educational environments and in many other institutions (Briers, 2009)

The development of so many mental disorders shows how important is the psycho-social environment (Avram, 2010).

Relationships with others determine one's self-image. Lots of studies on relationships and on emotional development of children during the first years of their lives, show that the manifestation of positive emotions in the family environment helps them become more empathetic towards others and to better understand their feeling during childhood and during their adult life equally.

In the family environment, children learn how to express their positive or negative emotions; it is the place where they learn how to relate to other people. Children's deep relationships with family members, with close friends give them the feeling of unity and of inner peace. Children who grow up in a climate which can be characterized by intense negative emotions can encounter difficulties in the understanding of their own feelings or those of others (Schaffer, 2007).

The main orientations in psychology stress the accent on the completeness of the human being, on the areas of the mental which can be assimilated in the spirituality area. Spirituality is defined as an ensemble of ideas, everything that concerns the human's spiritual life, his conceptions about life and the world, the spiritual-moral and cultural-religious values, as well as his relationship with the divinity. It is what helps the human being see beyond his being, succeeding in exceeding his imposed limitations.

This way of seeing things, the existence of a supernatural force, or of some representations are known as the consciousness focus, which has a healing potential. Spirituality involves a representation of the self in a perfectly calculated and organized universe, which has a spiritual foundation and opposes the theory which claims that the human being is only an accident in a universe.

## 2. THE PERCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality as a dimension of human psychic has been introduced in academic psychology by the doctor Stanislav Grof, one of the most important researchers of human consciousness from our century and the founder of the transpersonal current (Stanilav, 2007).

Spirituality is often seen nowadays as being strictly something that belongs to religion, religion being an institutionalized form of spirituality. Those that focus in a strictly manner only on the doctrines that should guide their life, give up their personal power, created in any one of us. Spirituality can be seen as searching for something, something that has no limits, something beyond our own understanding. Spirituality determines us to look in ourselves for the truth and to allow ourselves to live in that truth (Stanilav, 2007).

The spirituality and the universe phenomena make the connection between psychology and spirituality. Psychology and spirituality are both a part of the human being existence; the ignoring of a spiritual aspect of the human being in the name of a restrictive model of today's world, is not desirable. "What is the meaning of life?" is a philosophical question on the purpose of life and can be used to find some answers at certain questions as "Why are we here?", "What is life in general?", and "What is the purpose of our existence in this world?" There were numerous answers to these questions, diverse answers coming from numerous and diverse cultural and ideological spaces. In a world in which there is a spiritual ground, a lot of our fears and loneliness can be defeated much more easily (Fanget, 2008).

Human need for confession, for communication and for a connection with others, of having someone which knows how to listen and how to understand the other have always existed. Those who are meant to sustain human communities are mostly ineffective and sometimes even inexistent, and thus a degradation of human relationships appears as a result of indifference.

The church institution has offered an important reference setting when people needed someone to listen to them, to understand them and to receive help. At this moment, the church has lost a lot of its importance, but human beings have the same need for sharing with someone and for being listened to, and this need gets bigger and bigger. Nowadays psychology is considered to be the science of the soul, a science that is embracing spirituality as a fundamental dimension of one's spiritual being (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011)

## 3. SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN EXISTANCE

People want to be listened to, to be heard and understood. People want to know that they can share difficult situations with someone, which can make things and events seem easier. Sharing and communicating represent basic needs of each human being, connecting one with another. In a world in which people feel that they are dehumanized, often alone, unappreciated and unfulfilled, mass-media is presenting information and news which influences and feeds people's unhappiness and fears. In this case another view of the world is demanded, a world which is fundamentally spiritual, in which loneliness and fear are easier to overcome. One's vision about the world becomes in this way a form of therapy (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011).

The need for attachment and to be loved is an existential need. What is less desired is the fact that the concepts of spirituality and that of morality were somehow totally confiscated by religion, through the church, an institution that wants to guide our life. Choices suggested by the church are, mostly, choices that are based on fear. It incriminates through self blame and shame, the guilt that one cannot raise to the level of the dogmas, to their precepts, through the fact that the choices made are not according to its regulations. The church should be updated to the realities of the world, to offer trust and support through alternative ideas, through relationships and interaction.

There are a lot of children who don't have a childhood or who lost it much too soon, teenagers or youngsters who live the drama of loneliness, of drug addiction, of bad company, of abuse, or that live in a virtual world.

People of all ages – children, teenagers, young adults, adults and elderly – need people with vocation who can understand them, support them and offer alternatives; they don't need to be judged, moralized or be shamed (Briers, 2009). On the other way, spirituality offers knowledge with no limits, self-knowledge, updated models, the freedom to make choices, the right and the choice to be different, while keeping humanity and dignity. People are connected in a natural manner to the universe and deeply connected to each other, these connections having always existed (Fanget, 2008).

Many people live experiences which lead them to a spiritual vision of themselves and of the whole world, experiences which change deeply the manner in which they relate to the world or understand the world. People, while passing through a hard spiritual

period of time, with traumas and problems, try harder to connect to their own being and to the universe.

This thing helps them regain their balance and develop the capacity to trust their inner resources (Yalom, 2012).

The contact with the level on consciousness determines finding the meaning of life, a mental balance and many times the physical balance, because often diseases are caused by psychological unbalances. The experiment of your own consciousness and its dimensions is a way of transforming oneself and of healing oneself deeply. All levels of the human being are characterized by consciousness, from the physical ones to the emotional, mental and spiritual levels.

The need for spirituality is an important human being need, is the need to go beyond meaning. The spiritual search being determined in general by a failure, of a self-misunderstanding or a misunderstanding of others, of a mental trauma that one suffered at a certain moment. This spiritual search is determined to relieve some of our fears, respectively the fear of death or of loneliness. Spirituality comes as well from the desire of meaning, of justification of our own suffering, the need of moral values, of truth and of justice. People ultimately search for a support when they go through difficult times, states and conflict situations (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011).

A problem with which people often confront themselves is individualism, a faith inoculated by present systems: “Each of us for him” being a wrong perception and attitude. Carl Gustav Jung [4] demonstrated the fact that a human being is the carrier of that which is called “the collective unconscious”, that people are connected through consciousness to this vast ocean of the human and universal consciousness. The history of humanity, the experiences of all people which have ever lived on this planet are deposited somewhere in the archetypal space of consciousness.

#### **4. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN ACHIEVING STABILITY**

People are influenced by the times, the epoch they live in, the place, the country and the system of beliefs with which they are born. Many times people feel relieved in the moment in which they are confronted with this universal reality, because they change their reference system. These liberations are accessible to anybody, no matter the system of beliefs he comes from or his religion.

This explains the return to faith, to old spiritual rituals, to meditation, yoga, mindfulness and other, from a need to relate to something which, inside

ones’ hearts and minds, these clearly exist. Then all the ethical conceptions change, through thinking responsible, according to our personal needs (Yalom, 2012).

Through liberation of guilt, regrets and by assuming the role of a destiny, through spiritual beliefs, a mental balance can be achieved. Studies on child’s development show that people have a certain inheritance from parents, from the social and the family environments. Optimism must be learned in the family (Schaffer, 2007). The inclination toward optimism is 50% genetic inherited. The tendency toward addiction, bipolarity, anxiety and other psychopathic processes are also genetically inherited and can be activated when getting into contact with an unfavourable environment.

The restoration of a balance is the beginning of change, through a clearance of a psychological level, of the mental programs. Today’s preoccupation is not only to fulfil the basic needs, but also to fulfil the need to develop the personal potential of human connection towards the meaning of things. To be present and aware comes from philosophical and authentic psychology traditions, an exercise of being your own mind observer, an observer of thoughts, and a continuous process of reflexivity, fact that gives us a state of peace (Popescu & Vişcu, 2013). Automatic reflexes guide our lives thus not everything can be controlled, still one can select the people to be friends with, lives scenarios can be written, only with the help of thinking. The felling of divinity can be reached when, in the growing up process, at any age, one chooses not to be influenced and attracted by the majority.

The direction of change is given by liberating oneself of prejudices, by an acceptance of the past, the freedom to think and to act in your own name. Destructive negative emotions and actions are often purified into beneficial actions, through art, through humanitarian causes and activities. The accession to a certain group, in a certain time of your spiritual development comes from the need of role models to inspire us, the need of belonging and to delegate responsibility to the divinity. The falsity of many of these systems leads human beings towards an existential crisis, a crisis that can destroy one’s system of faith leading towards a spiritual search.

Submission is a behaviour learned during childhood; children are taught to obey parents, teachers, the authorities, including the divine authority. In this submission one ascribes the responsibility of happiness to the superior authorities, to the family, to the corrupt system, karma, God, precisely because of this need to justify failures.

According to emotional pattern, mankind heads toward a spiritual search. If this search, the result of an emotional fulfilment appears, and not because it is a preoccupation of curiosity, people will adhere to different groups which will fulfil a part of the common needs of the moment. People need to belong, to be acknowledged, valued, but they also have the need to be appreciated for their individuality and their particularity (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011) There are a lot of spiritual groups that try to remodel the man, through behaviour, thought and emotions control methods, through discouraging individualism and inducing through different methods the loss of identity and the assuming of another identity.

Those that belong to these groups are submitted to numerous rituals which create a certain behaviour which ultimately leads to the changing of thoughts and of feelings. These practices and techniques can be identified as being used in diverse environments and corporations. When the desire of leaving a religious system interferes, the leaving is disappointing because the one that once believed profoundly in the preached truths will discover the falsity, that all those feelings were, mostly, an emotional projection of big dimensions. It is a profound spiritual disappointment because it affects the whole existence.

Each person is born in a family, in a certain environment and in a certain system of rules which belong to the family. In the family one finds out what is good, things he is good at, and a certain role model is induced. Children are not shaped through moralizing speeches or through preaching, but through the power of the example. The children cannot be changed by critique, nagging or, worse, through physical corrections. In order for change to become possible, parents' behaviour must be changed (Briers, 2009).

Parents are imposing sometimes, due to indolence, role models that they do not follow themselves authentically. When the child turns toward one of the parents, he doesn't need to be judged, he needs to be helped. In order for him to receive that help, an authentic relationship must exist, in which the call for help and support is allowed. If the parent himself is aggressive and imposes himself to obey strict life rules or a religious doctrine, he can't be indulgent, understanding or tolerant with himself or with others. The words, gestures and the contact with the child have a tremendous long-time impact on him and can nurture maladjustment at maturity, or an attitude of rebellion, of profound change and transformation, and the desire of taking his own life into his own hands (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011).

This fact requires an authentic effort of awareness, to be available to believe that one can change and shape deficient actions. This means that one must accept the deficient relationship with one's parents without blaming them excessively, without accusations, confronting reality. Suffering pushes people to understand, to accept, to take another road and with another role model. Conflicts, the mess of principles and values leads to failure, which determines the choice of a way of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others, quitting the emotional and spiritual falsity that one often just imitates and takes from others.

Authentic spirituality refers to a mental and emotional renewal through redefining the concept of life, the joy from here and now. Not blaming one or both parents for their faiths and relations, without putting the blame on someone, leads to an authentic empathy. This empathy helps us look our past without anger or resentment, but with understanding and acceptance, which refers to an understanding and an accepting of your own self. The process of individualization begins at the level of the basic self, when the person feels different in a certain degree in comparison with other people and objects (Popescu & Vişcu, 2013).

Children are capable to evaluate, to understand the role model and the representation of other things (Popescu & Vişcu, 2013). The system of beliefs represents the compass with which one builds the map of an inner-psyche reality. Any human behaviour has at its foundation a pattern, his experiences are organized and function according to the existing programs at a certain moment in each one of us. The programs are the inner patterns through which a person shapes his representations and directs his behaviours. This involves the formation of a balance and a capacity of maintaining it in the changing conditions of the environment, which means to adapt in a flexible manner. The solving of conflicts, indulgence and cohesion contribute to diminish the tensions and to maintain the balance.

The society and the alert way of life, the present crisis, the way people interrelate negatively affected personality, so that people oscillate between desire and reality, tensions and frustrations. Everything in nature is cyclic; any experience has a beginning, a period of development and an end. Irvin Yalom (2012), a well known psychotherapist, identified four fundamental worries of the human being: death, liberty, isolation, the lack of meaning. Each one of these worries or all four together generate an existential dynamic conflict. From all of these, death is the easiest to perceive by the majority of people. The certitude of this worry of death leads to a unique



anxiety which triggers different defence mechanisms. It is necessary to look at life from the perspective of a mortal man (Yalom, 2012).

Theology and the humanist psychological sciences teach us to accept this fact. The fear of death brings us a discomfort, but the confrontation of death triggers personal changes, most of the time. No matter if the death is imminent or not, it has an impact on everybody, each one of us had to confront a certain anxiety some moment or the other. Our reactions to death are different, but among all the misfortunes that could happen to us, death is considered to be the worst. Our attitude toward death is different; it is hard to imagine or to accept our inexistence into the world, because people don't really believe in death. Freud considered to be the parent of psychoanalysis, said that in the unconsciousness people are all convinced of immortality and the fear of death hides, in fact, fears and emotional experiences. For children, the fear of death appears when they begin to perceive themselves, as a separate, individualized person, which happens somewhere between six months and three years, the age when the fear of separation occurs, in Freud's conception. In unconsciousness, the time does not exist. If one thinks about life passing, at the ephemeral life, our greatest anxiety occurs. It is the fear of non-existing, the fear of death, it is a universal anxiety, the fear that is the most frightening to us Fanget, F., (2008).

Explanations on this subject are given by the psychotherapist Irvin Yalom. There is the fear of experiencing death (pain, loneliness, others' suffering); the fear of what it is to come after death (judgement, the relatives' suffering, hell and other) and the fear of ceasing to exist, seen as a ceasing of all the experiences (unfinished projects, disappearance of all sensations). There are fears which are related to death, of something that appears before or after death. The real fear of death is the fear of non-existing, is the fear of not feeling anything, that thoughts, emotions will disappear one people disappear (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2011).

The fact that our existence on this earth is limited can make us aware and can refocus our direction of life, our purpose and can make us realize that the most important is that each one of us to follow his course and to search his fulfilment. Most of those that experienced this idea of death improved their lives, realizing what really matters: love, family and true values. These experiences show that one can learn to live better, knowing that life is limited and that it ceases. The thought that people are mortal, that life is finite determines us to choose to experience new

things, to do something creative. Sometimes, this anxiety troubles our peace, but it teaches us to truly live the gift of life with much more diverse emotions and experiences (Yalom, 2012).

Responsibilities and the will of having an independent behaviour are given to us by freedom. This freedom determines us to take responsibility, to be constant in our actions and in the ability to decide. Through avoiding responsibilities, people refuse to make choices, refuse to act and can develop disorders of will and of the ability to decide, letting others to choose instead. Isolation occurs, with its feeling of guilt, of blame toward others, an existential isolation that lacks meaning (Yalom, 2012).

It is necessary to discover a personal meaning, to discover and to be aware of a lived existence. Purpose must be used, through authenticity in the relationships with our fellows, by our social integration, practicing activities that people like, through altruist activities, dedication to families or to some cause of any nature. It can be an accomplishment that helps to fructify a psychic potential, to discover needs and desires.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

As a result of covering the necessary documentation for writing this paper, one could realise that all the fears, emotions, sufferings and the painful experiences are often hidden, but all of them occupy an important place in everybody's life; and that people carry many of them from the long-gone time of our childhood. Situations and events that seem insignificant at that time can create discomfort and they can repeat during adulthood or people can experience new situations but which will trigger the same feeling of discomfort, at another level, developing frustrations, fears and different affective disorders that can be temporary or permanent.

From childhood people instinctively feel the need to be protected, caressed and loved. The child that feels loved by his parents will become a responsible adult, capable to offer the same love and protection to his children, showing understanding to others (Schaffer, 2007). This affective need is not diminished as people grow up. The affection need tends to grow naturally.

The universe sustains life due to a perfect balance. Any change in this perfect construction of the universe would make the life impossible. The same is with the psychological balance of man, which is equally necessary in his life, a fact proven by science. People search for happiness every day of our lives, search for inner peace and when they succeed to reach that state of wellness, they realize that happiness means equilibrium, with balanced

emotions, with the joy of existing, of leaving in the present, here and now, in tranquillity (Fanget, 2008). At the beginning, science had the tendency to oppose spirituality due to the fact that it is based on the subjective perception, and the subjectivity cannot be measured by scientific means. Spirituality can be recognized through the fact that it teaches us which are the true values and the criteria of the truth, beauty and good. Spirituality offers faith, knowledge without limits, the liberty to choose, taking responsibility of our actions. Thus, people are guided in life, find their way and heal their soul. This means to regain the feeling of trust in ourselves and in our ability to action. This requires an authentic effort of awareness, when they have to be open to believe that they can change and shape our actions.

Conflicts, the disorder of our principles and values can determine us to choose the path of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others, to give up the false values, which are not ours. Authentic spirituality means an emotional and mental renewal, a new concept of life, living here and now, in the joy of the present. In this way people have the liberty to accept values, actions and the choice of who they want to be. People gain the wellness of our being, keeping the connection with people and with the universe (Fanget, 2008).

Integrative psychotherapy combines the dimensions of our being, of our consciousness and of spirituality (Popescu & Vișcu, 2013). Today's people need the acceptance of a new change, of a new consciousness, with a new foundation of spirituality, and the integrative psychotherapy can help in this regard. Spirituality makes possible the guidance of the

human being in this world and the finding of a purpose. The closeness and the connection with fellows, with nature and with the universe help us reaching a growing level of understanding, compassion, tolerance, with the power to enjoy the gift of life.

The balance of life means search inside, to keep connecting with other people and with the environment. People can learn that the fulfilment of life could be to follow a path, to experience, knowing to appreciate life and its precious simple things, which they can enjoy less or more.

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