

SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER - THE NOVICE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

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ABSTRACT: Thinking of one's future, of one's profession is idealistic, an action materializing with a happy ending, respectively the thought of having success, to be a successful as psychotherapist. The enquiry of a life concern, regarding one's future, represents an important stage in every human's mind, thus it is no wonder that the novice psychotherapist passes through this enquiry in order to be able to begin her/his career and to become a better person. The future psychotherapist is believed to go through five stages of changes, which will be resumed with the patient/client and his problem: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance

KEYWORDS: psychotherapist, beginning, profession, career enquiry

1. INTRODUCTION

Everything begins with the thinking process. The thought of being a psychotherapist, which is not yet firmly built, just the thought in its pure form, without any substrate or affirmation is necessary to start to profession. It can show up at any age. For children, because they already have a model or they only heard about it, and for adults, when you know that the things you accomplished until now are just not enough.

Then, the desire appears concretized through the affirmation "I want", and at the physical level, by that impatience and restlessness which contains any soul when it "wants". What follows next, is the choice and insight.

The transtheoretical model, proposed by Prochaska and DiClemente with its five stages of changes is pretty suggestive to solve the "problem" of being a psychotherapist or not.

2. BECOMING A PSYCHOTHERAPIST

In 1979, Prochaska and DiClemente have analyzed the most popular theories in psychotherapy and came with the conclusion that the main dimension of psychotherapy is the changing process. "By changing process we understand an activity initiated or experienced by an individual with the purpose of changing the way of thinking, the behaviour, or the

emotions about a particular problem. (Prochaska & DiClemente, in Drobot, & Popescu, 2013).

That being said, the future psychotherapist goes through the same five stages of changes, which will be resumed with the patient/client and his problem: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

The thought of becoming a psychotherapist can occur in a person's mind being introduced by one or more factors: a difficult childhood, traumatic life events, divorce, deaths, the need of knowing, the need of giving or the need of helping.

Thinking of one's future, of one's profession is idealistic, an action materializing with a happy ending, respectively the thought of having success, to be a successful as psychotherapist. The thought without any intention to act in the foreseeable future (usually within 6 months) is called **pre-contemplation**.

The life experience of each person, the need of knowing, of finding an answer to the questions "Who am I?", "How am I thinking?", "How am I and how can be in relation with others and others with me?". These questions can change what initially could be said as being impossible. Thus, the opinion resulted it that by choosing to become a psychotherapist one chooses to self-improve and to be honest with oneself and tell himself "I can do this!".

Psychotherapy is a science that can be defined in numerous ways, by various authors. It can be seen as a relation, as a scientifically based professional action, interdisciplinary field, situated on the border between medicine and psychology, or a treatment modality.

Under the impulse of a new definition attempt, one could say that the psychotherapy is the science which creates a link between indicator/psychotherapist and the client's or patient's suffering, having the purpose of removing the state of suffering and creating wellness instead.

Returning to the thought of becoming an integrative psychotherapist one should start from the psychotherapist definition given by the International

Association for Integrative Psychotherapy: *A person providing professional psychotherapy and mental health services, which includes but doesn't limit to the application of the integrative psychotherapy theories and integrative techniques, to prevent and relieve mental and emotional disorders, like the psychopathology, along with promoting optimal mental health, rehabilitation, treatment and evaluation.*

It includes clinic counselling and psychotherapy within a professional relationship to help individuals, couples, families, groups and organizations to remove emotional disturbances, to understand the conscious and unconscious motivation, to solve conflicts, emotional and relational attitudes and to change behaviours that interfere with effective emotional functioning, social, intellectual and adaptive.

Contemplation - is the stage in which a person will make a change in the next 6 months. The person weighs the pros and cons of changing, so that he or she can remain in this stage for a long time. A person in the stage of contemplation decides whether to correct the problem or not, and if the arguments in favour of changing exceed the ones in favour of current behaviour.

When underling arguments regarding the psychotherapist profession, one can't forget financial expenses, the distance the psychologist has to travel to start training in one of the forms of psychotherapy, in this case, training in integrative psychotherapy. The time spent preparing for training, because some of the future psychotherapists already have a job involving liabilities of time and space, and the attention to the family which the study. Family becomes a component in physical and psychological sustaining of the psychotherapist in the future given its approval to begin training.

Preparation - The stage in which a person plans or makes a change in his/her behaviour during the next month. The person in this stage usually had failed in changing his/her behaviour during the last year and still finds her/himself in the problematic behaviour. The individual might not know what to do in order to obtain change, and may be fearful regarding its ability to change. To eliminate or significantly reduce the problematic behaviour, the person makes an action plan so that he/she can choose from several potential solutions. "The person will move to the next stage of change if he/she chooses a plan that it is believed to work and whether it can be trustful to follow the plan" (Prochaska & DiClemente in Drobot & Popescu, 2013).

This stage can be called the program which any psychotherapist has to follow. Training in the

integrative psychotherapy includes a well-defined path in which the psychologist follows a program built by The Association of Research, Counselling and Integrative Psychotherapy (ACCPI). This program considers the basic principles of integrative psychotherapy, like: a unified approach of the person, the psychotherapist's personal integration and psychotherapeutic approach and flexibility in working with common factors (<http://www.psihoterapie-integrativa.eu/>)

"Every psychotherapeutic method brings its own valuable contribution in integration, although each has its own perspective centred on certain aspects of therapeutic change. The training program promoted by the association mentioned brings together several theoretical and practical approaches. It is believed that all psychotherapists work similarly, emphasizing one or another of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of psychotherapy (Extracted from the presentation made by ACCPI as part of the accreditation process by EAIP-European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy for Provisional Membership status, <http://www.psihoterapie-integrativa.eu/>). The training program of integrative psychotherapists is done in groups coordinated by trainers. Appointments are made on weekends once a month in a classroom type setting.

Similarly, a century ago, the great American psychologist and philosopher William James said: "We are not just some gregarious animals, liking to be in the sight of others, but we have an innate inclination to make ourselves noticed, and noticed in a favourable way by those alike us. If such a thing was possible, a punishment worse than letting an individual be free in the society and remain absolutely unnoticed by the others couldn't be made up" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2013, p. 41).

During the first group meetings, the trainer said among other things that she also has the role of a "hen", her role being extended outside of working group hours, besides maintaining the group cohesion, she also responds to therapists' individual needs. The trainer sets and restores communication between the group members. In the psychotherapists' training group, conflicts may occur sooner or later, this being often difficult and unpleasant for the personal trainer. Sometimes, the group can attack the trainer for having unrealistic expectations, somewhat magical expectations from him, expressing in a dependent way, in getting instructions, advice, orientation, structure, seeing the trainer as a leader, as an ideal model. "I want to be like him/her because this way I'll be successful. He/she is successful and I'll be

successful too” and only after that to desire addiction for not losing the identity, the originality.

Another conflict source is the learner's need to be the trainer's favourite, to be noticed by him and its merits to also be recognized by the trainer. Sometimes a conflict source is when the trainer brings a new member to the group, and the group feels their “trajectory in training” threatened by the new arrived member because they don't know his role. Another one can be the efficient use of communication, the trainer can be less direct in expressing his demands in a group assessment, each member perceiving it differently depending on the unsolved intra-psychic processes but manifesting more or less aggressive in dealing with the trainer, from bringing pro rebel arguments, to rejecting the once established and approved rules by both sides, the trainer and the group.

Eliminating a member from the group can also lead to a source of conflict, the group remaining concerned about the idea that any of them can be next. Regardless of who is right or wrong, there is going to be a break in communication.

The trainer, by his role, has to uncover the group's cohesion, the values that increased it, primarily, listening and accepting each other. Both introspection and understanding, or trying to solve through a retrospective of the life's personal history, and similarity with other conflict sequences in the past, similar to the current one, emotionally, the looking for a pattern and reuniting the group members.

Although the therapists' desire regarding the group is one of peace, comfort, unconditional support, security, a desire that will be also reflected later in the relation with the client, any conflict emerged in the training helps solving those non-adaptive processes which also would not bring any benefit to us, nor the client, in psychotherapy.

3. CONCLUSIONS

It can thus be stated that training in integrative psychotherapy provides the specific frame of a group therapy, the purpose of the courses being that to give students the opportunity to express their emotions individually, receiving feedback from the group, the purpose being the corrective one, focused on “here and now”.

There a “cleaning” of negative feelings, a recall of the life history, and a reframing of the facts and personal experiences takes place. Therapists learn to respect their clients finding themselves as a client. They learn that integrative psychotherapy is based on a relationship, the relationship between the client and the therapist. They practically experience everything

they have learned in theory about transference and countertransference, with both the group and the trainer. It's the stage of overcoming the personal demons and travelling the path in the search of an answer.

The corrective emotional experience in group therapy - In this case, the training group provides the following to an individual: a. a strong expression of an interpersonally oriented emotion which is a risk that the client assumes; b. a group that is supportive enough to allow this risk-taking; c. reality testing, which allows an individual to examine incidentally with the help of other members' consensual validation; d. the recognition of some improper feelings and interpersonal behaviours, or the avoiding of a particular interpersonal behaviour; e. facilitating the final capacity of the individual to interact with others more deeply and honest (Yalom & Leszcz, 2013, p. 50).

In addition to those listed above, this labour of the young psychotherapist serves as a purpose to the free expression of their experiences and feelings. He becomes aware of feelings that were denied, hidden or distorted until then. He finds himself reacting less to the way he's perceived by others, and more in terms of bringing contribution to their own personal development. The small group offers not only a social microcosm in which maladjusted behaviour of members is displayed clearly, but also becomes a laboratory in which is often being demonstrated with great clarity, dynamics and behaviour. “The therapist sees not only the behaviour, but also the events that provoke him, the real and anticipated answers of others” (Yalom & Leszcz, 2013, p. 62).

Through the training program, novice psychotherapists learn to work/and work with themselves, with their recognized or not anxieties, phobias, negative and poorly managed emotions, conflict states, self-image, unrealistic expectations about their own person and surrounding environment. They learn to respect and build relationships with others, to respect and develop themselves, to use their empathy in relationship with others, to forgive and be forgiven. They discover their skills and competencies that are necessary in the integrative psychotherapy practice.

In order to maintain in this stage, the person strives to prevent possible relapses and secure the gains resulting from the action. “The person in the maintenance state is less likely to have relapses and more confident that the change will continue. The maintenance stage is a continuation of changing, not an absence of it.” (Prochaska and DiClemente, in Drobot & Popescu, 2013). By completing the training

program, by acquiring the ability to form a bond, to have its intrapsychic conflicts solved and finding a solution for its own problematic behaviours, understanding and applying the techniques that rely on integrative psychotherapy, the therapist acquires psychotherapy skills in supervision.

This stage is a step towards continuous training in what originality means for the psychotherapist, finding their own way of working to also respect the things learned during the training. During this stage, the psychotherapist know that there is no universally valid model of a psychotherapist, but there are for sure certainly common techniques to apply, whatever the training school they belong. Individual study, consultation with the supervisor, consulting with colleagues becomes a model for sustaining and promoting performance and originality as a psychotherapist.

By the model proposed by Drobot and Popescu, integrative psychotherapists must find themselves, as

the authors say, in the proposed competencies that develop through theoretical and applied training, personal development and supervision. These are considered action situational skills. These skills are not prescriptive elements but results of the training program.

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