



Holistic. Among the many branches of psychotherapy, the four major branches have been identified as: Psychoanalytic, Behaviorist, Humanistic and more recently, Transpersonal.¹ The Transpersonal perspective includes the understanding and methods of the earlier branches and expands them to include the spiritual dimension of human experience. Transpersonal psychology draws on the world's spiritual traditions including Eastern ones such as Buddhism and Western ones such as Christianity. Transpersonal psychology, with its holistic focus on the inter-relatedness of mind, body, soul and spirit, includes consciousness research in addition to current psychological theory for understanding human experience. The Transpersonal approach to counselling and psychotherapy is about increasing individual awareness of body, mind, and spirit with a view to transforming the way we interact with ourselves and others.

Trans-religious. Transpersonal Psychology is not an ideology or a religion. The Transpersonal approach may be classified as “trans-religious.” Going beyond religion (as a person does not have to adhere to any religion in order to include spirituality as part of their identity or understanding of reality), yet including religion (if the client identifies or conceptualises spirituality through a religious context), the transpersonal approach separates religiosity from spirituality. Indeed, transpersonal counsellors and therapists acknowledge that the client's perspective on spirituality, whether or not from a religious context, can be very important for their healing or growth, and the way their interpret meaning in life.

Transpersonal Assessment. There are various transpersonal or spiritual questionnaires, inventories and charts that can be used to assess the client's perceived relevance of spirituality in their life. These can help reveal the client's self-identity and understanding of reality. For example, does the client perceive human existence as material and mental (two-dimensional); or does the client have faith, believe in or experience a spiritual dimension (three-dimensional) – and if so, how is it important or significant. Transpersonal assessment can include, for example, investigation into the client's:

- unfolding spiritual development from childhood
- spiritual practices (e.g. praying, meditation, reading spiritual books)
- spiritual experiences (these may be positive, negative, or neutral).

Transpersonal Growth & Applied Therapy. Transpersonal-trained counsellors can assist their clients to understand and develop awareness of spiritual dimensions of existence and show them how they can apply, for example, expanded states of consciousness such as intuitive knowing for decision-making. Intuition is a way of knowing that transcends reason and also bypasses the usual sensory channels and thus is referred to as spiritual rather than mental-physical. Counselling for transpersonal development has application for the individual psychologically, emotionally, physically, for their relationships and also for society at large.

The transpersonal orientation in therapy is particularly suited for clients that present with a spiritual crisis, including fear associated with spiritual experiences or shock associated with coming to a new understanding of reality. These clients may benefit through counselling to understand the various ways spiritual phenomena can be experienced, and the impact it can have on their self-concept and their relationships.

A transpersonal orientation for therapy is suitable for working with individuals, couples, families, adolescents and children. Emphasis is on an acceptance of non-ordinary states of consciousness, a respect for the client's self-healing capacities, including transpersonal or spiritual ability (and methods that evoke these capacities), and a view of dysfunction and crisis as an opportunity for growth. Transpersonal approaches to counselling and therapy can be beneficial for many issues including anxiety, stress, depression, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, relationship and family conflict, blocked emotions and recurring negative thinking, to name a few.

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¹ Refer to Transpersonal Psychology Interest Group of the APS TIP SHEET: The Evolution of Transpersonal Psychology.