

Time in current psychotherapy

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Abstract: This therapy is based on the theory of time perspective which sees human agent as naturally interconnected with the course of the time. Time perspective could be described as a tendency to be biased toward one time zone and neglect the others. Principles regarding time perspective therapy application are discussed in the light of this theory with the major emphasis on both the everyday life functioning and the concept of balanced time perspective in psychotherapy.

Key words: time perspective therapy, time perspective theory, balanced time perspective

Introduction

Both lay-public persons and professionals alike are well-aware of some effective factors pertaining to successful psychotherapy. Upon watching some movies and series, lot of us feel like we would do a great expert and have many to say when it comes to giving an advice on mental health and how to treat mentally ill individual, or, more often, help people with everyday troubles bearing on their backs. Such factors would be related to statements like „*do not date him again*“ (e.g., woman who is being physically bullied in a relationship), „*stop putting up with her watchfulness*“ (man, complaining about his girlfriend, who has felt he is

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under constant surveillance) , „*pay more attention to yourself*“ (individual who always try to help everyone but herself), or „*do not be so cautious and take things easier*“ (a person who is somewhat anxious, or even depressed, and who sees passed situations in dark shadow).

Time perspective theory and psychotherapy

Indeed, there are many factors one would imagine troubles of people stem from. One does not have to be a psychologist or a psychotherapist to infer from which aspects of human life some difficulties arise. Although many people would be excellent when it comes to figuring out causalities of „damaged psyche“ of many kinds, just a few people would expect time to be the crucial factor in fast expanding field of psychotherapy labelled as the **time perspective therapy** (e.g., Konefal, Duncar, Meub, & Winfield, 2006).

This therapy is based on the theory of time perspective which sees human agent as naturally interconnected with the course of the time. Time perspective could be described as a tendency to be biased toward one time zone and neglect the others. According to this theory, people perceive both inner and social world in five (some resources refer to six) time zones (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Thus, cognitive and emotional world of most of the people is coloured by the way they perceive time. Moreover, not only cognition and emotion processes, but all behavioral aspects as uncover derivatives of formerly mentioned phenomena are influenced by specific time zone each individual holds.

Essentials of time perspective therapy

Zimbardo, Sword & Sword (2012) has proposed basic principles regarding time perspective therapy application. Although authors appreciate theoretical background of each of the applied method, when describing their therapy tenets they divert the attention from theory to a human being, and people are a central part of both explanation and application. According to them, people who encounter troubles while dealing with obstacles of their everyday life ought to realize following:

PAST: be negatively biased toward the past always has major negative effect on our current thought patterns. People drawn to passed experienced just constantly regret themselves and by doing so they prevent their life from being full of pleasure, love, logic reason and unbiased

attitude toward other people. Thus, be able to put off previously happened negatively coloured experiences would always lead to improving of present-day functioning.

PRESENT: people who are stucked in the present usually forget to build in themselves what Aristoteles, about two thousand years ago, called as the eudaimonia (e.g., Boniwell, 2008). Live our lifes as it would be the last day on the earth is not bad. On the contrary, there are moments when having fun and being relaxed with friends and music all around is the best cure of all. However, too much fun could be detrimental as too much alcohol is. Two hundred mililitres of white wine per day are cure, but if we drank a bottle of alcohol every day of the week, that would result in disfunction of both somatic and mental aspects of our personality.

FUTURE: to be oriented toward the future means to fulfill our dreams and previously set goals. Accordingly, it is necessary to be future oriented in the current western society. However, being constantly oriented on pursuing our goals is sometimes as detrimental as having no plans at all. People just have to have the day off from time to time and sour what surrounding brings into their lives.

Balanced time perspective

Zimbardo et al. (2012) insist that many of people who have been treated for mood disorders, are stucked in negative past, and are not able to enjoy the present and set goals toward the future. When working with people who suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), the main focus of each patient who undergoes psychotherapy is to become far more aware of his or her preconception of time. In order to achieve changes in mind and construe what can be called ideal or balanced time perspective, patients have to listen to relaxation music regularly and be absolutely open-minded in psychotherapy. There is of course many techniques associated with this kind of treatment but authors admit that many of them arise during therapy to fit into thought patterns of patient.

Of the greatest importance, the goal of the treatment is to achieve the above mentioned balanced time perspective, which simply grasps three aspects:

- 1) To have positive attitude toward the past.
- 2) To be able to enjoy the present while bearing the modesty in mind.
- 3) To set up plans and accomplishing them and be able to stop self-actualization from time to time and let breath yourself as well.

Many of the people who deal with the troubles of their life can help yourself if they try to realize what the great impact time has on them. Thus, when entering the process of long-term therapy, effort to touch this principles could be very helpful. Although time perspective therapy is rather new field of treatment of mental problems, the principles binded to it have been certainly applied throughout the history.

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to describe the main principles of time perspective therapy. The major emphasis was put on both the everyday life functioning and the concept of balanced time perspective in psychotherapy. Consequences and other aspects of time perspective therapy were also mentioned.

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