

HEALTHY PERSONALITY

Presented by

CONTINUING PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION INC.

6 CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS

“I wanted to prove that human beings are capable of something grander than war and prejudice and hatred.”
Abraham Maslow, *Psychology Today*, 1968, 2, p.55.

Course Objective

The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of the concept of healthy personality. Seven theorists offer their views on the subject, including: Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Carl Jung, Viktor Frankl, and Fritz Perls.

Accreditation

Continuing Psychology Education Inc. is approved by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT # 1000067) to sponsor continuing education for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs and LEPs. Continuing Psychology Education Inc. maintains responsibility for this program/course and its content. This course, Healthy Personality, meets the qualifications for 6 hours of continuing education credit for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences.

Mission Statement

Continuing Psychology Education provides the highest quality continuing education designed to fulfill the professional needs and interests of mental health professionals. Resources are offered to improve professional competency, maintain knowledge of the latest advancements, and meet continuing education requirements mandated by the profession.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion, the participant will understand the nature, motivation, and characteristics of the healthy personality. Seven influential psychotherapists-theorists examine the concept of healthy personality allowing the reader to integrate these principles into his or her own life and practice.

1. The information was current and accurate.
2. The instructor was responsive to participants (timely responded by email, if requested).
3. There was accessibility for distance-learning support (questions/problems addressed effectively and timely).
4. The course technology was user-friendly

Faculty

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Outline

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INTRODUCTION

The study of healthy personality was ignored for a long time in psychology, instead, mental illness was extensively examined. In the past several decades, however, a growing number of researchers have recognized the capacity for growth and change in the human personality. These “growth psychologists” (most prefer to be called humanistic psychologists) have taken a new and fresh look at human nature and have observed a different type of person from that described by behaviorism and psychoanalysis, the traditional schools of psychology. Whereas behaviorists see individuals as passive responders to external stimuli and psychoanalysts see people as victims of biological forces and childhood conflicts, the humanistic psychologists believe we can strive to become all we are capable of becoming and in the process transform from “normality” to healthy personality.

Healthy personality has proven to be a difficult and elusive concept to define. There are thought to be enough definitions of healthy personality to fill a small book. Jahoda (1958), however, observed that “positive mental health” includes one or more of the following six aspects of individuals:

1. The degree of personal integration achieved by the individual.
2. The degree of autonomy achieved by the person.
3. The adequacy of the person’s perception of reality.
4. The degree of environmental mastery achieved by the person.
5. The attitudes shown by a person toward his or her own self.
6. The style and degree of a person’s self-actualization.

Schultz (1977) assessed components of healthy personality and stated the following characteristics to be agreed upon by most theorists:

1. Capability to consciously and rationally direct one’s behavior.
2. Being in charge of one’s own destiny.
3. Knowing who and what one is and being accepting of strengths and weaknesses.
4. Being firmly anchored in the present.
5. Pursuit of challenge through new goals and new experiences.

As can be seen, any single definition of healthy personality will be inadequate to some degree, yet it will be beneficial to have a working model, hence, the formulation by Jourard (1963) will be used:

Healthy personality is manifested by individuals who have been able to gratify their basic needs through acceptable behavior such that their own personality is no longer a problem to their self. They can take their self more or less for granted and devote energies and thoughts to socially meaningful interests and problems beyond security, or lovability, or status.

This course investigates those conceptions of healthy

personality offered by Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Carl Jung, Viktor Frankl, and Fritz Perls. These theories are selected because they are fully developed and are contemporary in their appeal. Each describes a level of personality development which is beyond normality leading to healthy personality.

The health of personality is considered important for happiness, peace of mind, personal adjustment, and success in living. To examine ways of becoming what we are capable of being is a worthwhile venture as Maslow (1967) stated by the following: “If you deliberately plan to be less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you’ll be unhappy for the rest of your life.”

GORDON ALLPORT THE MATURE PERSON

Allport believed healthy individuals function on a rational and conscious level, aware and in control of the forces that guide them. Mature persons are directed by the present and by their intentions toward the future. The outlook is forward toward contemporary and future events, not backward to childhood traumas and conflicts as with neurotics. He saw a gap or dichotomy between neurosis and healthy personality with neither type displaying any similar characteristics. The neurotic reveals infantile conflicts and experiences and the healthy person functions on a different and higher plane. Allport only studied mature, healthy adults and had little to say about neurotics, hence, his system is truly health oriented.

THE MOTIVATION OF THE HEALTHY PERSONALITY

Allport stated that adult motives are *functionally autonomous* of childhood meaning they are independent of original circumstances. Rather than being pushed from behind by motivating forces in the past, we are pulled ahead by our intentions for the future.

Central to this model is the importance of future goals and intentions as indicated by Allport (1955): “The possession of long-range goals, regarded as central to one’s personal existence, distinguishes the human from the animal, the adult from the child, and in many cases the healthy personality from the sick.”

The *intentional nature* of the individual - striving toward the future - unifies the total personality by integrating all its components toward the achieving of goals and intentions. The intentional nature of the personality also increases the tension level of the person as he or she takes risks and explores new things. Allport believed that only through these new tension-producing experiences and risks can human beings grow. Interestingly, this view differs from tension-reduction models of motivation (including Freud’s) which profess that people are motivated to reduce tensions and thus maintain a state of homeostasis.

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In Allport's view, happiness is not a goal in itself; it may be a by-product of pursuing aspirations and goals. In fact, he believed the healthy person's life could be grim with pain and sorrow.

Another paradox within this model states that the goals which are pursued by the healthy personality, in the final analysis, are unattainable. As an example, he used the explorer Roald Amundsen, who discovered the South Pole. After each new discovery, Amundsen would immediately plan for the next. He was motivated by the goal of continuing exploration, but this goal could never be fully realized so long as there were unexplored territories. To this end, Allport (1955) wrote: "Salvation comes only to him who ceaselessly bestirs himself in the pursuit of objectives that in the end are not fully attained."

Allport acknowledged the need to invent motives should existing ones become insufficient, hence, he proposed the *principle of organizing the energy level*. The woman whose goal was to raise children must find new goals and redirect energy once the children reach adulthood. Mature, healthy persons constantly need motives of adequate strength to consume their energy.

Allport's theory of motivation of the healthy personality also includes the *principle of mastery and competence* which proposes that mature, healthy persons desire not to perform at mediocre levels but at high levels of competence and mastery in striving to satisfy their motives.

CRITERIA OF THE MATURE PERSONALITY

The following seven criteria of maturity represent Allport's characteristics of healthy personality.

Extension of the Sense of Self

The self evolves from being focused only upon itself to a widening range of people and activities. Allport believed that the person needed to extend the self into activities with a feeling of genuine personal involvement and participation. The self then becomes invested in meaningful activities and they become extensions of the sense of self. This sense of authentic participation applies to work, family, leisure and all aspects of living. The more an individual is fully involved with various activities, people, or ideas, the more psychologically healthy he or she will be.

Warm Relating of Self to Others

Allport reported two kinds of warmth in relation to other people: the capacity for intimacy and the capacity for compassion.

The healthy person can display intimacy (love) for a parent, child, spouse, or close friend. A well-developed sense of self-extension brings forth this capacity for intimacy as the person displays authentic participation with the loved one and concern

for his or her welfare. The love of healthy persons is unconditional.

Compassion, the second kind of warmth, relates to an understanding of the basic human condition and a sense of kinship with all people. Empathy for others results from an "imaginative extension" of one's own feelings to humanity. In turn, the mature person is tolerant and non-judgmental of people's frailties, understanding they share the same weaknesses.

Emotional Security

This characteristic of healthy personality includes self-acceptance, frustration tolerance and emotional control. Self-acceptance is the most important and involves accepting all aspects of one's being, including weaknesses and failings, without being resigned to them. Mature persons live with their shortcomings with little conflict within themselves. They try to do their best and improve when possible.

Frustration-tolerance relates to tolerating stress and the thwarting of wants and desires. Healthy people devise different, less frustrating ways of reaching the same or substitute goals. Frustration is not crippling as it may be for neurotics.

Emotional control pertains to an individual's control of personal emotions so they do not disrupt social functioning. The control is not repression, but a redirecting of the emotions into more constructive channels.

Mature persons exhibit these three traits because they have a basic sense of security. They deal with life's fears and ego-threats with a sense of proportion understanding that such stressors are often manageable.

Realistic Perception

Healthy persons regard their world objectively and they accept reality for what it is. Mature people do not distort reality to make it compatible with their wants and fears. Contrarily, neurotics may have a personal preconception of reality placing people and situations into compartments which may not reflect the reality of the situation.

Skills and Assignments

Allport believed in the importance of work and the necessity of losing oneself in this activity. He did not think it possible to find mature, healthy persons who have not directed their skills toward their work. Work and responsibility provide meaning and a sense of continuity to life. Allport (1961) quoted the famous brain surgeon, Harvey Cushing, on this point: "The only way to endure life is to have a task to complete."

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Self-objectification

The individual who possesses a high level of self-objectification - meaning self-insight - achieves a higher level of self-understanding. Knowledge of self requires insight into the relation between what one thinks one is and what one actually is. Allport suggested that those with greater self-insight are more intelligent than those who possess less self-insight.

A Unifying Philosophy of Life

Healthy personalities are forward-looking, and motivated by long-range goals of accomplishment. This way of being provides continuity to their personalities. Allport called this unifying motivation *directedness* which guides all aspects of a person's life toward a goal (or series of goals) and gives a reason for living. Thus, within this model, having a healthy personality is contingent upon aspirations and direction toward the future.

Values are vital to the development of a unifying philosophy of life. The neurotic's values are thought to not be strong enough to unify all aspects of life.

Another contributing factor to a unifying philosophy of life is *conscience* which involves a sense of duty and responsibility to itself and to others. The mature person's conscience suggests, "I ought to behave this way," whereas the neurotic's verbiage is "I must behave this way," based on childhood obedience and restrictions.

CONCLUSION

Allport was the first personality theorist to study mature, normal adults instead of neurotics. He challenged several established theories of personality in developing his model. For example, he is rare in his emphasis that there are no functional similarities between neurotic and healthy personalities, that they are separate entities. His view that the healthy personality, once formed, is free of past childhood experiences differs from Freud and other personality theorists. Additionally, Allport's focus on increasing rather than decreasing the tension level as a means of positive change is noteworthy.

Psychological health is forward not backward-looking in this model. The outlook is toward what the person hopes to become, not to what has already happened and cannot be changed. Hence, Allport's model of personality is optimistic and hopeful.

The mature person is actively involved and committed to something or someone beyond the self. They are immersed in life. The healthy person is able to love and extend the self into deep relationships with others. Mature persons know who they are, in turn, they are secure in their relationships with self and others.

Gordon Allport's strength was his ability to detect common themes in the lives of psychologically healthy people and to state these themes with clarity.

CARL ROGERS THE FULLY FUNCTIONING PERSON

Rogers felt that our perception of the present is more important than past childhood events in attaining healthy personality. In working therapeutically with clients, he emphasized that personality must be examined and understood through the client's personal point of view, his or her own subjective experiences. What is real for clients is their unique perception of reality. Rogers developed a method of therapy which places the main responsibility for personality change on the client as opposed to the therapist, hence, the term *client-centered therapy*. He believed that reality is subject to each person's perceptual experiences, in turn, it will differ from one individual to the next, however, he sensed a common and basic motivational force for all: the tendency or striving to actualize.

THE MOTIVATION OF THE HEALTHY PERSON

Rogers indicated a single motivation - "one fundamental need" - in his model of personality: to maintain, actualize, and enhance all aspects of the individual. All aspects of human growth and development operate within this actualizing tendency, including physical maturation such as the body's organs and physiological processes developing. The actualizing tendency at the physiological level is irresistible as it thrusts the individual forward from one stage of maturation to the next, forcing one to adapt and grow. Rogers (1963) knew this process to be true for all living things as described by the following, "Here in this palm-like seaweed was the tenacity of life, the forward thrust of life, the ability to push into an incredibly hostile environment and not only hold its own, but to adapt, develop, become itself." The goal of life is not maintaining homeostasis, tension-reduction, or ease and comfort but movement toward increased complexity of functioning allowing us to become all that we are capable of becoming. At this biological level, Rogers saw no differences between the mentally healthy and ill, but significant differences appear regarding psychological aspects of actualization. The emphasis in actualization shifts from physiological to psychological beginning in childhood and is completed in adolescence.

This model defines self-actualization as the process of becoming oneself, of developing one's unique psychological characteristics and potentialities, is life-long and continual, and is the most important goal in a person's life. Rogers believed that humans have an inherent urge to create and that the most important creative product is one's own self.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF

At the time the self begins to develop in infancy, the infant learns to need affection, approval and love from other people which Rogers termed *positive regard*. The main requirement for healthy personality is receiving *unconditional positive regard* which develops when the mother or caregiver offers love and affection regardless of how the child behaves. This freely given love and affection, and the attitude it represents, become an internalized set of norms and standards for the infant.

Children growing up with the feeling of unconditional positive regard will not develop *conditions of worth* - feeling a sense of worth only under certain conditions, generally when behavior is not disapproved or rejected. Performing forbidden behaviors causes the infant to feel guilty and unworthy which leads to anxiety and defensiveness. The child "loves" itself only when behaving in ways it knows the caregiver approves, thus, becoming a "mother-surrogate." Resulting from this process is the individual's limited freedom because his or her true nature cannot be fully expressed. Contrarily, children experiencing unconditional positive regard feel themselves worthy under all conditions, have no need for defensive behavior, and will not have incongruence between the self and the perception of reality.

The self is deep in such healthy people because it contains all the thoughts and feelings capable of expression; they live life fully and freely with flexibility and openness to new experience. This person is free to become self-actualizing, to develop all of his or her potential, and to proceed to this model's ultimate goal, becoming a fully functioning person.

THE FULLY FUNCTIONING PERSON

Rogers' (1961) version of the healthy personality is not a state of being but a *process*, "a direction, not a destination." Rogers called one of his books *On Becoming a Person* which describes the continuing nature of the process.

Self-actualization is a difficult and painful process involving continuous challenges to one's capabilities. Rogers (1961) wrote, "It involves the courage to be. It means launching oneself fully into the stream of life."

Similar to Allport, Rogers sees happiness as a by-product of the striving for self-actualization; happiness is not a goal in itself.

Another essential point within this model is that self-actualizing people are truly themselves without pretending to be something they are not. The self is the master of the personality and operates independently of the norms dictated by others.

In addition to these points, Rogers offered five specific characteristics of the fully functioning person.

Openness to Experience

The absence of inhibiting conditions of worth allows one to experience all feelings and attitudes since none are seen as threatening or having to be defended against. Therefore, openness to experience is the opposite of defensiveness.

The fully functioning person intensely experiences a wide range of positive and negative emotions without closing off aspects of the personality; this results in greater personality flexibility.

Existential Living

The fully functioning person lives fully in every moment of existence. Each experience is perceived as fresh and new allowing for excitement as each experience begins.

The self is open to new experiences resulting in adaptability to life. Rogers (1961) believes the person is actually saying, "What I will be in the next moment, and what I will do, grows out of that moment, and cannot be predicted in advance either by me or by others."

Rogers emphasizes that this quality of existential living is the most essential component of the healthy personality. The personality is open to all that is happening at the moment and it finds in each experience a structure that can easily change in response to the next moment's experience.

A Trust in One's Own Organism

To Rogers, behaving in a way that feels right is the most reliable guide to deciding on a course of action and is more reliable than rational or intellectual factors. He wrote: "When an activity feels as though it is valuable or worth doing, it is worth doing. Put another way, I have learned that my total organismic sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect."

Making decisions only based on rational or intellectual factors is felt to handicap the individual since emotional factors are not utilized. All facets of the person - conscious, unconscious, emotional, and intellectual - should be analyzed in decision-making. Healthy persons trust their decisions as they trust themselves.

A Sense of Freedom

Psychologically healthy people experience freedom of choice and of action without inhibition or constraint. These individuals choose freely between alternative courses of thought and action.

Fully functioning people feel a sense of personal power about life and believe that the future is dependent upon their actions. This feeling of freedom and power creates many life options and the accompanying belief that we are capable of doing what we wish to do.

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Creativity

Rogers felt that all fully functioning persons are highly creative and spontaneous. Creative individuals are not known for conformity or passive adjustment to social rules; due to their lack of defensiveness, they are not concerned with approval from others for their behavior.

The fully functioning person is thought to be more capable of adapting to and surviving drastic life changes due to the creative and spontaneous element. Hence, Rogers considers fully functioning persons to be a “fit vanguard” in the process of evolution.

CONCLUSION

There is a special appeal in Rogers’ views that has contributed to his popularity - his call to be “me” and to be “now.” This model is attractive in an age which emphasizes self-expression and being free of inhibitions.

Healthy persons are capable of self-directed growth and leading their lives largely unaffected by childhood events. There exists an inherited tendency for psychological growth and actualization, a built-in natural motivation for health of mind.

The contributions of positive regard and conditions of worth are valuable as are the characteristics of fully functioning people. Being fully open to all experiences without feeling threatened offers potential for an exciting life style. Responding to life experience as fresh and new and living fully in each moment of existence is very worthwhile. The ability to choose and act freely without constraint, to feel a sense of power over life, and to be creative and spontaneous appear as cornerstones of healthy functioning.

ERICH FROMM THE PRODUCTIVE PERSON

In this model, mental health is based on society’s ability to adjust to the basic needs of all individuals, not in terms of how well individuals adjust to society. Psychological health is more of a social affair than individual. A healthy society enables its members to develop love for one another, to be productive and creative, to strengthen capacity for reason and objectivity, and it fosters fully functioning selves.

Fromm describes the essence of the human condition as *loneliness and insignificance* (this view is not as pessimistic as it appears) due to the historical evolution of mankind from the lower animals and key eras in history which allowed cultures to attain freedom, but at the expense of security and belongingness. For example, as the growing child becomes increasingly independent of the mother, he or she becomes less secure. Also, according to Fromm, unlike animals, our behavior is not tied to instinctive mechanisms, rather, we have knowledge and awareness, but unfortunately, also isolation and

alienation from the rest of nature, society, and our fellow humans.

This model suggests that the challenge is to find resolution for the dichotomies in our existence and to find new forms of union with nature, with others, and with ourselves. Fromm (1955) indicated that the choice is between “regression and progression, between return to animal existence and arrival at human existence.”

THE MOTIVATION OF THE HEALTHY PERSONALITY

Healthy people satisfy psychological needs in creative and productive ways whereas unhealthy persons satisfy them in irrational ways. Fromm offered five needs which derive from the freedom-security dichotomy.

Relatedness

Due to our awareness of being alone and separate in the world, we must seek ties with others and find a sense of relatedness with them.

Unhealthy ways of finding relatedness include becoming *submissive* to another person, group or ideal such as religion for example, or by trying to achieve *power* over others by forcing them to submit to our will. The healthy way of relating to the world is through *love* - not only in the erotic sense but also love of parent for child, love of oneself, and solidarity with and love for all people. This satisfies the need for security and allows a sense of integrity and individuality.

Inability to satisfy the need for relatedness results in *narcissism* - experiencing everything from one’s own subjective rather than objective point of view.

Transcendence

This need involves rising above or transcending our passive roles and becoming *creators* - active shapers of our lives. By creating such things as children, ideas, or material goods we rise above the passive and accidental nature of existence and achieve purpose and freedom.

The alternative to creativeness is *destructiveness* - destroying life, and it also allows for rising above the passive state. Obviously, only creativity leads to psychological health.

Rootedness

Becoming rooted and involved with others combats the essence of the human condition - loneliness and insignificance. The ideal way to fulfill this need is through *brotherliness* - establishing involvement, love, concern, and participation with society and fellow human beings.

The unhealthy way to achieve rootedness is by maintaining childhood *incestuous ties* with the mother. This person clings to the security of early maternal ties which can extend to

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include the whole family and potentially, the community.

Maintaining incestuous ties restricts love and solidarity to only some people which disallows full participation with the world at large, in turn, psychological health is not attained.

A Sense of Identity

Human beings are felt to need a sense of identity as being unique; an identity which sets them apart from others.

The healthy way of satisfying this need is *individuality*, the process by which one attains a definite sense of self-identity. These people have broken the incestuous ties with family and feel in control of their lives instead of having their lives shaped by others.

Contrarily, identity may be formed by *conforming* to the characteristics of a nation, race, religion or occupation. In this case, the self is borrowed from the group, does not genuinely belong to the individual, and will not achieve full humanness.

A Frame of Orientation

This need relates to formulating an image of the world which fosters understanding of all events and experiences.

The recommended basis for the frame of orientation is through *reason* whereby one develops a realistic and objective picture of the world and does not distort reality with subjective needs and fears.

The unhealthy way of constructing a frame of orientation is through *irrationality*. This involves a subjective view of the world in which events and experiences are seen not as they are but as one wishes them to be.

THE NATURE OF THE HEALTHY PERSONALITY

Fromm provides a clear image of the healthy personality; such a person loves fully, is creative, has highly developed powers of reason, perceives the world and the self objectively, possesses a firm sense of identity, is related to and rooted in the world, is the agent of self and destiny, and is free of incestuous ties.

Fromm calls the healthy personality the *productive orientation*, a concept similar to Allport's mature personality and Maslow's self-actualizing person. It represents the fullest realization of human potential. By using the word "orientation," Fromm makes the point that it is a general attitude or viewpoint that encompasses all aspects of life.

Being productive means utilizing all of one's powers and potentialities and is synonymous with terms such as full-functioning or self-actualizing.

Four additional aspects of the healthy personality are included in the productive orientation: productive love, productive thinking, happiness, and conscience.

Productive love comprises an equal relationship in which the partners maintain self-identity and independence. This concept

involves care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of the other and is thought to be one of life's more difficult achievements.

Productive thinking involves an intimate relationship between the object of thought and the thinker such that the person can examine the object in an objective, respectful, and caring manner. Fromm believed that all great discoveries and insights contain such productive thinking in that there is concern to objectively evaluate the totality of the problem.

Happiness is an important part and outcome of living within the productive orientation. It is a condition thought to increase vitality and fulfillment of one's potentialities. Productive people are happy people.

Fromm indicates two types of *conscience* - authoritarian and humanistic. The *authoritarian conscience* represents an internalized outside authority, such as parents or the state, which regulates behavior through fear of punishment for violating particular moral codes. This is counter-productive to productive living and opposite of the *humanistic conscience* which is the voice of the self, internal and individual, rather than the voice of an external agent. Thus, the productive, healthy personality is self-directed.

The productive orientation is an ideal goal of human development and it has not yet been attained by any society. Fromm visualized this society as one in which no person is exploited or manipulated, instead, the goal is maximum development of the self. In this future society, our humanness is to be the focus, and the purpose of political and economic systems will be to foster human growth and full functioning. The ideals of this society are love, human solidarity, brotherhood, the participation of each person in his or her own life and in society, and the productive use of every human being. Fromm believes that it is not possible to reach full productivity in our present social structure but that it is possible to attain partial productivity.

CONCLUSION

Fromm emphasizes the effect of social forces on shaping personality. Supportive of this view, for example, is the different outlook on life of those raised during the depression of the 1930's compared to those raised during the affluent era of the 1960's. Nonetheless, Fromm is optimistic about approaching the productive orientation, even under repressive or harsh social systems.

Positively, by acquiring feelings of relatedness, rootedness, love, and brotherhood, we are not condemned to constant isolation and insignificance. Further, the productive person is unselfish and offers responsible interaction with others; we need others for our own well-being.

Fromm's productive personality is anchored in reality, perceives the world objectively, and decisions are made using logic and reason. These people direct the course of their lives without being passive; they are in control of self and their

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outside themselves; have found a meaning in life which suits them; are in conscious control of their lives; can manifest creative, experiential, or attitudinal values; have transcended concern with self; are oriented toward future goals; are committed to work; and they have the ability to give and receive love.

CONCLUSION

Frankl addresses a common problem to our era: the lack of meaning in our lives. The belief in the will to meaning worked for himself under the harshest of living conditions which suggests this approach may be even more applicable in today's world.

An optimistic picture of human nature is painted as we are free of the past, not shaped only by social and cultural forces, and we are not dominated by the physical environment, no matter how oppressive. It is comforting to feel that we contain the power within ourselves - the spiritual freedom - to decide our outcome.

The challenge of personal responsibility to promote meaning and purpose in life is considered healthy and can lead to greater fulfillment of potential. This model assists us in this venture by suggesting three ways in which to find meaning in life: the creative, experiential, and attitudinal values.

Frankl reminds us that meaning exists in every situation and that we are free and responsible to find it; the outcome is enriched living, regardless of momentary circumstances.

FRITZ PERLS

THE "HERE AND NOW" PERSON

Perls (1969) built his life and his theory around one basic idea, expressed by his "Gestalt prayer:"

I do my thing and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you and I am I,
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.

He became a living example of that which he advised others to do: to live "here and now" and to be one's authentic self.

PERLS' APPROACH TO PERSONALITY: GESTALT THERAPY

Perls' approach to personality is through a form of therapy called Gestalt Therapy. The word "Gestalt" represents the idea that every organism tends toward wholeness or completion. Anything that prevents or disrupts this Gestalt (coming to closure) is harmful to the organism and creates what Perls called an *unfinished situation*, which for mental health purposes, needs to be finished (made whole or complete). We are driven by unfinished situations or incomplete Gestalts as

our primary motivation. People respond to these incomplete Gestalts in an orderly manner by arranging them in a *hierarchy of importance* - the most urgent situation dominates our consciousness followed by the next most important, and so on.

Related to dealing with unfinished situations is *self-regulation* versus *external regulation*. Healthy persons do their own regulating by relying on the wisdom of their own organism (mind and body) as opposed to being controlled by external forces such as demands of others or social codes.

This model emphasizes the need to express impulses and yearnings freely (thus completing the Gestalts), otherwise, we will *project* - accuse others of being what we would like to be, as in the example of shy persons accusing others of being too aggressive. Perls felt that these projections represent our inner feelings.

Another aspect of Perls' approach to personality is the importance of the present as the only reality. The here and now is all we have and we must take responsibility for experiencing every moment. The hazards of not living in the present are illustrated by the *retrospective character* who lives in the past and may blame others for his or her faults or live in sentimentality. Similarly, the *prospective character* lives in the future and surrounds his or her self with fantasies about what lies ahead which may lead to blaming others for disappointments. In each case, we are relinquishing responsibility for our lives to someone or something other than ourselves. Though we are advised to live in the present, Perls believed we must be aware of the past and future but not dwell in those realms.

ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PERSONALITY

Perls sensed that we function on two levels: the *public* level (overt behavior) and the *private* level (thought and fantasy). Thinking is a way to rehearse for future behavior, to try out things in the private level of our mind, but it can be unhealthy and lead to *anxiety* - the tension that exists between "now" and "then" - if used to act in an unspontaneous or contrived manner. The healthy personality lives in the present and does not experience anxiety over what may happen tomorrow.

Guilt plays a role in Perls' theory and is defined as resentment projected onto others. Those who are resentful have not confronted the target of their resentment and expressed their feelings, in turn, they have not relieved themselves of the guilt which the resentment causes.

Awareness is a key for psychological health in this system. We must be aware of our unfinished situations, our impulses and yearnings, of the here and now, and of our resentments. There are three levels of awareness: awareness of the *self*, awareness of the *world*, and awareness of the *intervening fantasy* between the self and the world. This intermediate level is called the DMZ (demilitarized zone) and contains our prejudices and prejudgments through which we view the world and people. Seeing the world through bias is not experiencing

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things as they are but as they appear to us. Those with healthy personality become aware of their fears, fantasies, and prejudices and empty this intermediate zone. Perls (1969) described this process by the following: "Suddenly the world is there.... The aim in therapy, the growth aim, is to lose more and more of your 'mind' and come more to your senses."

To accomplish this goal we must create a *continuum of awareness* such that we are alert to what is going on around us; our awareness is in the here and now. Sometimes, however, we choose to withdraw our attention from the here and now because it is unpleasant or threatening, in turn, we may escape into the past or future, intellectualize, or create meaningless free associations. Perls called these methods of avoiding the present awareness *dissociation*, defined as avoidance or flight from reality. Dissociation represents a *phobic attitude* which interrupts the awareness continuum. Our focus must be drawn again to the present, no matter how painful.

Perls saw two opposing personality forces vying for control within the individual. The *topdog* is the equivalent of Freud's superego, it is dictatorial, righteous, commanding, and threatening if we violate its dictates. The *underdog* manipulates us in more subtle and coaxing ways, it becomes defensive and apologetic. These forces continually battle for control of the personality and the person becomes divided into the controller and being controlled. The conflict leads to the *self-torture game* in which we believe the topdog is always correct in its perfectionistic demands and we feel bad when we cannot meet the demands. Resolution comes when we try to actualize our true inner self rather than topdog's image of the self.

Another element within Perls' view of personality is the *ego boundary* which separates the self from the rest of the world. Two characteristics of the ego boundary are *identification* and *alienation*. We identify with elements within our ego (our self), for example, our profession, family, and possessions; we alienate ourselves from those things on the other side of the boundary, for example, people belonging to a different political party. The boundary becomes bigger or smaller depending upon what and who we include or exclude.

The ego boundary also applies within the self as we may reject or disown thoughts and feelings which will result in our internal ego boundary becoming smaller and our psychic energy diminishing. Healthy individuals are in touch with all aspects of their selves which allows for ego boundaries to enlarge and here and now experiencing to heighten.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

The main principle underlying Perls' view of the development of personality is the change from environmental support to self-support. Freeing ourselves from environmental support presents great challenges and leads to the "basic conflict" of human existence. This conflict is between what we are and what others - parents, teachers, etc. - want us to be.

Perls believed that "authentic growth," natural actualization of the self, is "falsified" by society's use of two powerful tools, the *stick* and *hypnosis*. The stick functions through the principle of *catastrophic expectation*, informing us that disaster awaits us if we behave as we wish instead of as society wishes. Hypnosis involves propaganda or persuasion as in the classroom, pulpit, or advertisements, aimed at convincing us to believe in something. The stick and hypnosis maintain our dependence on the environment rather than on ourselves.

Another key element within this model is whether the child was raised to be spoiled or forced to overcome frustration. Perls thought frustration was beneficial for the growing child because it leads to autonomy rather than being dependent or manipulative. The downfall of becoming manipulative to the parents is developing *character*, a rigid way of interacting with the world through constant need of praise or encouragement from others. The energy needed for this environmental manipulation exhausts our potential for self-support. To Perls, being self-supportive - actualizing our potential by reflecting our true inner nature rather than playing roles for others - is the ultimate goal of healthy personality development.

The following characteristics represent Perls' view of the healthy personality: securely grounded in the present moment of existence; awareness and acceptance of self; able to express impulses and yearnings; taking responsibility for one's own life; shedding responsibility for others; in touch with the self and the world; ability to express resentments; free of external regulation; guided by and react to the situation of the moment; absence of constricted ego boundaries; and not engaged in the pursuit of happiness, (instead, just being who and what we are at the moment).

CONCLUSION

Although Perls is rarely given recognition within academic psychology, his work within the human growth movement is respected, as evidenced by Gestalt training centers throughout the country.

Here and now persons understand their impulses and yearnings, therefore, they have an objective picture of their nature. Certainly, living in the moment, accepting and taking responsibility for who and what we are, and being guided by ourselves as opposed to external forces, are good prescriptions for healthy personality.

Perls emphasized that the goal of Gestalt therapy, to promote the full growth and development of human potential, takes time, effort, and discipline.

THE NATURE OF HEALTHY PERSONALITY

Seven distinguished thinkers have shared their knowledge about the nature of healthy personality. Analysis shows agreement and disagreement among the theorists. Some argue that perception must be objective while others indicate that

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healthy persons use their subjective view of reality as the basis for behavior. Some suggest that work is vital and others make no mention of work at all. Moreover, these theorists differ on the major motivating force in life. Agreement abounds with respect to healthy persons rationally directing their behavior and being in charge of their destinies, having self-awareness, being anchored in the present, and increasing rather than reducing tension through seeking new challenges, goals and experiences.

The effects of these seven approaches to healthy personality differ not only for different persons, but also for the same person at different ages. Our values and needs change through life suggesting one model may be effective at age twenty but not at age forty; we may not remain static as we evolve from one stage of development to the next.

One may then ask the logical question, how do we find the road to healthy personality at each stage of growth? The answer may lie in having the freedom and inner security to experiment with different models of healthy personality to determine which one works for us.

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TEST - HEALTHY PERSONALITY

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For True/False questions: A = True and B = False.

TRUE/FALSE

1. **Healthy personality has proven to be a difficult concept to define.**
A) True B) False
2. **Maslow studied extremely healthy individuals to develop his self-actualization concept.**
A) True B) False
3. **Living “here and now” is vital to Fritz Perls’ view of healthy personality.**
A) True B) False
4. **Carl Rogers did not value the client’s subjective experiences.**
A) True B) False
5. **Self-actualization is generally defined as the development of all our qualities and abilities allowing us to become what we have the potential to become.**
A) True B) False
6. **Carl Jung emphasized the effect of unconscious forces upon mental health.**
A) True B) False
7. **All personality theorists agree on the characteristics of healthy personality.**
A) True B) False
8. **Carl Rogers felt that an important requirement for healthy personality is receiving “unconditional positive regard.”**
A) True B) False
9. **Common characteristics of healthy personality appear to include: rational control of one’s behavior, having self-awareness, and living in the present.**
A) True B) False
10. **To Fritz Perls, we are motivated by unfinished situations or incomplete Gestalts.**
A) True B) False
11. **Generally, _____ psychologists study healthy personality as their primary focus.**
A) humanistic
B) experimental
C) physiological
D) industrial
12. **Gordon Allport stated that adult motives are “functionally autonomous” of childhood, meaning _____.**
A) motives do not reflect who we are.
B) adult motives are independent of original, early-life circumstances.
C) motives are unimportant.
D) motivation is unchangeable
13. **Placing the main responsibility for personality change on the client as opposed to the therapist, in Carl Rogers’ model, is called _____.**
A) Reality therapy
B) Gestalt therapy
C) Client-centered therapy
D) Logotherapy
14. **Carl Jung termed the storehouse of material which is no longer conscious, but can easily rise to the conscious, the _____.**
A) ego
B) superego
C) id
D) personal unconscious
15. **Due to Viktor Frankl’s Nazi concentration camp experience, he concludes life’s main motivation is to _____.**
A) find meaning in life so there is reason to continue living.
B) fulfill our needs, regardless of the costs.
C) explore the depths of the unconscious.
D) pursue extensive leisure activities.

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16. **To Erich Fromm, the productive personality is _____.**
- A) anchored in reality
 - B) using logic and reason in decision-making
 - C) in control of self
 - D) all of the above
17. **Based on Abraham Maslow, by definition, self-actualizers _____.**
- A) have satisfied their basic needs
 - B) are free of psychoses and neuroses
 - C) are models of mental health
 - D) all of the above
18. **Tension-producing experiences, such as seeking new challenges and goals, are considered _____.**
- A) dangerous and to be avoided
 - B) important for personal growth and healthy personality
 - C) not worth the risk
 - D) only for the foolish
19. **Fritz Perls believed the “ego boundary” of the healthy personality is _____.**
- A) enlarging due to here and now experiencing
 - B) the smaller the better
 - C) unimportant
 - D) irrational
20. **One particular model of healthy personality may not be appropriate for the same person at different ages because _____.**
- A) models of healthy personality are unfounded
 - B) people are stubborn
 - C) our needs and values change through life
 - D) people do not want personal growth

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