

THE APPLICATION OF EXISTENTIAL-ANALYTIC VIEWS IN THE PRACTICE OF GROUP PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT



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Summary: The article examines the psychological features of preventing and correction of existential crisis of personality, namely, group psychotherapy, which is based on the postulates underlying of existential therapy, psychoanalysis and art therapy. We identified the main existential givenness, which actualized during completion of the training, described existential meaning obtained during group therapy and defense mechanisms.

Keywords: existential crisis, group's psychotherapy, existential approach, psychoanalysis, art-therapy, existential meaning, defense mechanisms.

Анотація: В статті розглядаються психологічні особливості попередження і корекції екзистенційної кризи особистості, а саме групова психотерапія, яка спирається на постулати положені в основу екзистенційної терапії, психоаналізу і арт-терапії. Обозначені основні екзистенціальні, актуалізуючіся во время проходження тренінга, описані екзистенціальні значущі, отримані в ході групової терапії, а також захисні механізми психіки.

Ключевые слова: экзистенциальный кризис, групповая психотерапия, экзистенциальный подход, психоанализ, арт-терапия, экзистенциальные значущие, защитные механизмы.

Анотація: У статті розглядаються психологічні особливості попередження і корекції екзистенційної кризи особистості, а саме групова психотерапія, яка спирається на постулати покладені в основу екзистенційної терапії, психоаналізу і арт-терапії. Позначені основні

екзистенціали, які актуалізуються під час проходження тренінгу, описані екзистенційні означаючи, отримані в ході групової терапії, а також захисні механізми психіки.

Ключові слова: екзистенційна криза, групова психотерапія, екзистенційний підхід, психоаналіз, арт-терапія, екзистенційні означаючи, захисні механізми.

Introduction. The issue of psychological support, assistance to a person in difficult life's situations relating to various aspects of human existence, more actualized since modern person is under the influence of the much larger constant stresses and is forced to rely heavily on their internal capabilities for coping with the latter than the person previous epochs - epochs are much lower velocities of the historical process.

Professional field of practicing psychologists concerns the range of issues delineated the bio-psycho-socio-spiritual life of the entity contour. This four-life context in which a person exists simultaneously and continuously living their interconnectedness with the world, is noted by L. Binswanger. It is known that human life is determined by physical biological laws because personality is always to be in a particular context of the conditions of life. Beyond that we should consider the specific socio-cultural context in which a person born and lives, building interpersonal relationships. Human behavior is regulated by mental processes, emotions, character, complex psychodynamic mechanisms which constitute the psychological context of life. His, person, the most important choices are carried out under the influence of certain values with reliance on their own understanding of the meaning / meaninglessness belief everything that constitutes the basis of worldview of personal vital philosophy in which the spiritual contour is articulated.

The main part. Continuing a research in the framework identification of effective ways of prevention and correction of existential crisis of personality we focus on the specific form of psychological help, namely, group psychotherapy which generates conditions where a person comes to a relationship with himself through the relationship with other people.

The purpose of this training was to study the living space of the entity that experiences an existential crisis and finds ways of coping with that.

The tasks we set for ourselves were related to:

1. Combining the principles of psychoanalysis (S. Freud, J. Lacan), existential (existential analytics of M. Heidegger) and the art-therapeutic approaches (applying of free association when considering the givens of existence and use drawings in a circle);
2. Eliciting of unconscious phenomena and deducing certain in a symbolic line (interpretation and awareness);
3. Group regression (free floating in fantasies);

4. Work with metaphor;
5. Integration of the received therapeutic experience in life situation.

Considering the tradition of existential therapy and contemporary psychoanalysis is an attempt to expand the understanding of the mechanisms of emergency development and regulation of the flow of psychic phenomena by using the theory and practice of these approaches. As each of the aforementioned approaches helps to consider one person from different perspectives, it is, in our opinion, can help to extend the context of psychological help and the person in it.

Thus the existential approach understand the person not as an isolated psychic wholeness but the person as a being-in-the-world, in other words it pays attention to his life as an integrity of relations with the world with the existential givenness that affects the lives regardless of the person's will, which makes it possible to eliminate the dichotomy of internal and external, as well as clarifies, reflects and understands the life in the context of bio-psycho-socio-spiritual contour inseparable from a variety of contexts of the world [9,10].

In its turn, the psychoanalytic approach enables to deploy a person's thinking from personal symptom towards discussion of life situations in general. In other words, person's thinking moves by analogy with the free associations – symptoms, being hidden, manifest and clear up and the possibility to speak of them appears and as a result offers an opportunity to discuss the problems of life misery of people [8]. And here the existential factor can come into effect. In psychoanalysis L. Binswanger saw, first of all, means of penetration on level of subjective meanings beliefs and values of the person. Not casually P. Ricker compared Freudianism to transcendental idealism as the reality of the unconscious is established by the psychoanalyst “in the sense that it is constituted by set of hermeneutical acts which decrypted it” [2].

Existential therapy as well as psychoanalysis is psychodynamic therapy inasmuch in this and other approach the concept of the dynamic conflict is essential: the main question is postulated of what contradictory forces, conscious and unconscious, form dynamics of the conflict and what the content of the conflict is that bases in confrontation of an individual with existential givenness and not only repressed desires of the person.

In order to explore emerging “intrapsychic and intersubjective” (Green, 1996) phenomena the presented approaches make it possible to deploy subjectivity (internal content) of the person of experience which helps the psychologist (here - entity providing psychological support and assistance) to provide emotional meaning and existential reversal of person (here the client) or a group of people in difficult situations that arise in the course of their personal and social life.

Psychotherapeutic context unfolds through the interaction of the reality of the psychologist and the person who has addressed for psychological help which

is possible in the case of building the setting during the formation of the dyad “psychologist-client”. It should be noted that in every moment the interaction and the way of experience and interpretation of both sides of psychotherapeutic process will be largely determined by the “meeting” of intrapsychic and intersubjective phenomena both of them: psychologist and client. As soon as psychologist becomes an important part of the emotional landscape of the client, his interpretation of experiences and processes client's inner world allows the client to change the dynamics of the conflict, the space of the inner world, namely its subjectivity [3].

And here, in our view, as a soft way of human exploration of subjective space live situation their relationship to different life circumstances, the most appropriate is art-therapy because through using a drawing a person gets access to the personal unconscious bypassing the censorship of consciousness which in turn produces a rich diagnostic material for the psychologist, and for painting too. Drawing gives the opportunity to get closer to the use of symbols as a resource of healing.

At the same time exploring the symbols we applied to the internal phenomenology of individual which provides conception of drawings by the author i.e. insertion to his study of the verbal material. The latter, in the same degree is required to work as the symbols of drawings because it gives a more profound interpretation of the drawings based on their author's comprehension. Thanks to the analysis the symbols are enriched with various often contradictory content which creates a human ability to conceptualize themselves, develop adaptive coping behavior, to see life's goals and perspectives, to understand their own capabilities and limitations in the various spheres of life, reflect upon their fears weaknesses leading to the development of self-awareness, a deeper understanding of themselves and the development of reflection. Analysis of the characters allows to explore the logic of the unconscious its relationship with the consciousness of the entity which contributes to the expansion of self-understanding.

Thus the determining factor in this context are the language and speech of individual – “the abode of Being” (M. Heidegger), through which the person is looking at himself denoting and transcribing and that “... gives the person seeing for talking to each other ...”, “voice of Being” which gives an opportunity to “get into the lumen of the truth of Being” [10]. According to M.K. Mamardashvili the speech through the message in particular includes the human consciousness due to “the consciousness of one entity is taken a given for another” [7]. And as a special source of self-knowledge considers the consciousness of individual through which a person solves the problem of his way of being.

It should be noted that understanding in a person is connected with the question: if there are such structures in him and his possession that are commensurated with the structures of the world and which enable him to

understand the world. Here, for cognition and self-reflection entity uses the language that creates itself, organizes and by which it obeys, where the symbols of speech represent a certain type of relations with the world, forasmuch the speech and language fully reflects the whole range of meanings of phenomena that exists in and out of consciousness i.e. in the unconscious. Actually there is the possibility of opening the human unconscious through the language and speech a possibility of reading a person and arrange of communication with others, and therefore with oneself [4, 5, 8].

In practice the dialogue between the person experiencing an existential crisis and a psychologist (psychotherapist) work with a problem often leads out to the broader question of the value and meaning of life the internal and external constraints and the potential to live and feel more fully and freely.

The turn towards group work was connected, first of all, with the fact that experiencing the crisis one is confronted with the social and psychological frustration, heightened sense of loneliness isolation meaninglessness. Therefore, the situation of joint experiences of a group of strong emotional states anxieties etc. can carry therapeutic character. The task of the leader of the group is the ability to direct the attention of not only to solve personal problems as the creation of life and better understanding of it, which is achieved by analyzing the life of each member of the group, and through this life in general. In other words, arousing problem crisis situation is not considered isolated from human life itself but rather strives to understand from within the logic of the individual human life: there was a problem as to why it could not come, and it is now possible to manage with it.

Considering expected changes in the three planes – the cognitive emotional and behavioral, group psychotherapy each participant can obtain: a feedback from other participants, has the freedom to express or keeps silent about their feelings, emotions and thoughts; a unique opportunity to determine what unconscious existential beliefs he/she has, and how they limit his/her life; can clearly see their limited life scenarios and changes lives. Thus, the problems of group psychotherapy focus on mentioned above three aspects which allows to determine the primary purpose of group therapy as the expansion of sphere of person consciousness.

Thus, the existential-analytic training can be applied in groups of up to 10 people. Preferred is the heterogeneous composition of the group as it is provides maximum variety of methods and types of responses feelings and interpersonal relationships. The form of groups is closed with the same number of participants.

The training program is designed for 10 sessions of 3 hours each. The total duration of training is 30 hours. It is recommended to exercise 1-2 times a week for a month. Each session is thematically defined by psychologist: 1st – Introduction; 2nd - Dissatisfaction; 3rd - Loneliness; 4th - Suffering, 5th – Sin; 6th - Fear of death; 7th – Meaninglessness; 8th – Responsibility; 9th - Freedom; 10th –

Finality of the group. These themes are taken from the general procedure applied by us in the study of existential crisis – Diagnostic of Spiritual Crisis by L.V. Shutova and A.V. Lyashchuk. Each session is completed by a certain drawing the designated theme and the subsequent discussion of the drawn.

To determine the effect of training on indicators of the spiritual crisis used the comparison sampling before and after exposure (training) using the Student's *t*-distribution (*t*-test) for paired sample. This training was attended by 35 persons who at the time of passing the training have experienced an existential crisis. The analyses of the data are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1

The effect of training on the variable “crisis”

Variable	before		after		t	p
	M	σ	M	σ		
The spiritual crisis	41,62	14,77	42,79	10,95	-0,44	0,661
The existential vacuum	45,65	13,48	48,87	11,59	-1,69	0,101
The crisis in the past	39,92	18,13	46,60	15,32	-3,08	0,004 **
The crisis in the present	41,21	14,45	43,27	15,96	-0,81	0,422
The crisis in the future	37,73	14,81	38,15	12,09	-0,22	0,830

Note: ** - significance level $p < 0.01$

As it is seen from the table statistically significant differences were found in the variable as a “crisis in the past” ($p < 0.01$).

Analyzing the influence of training on indicators of “dissatisfaction”, “freedom”, “suffering”, “responsibility”, “death”, “meaninglessness” statistically significant differences in the variables were not found. Thus it is necessary noted that the semantic space mentioned above the existential givenness is defined by the following signifiers obtained in the course of group psychotherapy:

- “Freedom” includes the following semantic units the most often presented in the stories of the respondents in order of importance: “make a decision (to choose)” ($p < 0.04$), “do what I want” ($p < 0.04$), “do not adjust to the other” ($p < 0.02$), the “independence (without limitation)” ($p < 0.02$), “my space” ($p < 0.01$);

- “Suffering” includes the following semantic units the most often presented in the stories of the respondents in order of importance: “the experience of negative emotions” ($p < 0.05$), “pinching”, “lack of love”, “a sense

of his own insignificance”, “self-incrimination”, “lack of anything”, “inability to sustain their environment”, “sadness” ($p < 0.01$);

- “Responsibility” includes the following semantic units the most often presented in the stories of the respondents in order of importance: “taking care of one another” ($p < 0.04$), “to answer for their deeds” ($p < 0.03$), “to answer for his life”, “execution of the order”, “understanding that something depends on me” ($p < 0.02$), “the need for a moral life”, “serious attitude towards something” ($p < 0.01$);

- “Meaninglessness” includes the following semantic units the most often presented in the stories of the respondents in order of importance: “doing useless work”, “do not understanding the meaning” ($p < 0.03$), “useless existence”, “lack of purpose” ($p < 0.02$), “despair – sadness”, “no confidence in their actions” ($p < 0.01$);

- “Fear of death” includes the following semantic units the most often presented in the stories of the respondents in order of importance: “threat to life” ($p < 0.03$), “do not fear of death” ($p < 0.02$), “the fear of death of the relatives” ($p < 0.02$), “fear of the unknown” ($p < 0.02$), “emptiness” ($p < 0.01$), “fear not to have time to do something” ($p < 0.01$).

So, due to represented signifiers it is possible to see how a person through the language and speech defines himself his place in inseparable connection with the world. And here the entity is necessary to carry out reconstruction and deconstruction of language and to speak in the language of Dasein which means re-define in its symbolic terms using language and speech, and this process is only possible by being able to the state of loneliness and through personal responsibility. That was brightly presented in the indicators as “loneliness” and “sin”.

The analyses of the influence of training on indicators of “loneliness” are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2

The affect of training on the variable “loneliness”

Variable	before		after		t	p
	M	σ	M	σ		
Loneliness in the past	2,40	2,17	3,06	2,10	-2,57	0,015*
Loneliness in the present	2,23	1,90	2,57	2,05	-0,92	0,362
Loneliness in the future	1,43	1,94	1,09	1,70	1,14	0,263

Note: * - significance level $p < 0.05$

As it is seen from the table statistically significant differences were found in the manifestation of such indicators as “loneliness in the past” ($p < 0.05$).

Loneliness in terms of existential-humanistic paradigms is a reality that is rooted in the nature of man himself. “Loneliness – is suffering” (M. Mamardashvili), “the freezing horror of being abandoned” (K. Jaspers), “nostalgia for the escape” (E. Levinas), etc. which can be considered as a phenomenon that immanent to human existence and in this sense is a subjective.

The content side of it is related to the following semantic units the most frequently mentioned by entity: “I do not feel support” ($p < 0.04$), “there are no people who think alike” ($p < 0.03$), “I feel lonely (emptiness)” ($p < 0.02$), “no one understands me” ($p < 0.02$), “lack of self” ($p < 0.01$), “a state of alienation” ($p < 0.01$), “time to think about myself” ($p < 0.01$), which reveals a certain experience (conscious or unconscious), contradictory relationship between “I” and the world, rejection autonomy non-participation of “I” which can have a stable negatively charged emotional and associative background. Thus the relationship of generality and objectivity with subjectivity qualifies as an ambivalent phenomenon of loneliness which is dual in its nature.

The analyses of the influence of training on indicators of “sin” are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3

The effect of training on the variable “sin”

Variable	before		after		t	p
	M	σ	M	σ		
Sin in the past	1,77	1,80	2,40	1,63	-2,71	0,011*
Sin in the present	1,86	1,78	1,94	1,64	-0,40	0,692
Sin in the future	1,49	1,72	1,54	1,79	-0,20	0,840

Note: * - significance level $p < 0.05$

As can be seen from the table statistically significant differences were found in terms such as “sin in the past” ($p < 0.05$). Sin from the standpoint of existential-humanistic paradigms refers to the internal self-existence of person and comes from his inner reality involving the opposition of the real world (the existence of extant) ideal world (symbolic existence). In this kind of comparison individual can face the experience of non-compliance lack of authenticity of betrayal to himself, his own being which illuminates in meanings of person: “do something bad” ($p < 0,04$), “the Bible sin” ($p < 0,03$), “life style” ($p < 0,02$), “lack of moral”, “bad attitude to people”, “sense of guilt in front of himself” ($p < 0,01$).

According to M. Heidegger, the process of in-depth study “exposure” leads a person to a collision with the existential loneliness or isolation which is associated with the abyss between person and the other, the separation between the entity and the world [4, 9]. Existential isolation creates a situation of crisis, connected with the state of “thrownness” and is a kind of emotional response to the effect of loneliness-helplessness when a person encounters a choice [1, 9, 10]. However, the intensification of awareness of our life can lead to the discovery of personal sin giving rise to sense of guilt which, according to M.

Heidegger, is a fundamental part of Dasein. As noted by thinker, the guilt is “intimately connected with the possibility” when “the voice of conscience” is heard, a person is always “guilty” to the extent that he has failed the accomplishment of authentic opportunities [6, 9].

Summing up the foregoing it should be noted that the differences established for indicators “crisis in the past” ($p < 0.01$), “loneliness in the past” ($p < 0.05$), “sin in the past” ($p < 0.05$) are highlighted through an existential paradigmatics where people, when confronted with existential givenness, can comprehend the events change, occurring to them and open personal meaning and purpose.

Furthermore, cluster analysis (Ward's method), mentioned above respondents (35 persons) were distributed in terms of “existential crisis” for three groups in which the crisis was experienced in the past, present or future. After the division of the respondents of the crisis groups have made a comparative analysis of the data which were obtained before and after completion of the training itself. Based on the identified results we can make a conclusion that the outcome of the training was the strengthening the links between the data of spiritual crisis existential vacuum crisis in the past and in the present.

The next stage designed to investigate the effect of training to the system of defense mechanisms used by the entity experiencing an existential crisis was the application of regression analysis. The array data obtained during testing of respondents to the training was analyzed and the defense mechanisms their possible change after completions of the training were studied. Our attention was drawn to the fact that the level of this defense mechanism as a displacement was significantly increased. The data are presented in the Table 5.

Table 5

Comparative analysis of defense mechanisms

Variable	before		after		t	p
	M	σ	M	σ		
Denial	59,50	27,44	62,52	29,33	-0,50	0,618
Repression	56,26	27,41	65,23	27,78	-1,57	0,122
Regression	68,42	22,82	76,68	19,85	-1,89	0,063
Compensation	52,03	25,99	56,60	23,38	-0,90	0,369
Projection	63,64	27,89	74,76	28,59	-1,86	0,068
Displacement	51,13	24,43	61,53	23,44	-2,09	0,041 *
Intellectualization	60,96	27,28	71,26	26,62	-1,83	0,072
Reaction formation	69,75	22,60	77,23	18,36	-1,81	0,074

Note: * - significance level $p < 0.05$

Obviously, that the actualization of this defense mechanism may point to aspiration of the person to cope with the emotional distress associated with frustrating situations.

With the help of regression analysis we have identified the system relationship between the index of “crisis in the past” and psychological defenses. The data are presented in the Table 6.

Table 6

The regression coefficients for the variable “crisis in the past”

Model		Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Signifi- - cation
		B	standard error	Beta		
Before training	(constant)	34,553	4,664		7,408	0
	Reaction formation	2,325	0,801	0,269	2,901	0,005
	regression	2,386	0,692	0,356	3,447	0,001
	displacement	-1,896	0,859	-0,222	-2,207	0,03
After training	(constant)	47,321	21,527		2,198	0,037
	displacement	-0,307	0,134	-0,424	-2,295	0,030

As can be seen from the table for the crisis in the past the most relevant defense mechanisms are reaction formation regression and displacement. Based on the results we can make the conclusion that the aspiration of the person to cope with the crisis experiences, existential frustration through using above mentioned defense mechanisms is rather connected with the desire of the individual prevent, perhaps to avoid severe emotional distress. Applying the dispersion analysis for the variable “crisis in the past” it was found that up to completion of the training of the multiple correlation coefficient which reflects the relationship between the variable “crisis in the past” with a set of indicators of psychological defenses was $R = 0,338$, after training, $R = 0,666$. The coefficients of determination were $R^2 = 0,114$ before training and $R^2 = 0,666$ after training. Accordingly, 11.4% of the variation of the variable parameters “crisis in the past” was caused by variations of the psychological defenses.

In a regression model before the training included the following psychological defenses - reaction formation regression and displacement. In addition, these psychological defenses as a reaction formation and regression have a positive correlation, and the displacement has a negative one. After the training, the proportion of variance of the variable “a crisis in the past” which depends on the variation of psychological defenses is increasing to 66.6 %. In this case the model includes only displacement with a negative coefficient. Fisher

Criteria Model training amounted before passage the training was $F = 8,824$, $p < 0,001$; after training was $F = 2,592$, $p < 0,031$, that indicating on the accuracy of models. Data are presented in the Table 7.

Table 7

Dispersion analysis for the variable “crisis in the past”

Model		sum of squares	standar d error	average square	F	p
before	Regression	6320,056	3	2106,685	8,824	0,001
	residual	22919,26	96	238,742		
	altogether	29239,31	99			
after	Regression	4957,132	8	619,642	2,592	0,031
	residual	6214,87	26	239,033		
	altogether	11172	34			

The conclusions. From this study the nature of the correlations in the regression model before the training shows that the experience of the crisis in the past is diffuse and vague and is connected with the reaction formation regression and displacement. After the training the experience becomes sharper, is localized more precisely, loses contact with the reaction formation and regression and weakens with the displacement. Thus, the content of the existential crisis of the person is defined in the existential givenness such as loneliness and sin, and in presented defense mechanisms –reaction formation regression displacement.

Thus, the existential-analytical training is an effective psychological support of the person experiencing an existential crisis. Combining the above mentioned approaches provides an opportunity to expand the context of human understanding, studies its vital space, mediated by speech and language, which makes it possible to find the most appropriate ways of coping with the crisis, and can be applied in the practical work of psychologists.

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