

Experiential and Emotional Conceptualization and Intervention in Psychotherapy

Fundamental human emotions like fear, sadness, anger, and shame underlie psychological problems but are also the key to healing and growth. Experiential and emotion-focused interventions have a rich background in humanistic and existential approaches like gestalt and person-centered therapies. When we help our clients embrace more adaptive emotions, we reduce suffering and enhance human potential. This seminar will teach both experiential conceptualization and intervention methods. Formulating an emotion-based conceptualization involves distinguishing between primary, secondary, and instrumental emotions. Exploration can help distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive emotions. Diversity is addressed in this webinar by describing the way cultural contexts shape clients' emotional experiences.

Video demonstrations of foundational experiential skills drawn from Emotion-Focused Therapy will be used to help participants prepare for practice. These skills will address three general processes: (1) Exploration and functional analysis of current patterns, (2) Guided discovery to uncover more adaptive functioning, and (3) Enacting adaptation outside of psychotherapy. More advanced experiential interventions—like chair work and focusing—will be previewed as possibilities for future professional development.

Although emotional transformation is often an essential part of treatment, there are times when emotions cannot be changed. Many people use experiential avoidance and defense mechanisms to evade uncomfortable emotions. When emotions cannot be changed, it is important to help clients accept difficult parts of the human experience and to increase distress tolerance and emotional regulation. This seminar will prepare psychotherapists to discuss with clients when to emphasize acceptance of emotions and when to promote change.

This webinar is part of Level One of Training in Unified Psychotherapy (TUP), focusing on working interactively with cognition, emotion, and behavior. Instead of exclusively focusing on emotion as a lever of change, TUP encourages psychotherapists to develop a wide repertoire of skills that can be adapted to the individual needs of each client.

Target Audience

Psychologists
Therapists
Social Workers
Psychiatrists
Counselors
Nurses
Course level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Explain how adaptive emotions are likely to reduce psychological symptoms, support functional cognitions, and promote effective actions.
2. Describe the difference between primary, secondary, and instrumental emotions.
3. Analyze clients' emotions in order to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive emotions.
4. Identify experiential skills related to functional analysis, guided discovery, and enacting adaptation outside of psychotherapy.
5. Describe the types of emotions that can be transformed and those that would benefit from distress tolerance and emotional regulation.

Seminar Schedule

The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

Outline

Begin 10 AM ET

Overview of Experiential Psychotherapy
Experiential Themes in Psychotherapy
Phenomenology and Authenticity
Focusing on Experiences in Unified Psychotherapy
Experiences as a Focal Dimension
Markers for Focusing on Experiences
Impact of Experiential Interventions in UP
Experiential Case Formulation
Differentiating Adaptive versus Maladaptive Experiences
Foundational Skills for Working with Experiences in UP

Break 11:30 (15min)

Practicing Experiential Exploration
Noticing the Presence of an Emotion
Curiosity and Bracketing
Affect Labeling
Incorporating the Context
Emotional Meanings
Connecting to Cognitions and Behaviors
Using the Multidimensional Survey to Highlight Experiences
Differentiating Functional from Dysfunctional (Adaptive vs Maladaptive) Experiences
Introducing the Experiential Exploration
Implementing the Experiential Exploration

Discussion and Reflecting on One's Own Practice
Other Experiential Strategies
Ends 1:15 PM ET

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Continuing Education Credit

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The Presenter

Jeff E. Harris received his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from The Ohio State University in 1990. In 2004, he was awarded board certification as a Specialist in Counseling Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology. Dr. Harris has worked as a psychologist, training director, and director of counseling at student counseling centers at Southern Illinois University, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and New Mexico State University. He also worked as an associate professor of Counseling Psychology at Texas Woman's University. Dr. Harris is a licensed psychology, currently providing telehealth psychotherapy for Amwell Medical Group and BetterHelp. Dr. Harris is the author or co-author of two books: *Workshops: Designing and Facilitating Experiential Learning* (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999) and *Integrative Multitheoretical Psychotherapy* (Brooks-Harris, 2008). In 2015, Dr. Harris started collaborating with other scholars to define Unified Psychotherapy as a distinct route to integration. Dr. Harris has developed Training in Unified Psychotherapy (TUP) as a webinar series and certification program to teach therapists to think about clients in a holistic manner and to utilize diverse interventions based on the individual needs of each client.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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