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## **WHAT IS PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CONSCIOUS LIVING?**

Psycho-Spiritual, or Transpersonal Psychology, represents the forth force in psychology, the first being classic psychoanalytic, the second being behaviorism, the third, humanistic. The Transpersonal Psychology Association was established in 1966 by Abraham Maslow, who also established Humanistic Psychology Association and is well known for his formulation of the hierarchy of needs. 'Trans' in Latin means 'beyond' or 'through' and personal is from the Latin 'mask', meaning that Transpersonal Psychology is concerned with experiences which identify some deeper and more enduring sense of self that is beyond the persona or mask we present to the public, and which is beyond, or more than, the conditioned ego. It is also concerned with beliefs and experiences (sometimes labeled spiritual and religious) that regard individual existence as an expression of a larger reality and is concerned with those areas where psychological and spiritual concerns overlap, where mind/body/spirit coalesce. Carl Jung's analytic understandings of the unconscious and the spiritual dimensions of life are helpful in this study, also.

Humanistic, and later Transpersonal Psychology, look into the original meaning of psyche as soul, not just a brain to be fixed or behavior to be re-conditioned. The soul is that immortal aspect of our beingness which actually brings meaning and life to us; it is our human connection to the Divine Essence that we are. We believe that it behooves us to become more conscious of our soul and of dimensions of awareness and understanding available to us when we have this larger framework, as well as to become more conscious of the unconscious workings of our minds.

A major feature of Transpersonal Psychology is the conviction that western and eastern psychologies and spiritual frameworks can work together by bringing together the emphasis on the ego, outer objectivity, and pathology from the West with the contemplative approach of the East with its emphasis on inner self exploration and consciousness. As you become aware of how the unconscious works and how you unconsciously think and act, you begin to be conscious and have less need for unconscious ego defense mechanisms.

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the nature of the mature personality and psychological well being, as well as techniques that seek to employ positive thinking and/or the image making capacities of the mind that assist physical and emotional healing. Transpersonal strategies are common place in the exploration of consciousness, stress management, self understanding, self acceptance, relaxation training and breathing, meditation, personal growth, self awareness, answering the question "Who am I?" healing, spirituality, creativity, and connecting with the 'higher self'. With younger or less mature psyches, it is frequently appropriate to utilize other more traditional methodologies, coupled with this basic psycho-spiritual understanding. Exploration of the unconscious is not the task of individuals still engaged in the process of stabilizing ego development and/or healing from childhood difficulties or abuse.

### Conscious Living

Here at the Center For Conscious Living, we hold that life is a sacred process, a lifetime journey in consciousness through certain predictable stages, experiences, and learning opportunities, persona, and challenges. While there's a certain predictability

common to all people, there are also differences in how these stages, experiences, and learning opportunities are presented to us individually.

Conscious Living is both the goal and the process leading to deeper and clearer levels of consciousness.

We weave these understandings into our work with the particular life situations of each client, as is appropriate to their needs. We hold that you can become conscious of your mental thinking process, comfortable with the range of your emotional states, learn how to love yourself unconditionally, and live in a more peaceful state.

We believe that each of us contains a Divine Spark, which is called by many different names, such as God, Allah, Great Spirit, and is experienced differently by different peoples; nonetheless, it is the Life Energy that activates and energizes all of creation. We experience our everyday, ordinary ego self, which is our vehicle of everyday consciousness, as well as our own Higher Self which connects us to those transpersonal realms. Each person is led to a path that is uniquely his or her own that over their lifetime takes them more deeply into their own nature and their own connection with the inner Divine.

### Judgments and Assessments

We see psychology as a process of assisting individuals to become self-observing and better able to let go of their self-critical self-judgments. There is a difference in *making assessments* about how you handled certain activities and in *making self-critical judgments* about your self with regard to who you are and how/what you do/say/think/ or feel. An assessment is an inventory conducted for the purpose of determining how to improve your behavior/performance in some way. A self-critical judgment is a judgment about your self, your essence which in some way says that you are 'bad and wrong, a loser, a bad seed, bad from the beginning and no hope for you, that you aren't good enough and there is nothing that can be done to make you better, that you are unworthy in every significant ways'. This self-critical judgment has the power hamper/cripple all your efforts at self-development because it seems hopeless to ever get out of the trap because you believe you are fundamentally broken.

The difference in these two processes- assessments and self-critical judgments- is critical and mammoth. A judgment has the effect of saying 'you have failed and there is no possible way to undo the failure'. An assessment provides information about what you have done/said that was good/appropriate and what was not so good/appropriate, *and* what you might do better/more appropriately. An assessment provides direction for future development. It is open ended. A judgment creates a closed door.

Perhaps, you might think of it in the way Jean Houston expresses it. You are a human being with a Divine Essence, and you have skilled behaviors and you have unskilled behaviors. You can always improve unskilled behaviors. That is what we do in life: find new behaviors, which in the beginning are always unskilled, and practice to make them more skilled. Then we find more unskilled ones to practice on. It is just what we do in life to make like interesting. And, as Jean says, we don't want to bore God.

### Transformation

We think of the therapeutic process as leading to a transformation of how you view your self and the world, and letting go of beliefs formed in childhood which focus on your inadequacies and rather hopeless situation because there seems no way to get out of it. The

way out is through a transformation of your way of viewing Life. You move out from a black and white view of life and yourselves which says that there is one right way to do things and everything else is wrong. Transpersonal psychology embraces a holistic approach based on contemporary physics which says that how you see things is based on your point of view and personal biases. Therefore, when you understand that your situation, how you view it, and your feelings about it come from your point of view, you're then able to consider alternative points of view and open up your consciousness.

We see the actual practice of psychology as setting the stage for each of us to live life as an adventure of exploration into the depths of our selves/our souls, as well as learning to handle basic life situations and solving personal/mental/psycho-spiritual concerns and problems. This requires an awareness of and letting go of the belief that you are broken and need to 'be fixed', because when you believe this about yourself, your inner critic never lets you believe that you would ever be able to do well enough/be perfect enough to 'be fixed'.

We, also, hold that when you gain a new perspective/ develop a new framework or lensing through which to see yourself more accurately and assess your own thought process, feelings, and behaviors, then, you can more easily understand how you've become stagnant, careless, or unconscious in the living of your life. With this awakening awareness, you are developing the ability to live consciously.

We realize that our inner world is the world of images, intuitions, and archetypes that can be consciously understood and utilized in creating health and well being, as well as, directing our psycho-spiritual unfolding. This may include awareness of ancient stories/ mythologies and the universal truths contained therein, as well as accessing one's own intuitional knowing about themselves and what is right for their development.

## Consciousness and Holism

A holistic view of life includes a recognition that our beingness is composed of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects which interact and affect each other and our experience of life. While these are separate aspects, they also interact within the wholeness of our being.

For instance, people come to the Anger Workshop who have stomach pain, bodily discomfort or muscle tension. They often find that after they get in touch with their anger and pain, rage and tears, that not only do they feel differently about their emotional self, but their body feels differently. Pain which has emotional components and which is exacerbated by holding on to the emotions will shift and often leave when emotional energy is released. At this time, your mind has a space in which to look differently upon your situation and your mental set about it. Then, when you begin to release your negative self judgments, feelings of hopelessness, guilt and shame, you are able to begin to 'consider the possibility', as a first step, that you might see yourself through the eyes of unconditional love and open to your true spiritual nature.

At this point, after you've gained some consciousness, reduced your fear of your emotions, you can begin to access feelings and intuition, and learn to be more self governing, less concerned about what you think everyone else thinks you should do, and

more able to answer the question of 'What do I want? What pleases me?' You recognize that you and only you are responsible for your life and your decisions. These feelings of personal freedom and the ability to listen to your own inner truth open the opportunities to be responsive to Life as it presents itself to you.

With increased conscious awareness of yourself and the process going on inside of you, your relationships will improve and be more loving because you can see the relationship interactions from other points of view.

We're not affiliated with any religious groups. We encourage a psycho-spiritual consciousness, which an individual can then direct in any way appropriate for them. Often this work helps heal earlier religious woundings and misunderstandings of religious experiences. Therapists connected to the Center are actively engaged in their own particular path of psyche psycho-spiritual development, and we include these principles in our work as appropriate with the needs and desires of each client.

As you are more conscious, Life begins to be your teacher, and your inner guide lights your way. Your awareness continues to deepen and you can identify how love opens your experience of life and how negativity and fear close life. The ancient wise ones wrote above the entrance to the temple at Delphi *Know Thyself*. Everyday is an adventure of knowing yourself, a lifetime journey of wonderful surprises and exquisite dimensions.