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Person-Centred Approach and Positive Psychology


“The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5)
“In the past, mental health has been a ‘residual’ concept – the absence of disease. We need to do more than describe improvement in terms of say ‘anxiety reduction’. We need to say what the person can do as health is achieved. As the emphasis on pathology lessons, there have been a few recent efforts toward positive conceptualizations of mental health. Notable among these are Carl Rogers’ ‘fully Functioning Person’, A. Maslow’s ‘Self-Realizing Persons’” (Schlien, 2003/1956, p. 17)

Person-Centred Positive Psychology

- Challenges illness ideology
- Understanding the full spectrum of functioning
- Inform positive psychology practice

Posttraumatic growth

Person-centred approach to psychological trauma


Looking to the Future: Let's be more outward looking

Research support for PCA from Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Develop PCA theory
Consistent Measurement

Person-centred coaching
Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Three philosophical assumptions

1. “The first is that human beings are inherently proactive….

2. Second, human beings, as self-organizing systems, have an inherent tendency toward growth, development, and integrated functioning….

3. The third important philosophical assumption is that, although activity and optimal development are inherent to the human organism, these do not happen automatically. For people to actualize their inherent nature and potentials – that is, to be optimally active and to develop effectively – they require nutrients from the social environment. To the extent that they are denied the necessary support and nourishment by chaotic, controlling, or rejecting environments, there will be negative consequences for their activity and development”. (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 23-24)
Three Basic Psychological Needs:

- **Autonomy**
  (e.g., my mother allows me to decide things for myself)

- **Competence**
  (e.g., my mother puts time and energy into helping me)

- **Relatedness**
  (e.g., my mother accepts me and likes me as I am)

- Convergence of philosophical assumptions of SDT and PCA

- Similarity between basic psychological needs of SDT and the core conditions of PCA

- SDT research supportive of PCA


Authenticity Scale

Please read of the following statements and rate how well each describes you, where 1 = “Does not Describe me at all” and 7 = “Describes me very well”.

1. I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular
2. I don’t know how I really feel inside
3. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others
4. I usually do what other people tell me to do
5. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do
6. Other people influence me greatly
7. I feel as if I don’t know myself very well
8. I always stand by what I believe in
9. I am true to myself in most situations
10. I feel out of touch with the ‘real me’
11. I live according to my values and beliefs
12. I feel alienated from myself

Scoring: total items 3, 4, 5, 6 for resistance to external influences; 2, 7, 10 and 12 for self-alienation; and items 1, 8, 9 and 11 for authentic behavior.


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