



The Existential-Humanist

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Letter from the President

This year's conference is appropriately entitled, "From Crisis to Creativity," not only because as a country we are undergoing difficult economic times, but also because the basic foundation of our existential-humanistic tradition is rooted in the transformation of crisis into creative solutions to life and living. For is this not exactly what our clients ask of us? "I'm in crisis, help me alleviate my suffering, help me get through these difficult times." Whereas many other approaches and attitudes to helping people begin with the idea that the clients' crisis must be eliminated - find etiology, remove the tumor, redirect the person, modify the behavior, change the thought - an existential-humanistic approach to helping others begins with the assumption that inherent in crises reside solutions to what lie ahead in terms of awareness and learning. In other words, crisis - whether of personal or social dimension - is driven by meaning. This, then, is what our task as existential-humanistic psychotherapists continues to be: To look at crisis in order to find within it the jewel that wants to be unveiled.

There is yet another point to the title of our conference. We are not just using crisis as an opportunity to understand and learn more deeply, but also to emphasize that the very nature of crisis can spur the best of our creativity. "Not macht erfinderisch," a popular German saying goes: "Misery prompts discovery." So it is with crisis as the very stimulus that makes us seek new ground, fresh awareness, a deepening of our consciousness.

Lastly, crisis presents an opportunity to come closer together as people, to create relationships and build community. The Existential-Humanistic Institute (EHI) would like to emphasize building our existential community in the years to come. Our redesigned website - like everything in life, a work in progress - will be one vehicle to bring us together. Call us old-fashioned, but as existential-humanists we also like to continue with interactive events in the future, such as conferences, parties, and residential workshops. We look forward to you - the reader - sharing your ideas and offerings with the community and thus helping EHI grow into a place we existentialists can truly call our home.

- Nader Shabahangi

Check out our new website!

www.ehinstitute.org

Stay up-to-date with current and upcoming events and courses, get information on becoming an affiliate, and connect with the EHI community.

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Existential-Humanistic Therapy Comes of Age

APA Convention, August 6, 2009
Toronto, Ontario

Existential-Humanistic Therapy made a landmark contribution at the annual APA convention held in Toronto this past August. Kirk Schneider, Ph.D. and Orah Krug, Ph.D., two EHI Executive Board members, along with three students (Alexander Bacher, Dave Fisher and Pernilla Nathan), presented a symposium on the potential for a renaissance in existential-humanistic theory and practice. The invitation to present at the APA conference signals the acceptance and impact of EH therapy by more mainstream psychotherapies.

What was presented was that not only is EH therapy regaining visibility through a new monograph and DVD series, co-authored by Kirk Schneider and Orah Krug and published by the American Psychological Association (see apa.org/videos), it is also being reassessed as a leading evidence-based modality. This reassessment is exemplified by the latest *contextual* or *common factors* research which upholds both the personal dimensions of the therapist as well as self-healing capacities of clients as the key variables for effective therapy. This panel, comprised of both clinical graduate students and the co-authors of the EH monograph, explored the nature, implications, and practical applications of the aforementioned findings, and related them directly to EH case material. Specifically, student presenters, Bacher, and Fischer, *set the stage* for the symposium with an examination of the leading common factors research relevant to the EH therapy renaissance, while student presenter Nathan focused on one potentially promising outgrowth of that renaissance, existential-integrative (EI) therapy. In the balance of the symposium, presenters Krug and Schneider related the findings of the students to two clinical case studies, drawn from their monograph, and Elkins followed up with a brief discussion of the key findings of the symposium as a whole.

A Tribute to Al Siebert, Ph.D.: A Humanistic Resiliency Pioneer 1934 - 2009

by Molly Siebert

Al had a gift. He had the ability to observe his personal journey at the same time he experienced it, whether painful or delightful. His life's work was to witness and research the human experience in a new field called *resiliency* decades before *resiliency* was an accepted field of study in psychology. He was a pioneering authority on how to be resilient and what the necessary qualities are for optimum resiliency. In his first book, *The Survivor Personality*, he demonstrated Nietzsche's mantra, "that which does not kill us, makes us stronger." By using a playful curiosity, asking skillful questions, and having a strong desire to want life to work well for everyone, Al helped the reader build skills in coping, surviving, and thriving. His next book, *The Resiliency Advantage*, enhanced *The Survivor Personality's* core theory by showing how basic it is for healthy people to become increasingly better at handling turbulent change, nonstop pressure, and life-disrupting setbacks.

Al was the founder and director of the *Resiliency Center*. He was a member of and strong advocate for both the Association for Humanistic Psychology and the Association for Humanistic Psychology, Oregon Community. Al was a gifted teacher, whether it was teaching at Portland State University, providing independent workshops or presenting at numerous conferences. *The Resiliency Advantage* won the Independent Publishers 2006 Best Self-Help Book Award. *The Survivor Personality* is now in its 7th printing. He was interviewed about highly resilient survivors on National Public Radio, the NBC Today Show, and Oprah.

Molly is the beloved wife of Al Siebert.

Learning Communities

EHI invites you to join us at our next San Francisco Bay Area Learning Community Meeting.

Please RSVP: Candice Miller Hershman
Phone Contact: 415-328-4575
Email: cahershman@comcast.net

December

We will be viewing Disney's version of the classic Charles Dickens existential tale, "A Christmas Carol" followed by a late lunch/early dinner and open discussion on movie's themes. Showtimes not released yet, but will be announced along with location upon release. If interested, please RSVP:

Date: Saturday, December 12th, 2009

Time: Matinee showing - TBA

Location: Theater TBA (probably Metreon)

Address: San Francisco

January

To honor Black History month, we will be attending the screening of the film "Banished" at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco. There will be opportunity for discussion after the film, venue to be announced during event.

Date: Friday, January 8th, 2010

Time: 6 - 8 PM

Location: Museum of the African Diaspora

Address: 685 Mission Street (at Third)

San Francisco, CA 94105

Museum Phone #: 415-358-7200.

Link to event: <http://www.moadsf.org/visit/calendar.html?year=2008&month=01>

February

Candice Miller Hershman will host a learning community potluck at her home. The discussion theme will be "The Phenomenology of Food." Please bring an interesting dish to explore and discuss with other attendees.

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2010

Time: 6:30 - 9:30 PM

Location: Home of Candice Miller Hershman

Address: 14 Zanco Way, Novato, CA 94947

EHI is seeking supporters who are interested in hosting learning community meetings in other regions of the country. A learning community is basically a social forum in which people who share an interest in the Existential Humanistic tradition can get together and network, share resources and ideas, brainstorm, and build a local support system in the psychological world at large. Learning community meetings can look very different depending on who organizes them, but the common thread which they all share is that they bring people together who have diverging interests. It is also helpful to invite people from other professions (e.g. - the artistic community, the teaching community, the medical community) to create an integrative grassroots forum. If you have any questions about how to begin a learning community, or want to advertise with EHI, please contact Candice Miller Hershman, M.A. at cahershman@comcast.net.

25 Proposed Qualities, Attitudes, and Skills of an Existential Humanistic Psychotherapist

by Bob Edelstein

I have been a member of AHP since 1973, and an Existential Humanistic therapist since 1975. Over the years, I've been continuously fascinated by both how and why Existential Humanistic Psychotherapy works. Part of my search has included attempting to define the qualities, attitudes, and skills that are specifically beneficial for an Existential Humanistic psychotherapist to develop. Below are my thoughts:

1. Hearing and observing the lived experience of the client with acceptance and engaged curiosity.
2. Being congruent with your authentic self and, as appropriate, expressing that.
3. Having an unconditional positive regard for the client that is expressed verbally and embodied nonverbally.
4. Having a highly developed sense of empathy that you express to the client. This means being able to sensitively communicate your perception of the client's lived experience to them in a way that they feel deeply heard and understood. This facilitates the client to make new discoveries that can range from helpful to life-transforming.
5. Valuing clients for their inherent worth and dignity beyond their undesirable and/or ineffective behaviors.
6. Believing even the most wounded client has the capacity and potential to heal.
7. Believing each client is capable of self-actualization.
8. Believing self-actualization is not only good for the client, it is good for the world.
9. Believing a client's lived experience supersedes any theory about how that client should live.
10. Facilitating the client's search for meaning. This includes exploring the client's definition of themselves and their world through their verbal messages and nonverbal cues. Their self and world identity may need to be challenged so that possibly a more rewarding identity can be embraced, if the client so chooses.
11. Having the flexibility, presence, and spontaneity to work with each client so that each client has a unique therapeutic course.
12. Being aware of and honest about your strengths and vulnerabilities as a therapist, and as a person. This includes knowing your limits.
13. Being fully engaged in the present moment. Recognizing when vital elements of the client's past and future are contained in the present moment. Exploring what emerges from the present moment can facilitate change that ranges from subtle to dramatic.

14. Trusting that the awarenesses which emerge in the present moment, both within the client, within the therapist, and between us, will lead to the exact intervention that will best move the process forward.

15. Believing clients know themselves better than the therapist can ever know them. The therapist's task is not to give answers to the client, but to provide the container for the client to discover their own answers.

16. Being comfortable with not knowing. Having the ability to remain present and be patient with the process until the mystery of not knowing transforms into increased clarity.

17. Being patient with silence until the therapist or client has something relevant to say, thus drawing the client deeper into their immediate experience.

18. Being authentic within the context of the client-therapist relationship. This facilitates the client to trust their own authenticity. As a result, the client can more easily access and express the full range of their feelings. The client experiences the value of being authentic.

19. Using the client-therapist relationship as a powerful way for the client's intimacy issues and existential themes to be explored directly in the therapy session. Shifts occur by exploring the authentic client-therapist relationship as well as any transference and/or countertransference that may be occurring.

20. Valuing the mutuality of the client-therapist relationship, especially the importance of mutual respect and caring in order for the relationship to develop optimally. Appreciating the reciprocity of needs being met, while recognizing that those needs are different.

21. Fostering the development of an I-Thou relationship with the client and acknowledging its sacredness. Addressing what might be preventing the I-Thou relationship from developing.

22. Having confidence in your ability and capacity to hold the container for your clients as they work through their changing feelings, needs, and issues.

23. Accepting and engaging fully with whatever feelings our clients are dealing with – even when it is personally uncomfortable for us as therapists.

24. Accepting and engaging fully with whatever feelings we as therapists have towards our clients, and working through them appropriately - whether that be internally, in supervision/consultation, in our own therapy, and/or directly with the client.

25. Embracing your unique therapeutic style as valid and sufficient.

This article is reprinted from the February/March 2009 Assn. for Humanistic Psychology Perspective, published by the Assn. for Humanistic Psychology, AHPweb.org.

Recently Released Existential Humanistic Books

Existential-Humanistic Therapy by Kirk Schneider and Orah Krug provides an in-depth survey of contemporary existential-humanistic (E-H) theory, practice, and research. In particular, this uniquely American version of existential therapy, currently experiencing a renaissance, highlights E-H therapy's historical development, theoretical underpinnings, and practical applications alongside the very latest in process and outcome research. The book features the most recent theoretical and practical applications of E-H therapy to a broad diversity of ethnic and diagnostic populations. Among the theorists *Existential-Humanistic Therapy* highlights are Rollo May, Irvin Yalom, James Bugental, Kirk Schneider, and Orah Krug, an emerging female voice within the E-H movement. Each theoretical discussion is richly illustrated by case vignettes, drawn from the authors' practices.

The book also accents an integrative E-H approach. This approach is augmented by numerous case vignettes that articulate, step-by-step, the processes by which mainstream therapeutic approaches can be interwoven within an overarching E-H context. The book also highlights recent transpersonal and spiritual expansions of E-H practice.

Finally, the book features a discussion of the political and economic challenges that beset E-H therapy, and proposes alternatives to address them. To sum, *Existential-Humanistic Therapy* provides a rich, comprehensive, and practical overview of the very latest in E-H theory, practice, and research. It also exemplifies leading therapy researcher Bruce Wampold's suggestion that "an understanding of the principles of existential therapy is needed by all therapists, as it adds a perspective that might...form the basis for all effective treatments" (Wampold cited in *PsycCritiques*, February 6, 2008, p.6). 2010. 176 pages. Paperback.

Awakening to Awe by Kirk Schneider is a self-help meditation on an alternative—and growing—spiritual movement. This is a movement comprised of people who refuse the "quick-fix" model for healing, whether that model entails popping pills, indulging in material comforts, or adhering to doctrinal dogmas. By contrast, the movement about which Schneider writes is composed of people who have developed the capacity to experience the humility and wonder, or in short, awe, of life deeply lived. In particular, this book highlights the stories of people who through the cultivation of awe have transformed their lives. For example, readers will discover how awe transformed the life of an ex-gang member into a beloved and productive gang mediator, an ex-drug addict into a communally conscious healer, and a sufferer of stage three cancer into a contemplative and spiritual seeker. The book will also inform readers about the challenges and joys of awe-based child-raising, education, humor, political activism, and aging. Drawing on the philosophy of Schneider's earlier work, the acclaimed *Rediscovery of Awe*, *Awakening to Awe* tells the down-to-earth stories of a quiet yet emerging revolution in the transformation of lives.

Conversations With Ed: Waiting For Forgetfulness Why Are We So Afraid Of Alzheimer's Disease?

The following is an excerpt from the book jointly-authored by Ed Voris, Nader Shabahangi, and Patrick Fox, in collaboration with Sharon Mercer.

Our understanding of personal and social growth is embedded within a dominant framework of striving for more - more outcomes, more memory, more years to live. From this notion of gain, it is fair to assert that loss is anything that prevents us from reaching outcomes - from accomplishing, from being engaged in work, from remaining youthful achievers. Forgetfulness falls on the loss side of this equation.

Alzheimer's disease is caused by various changes that result in so-called damaged brain cells. In the public it is predominantly defined by its symptoms and interpreted as the decline and final loss of memory and other cognitive abilities. Many of us might place most, if not all, of our hopes on finding a treatment and ultimately a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

But the fruits of such an approach are elusive and difficult to obtain, and no clear timetable can be set for harvesting the fruits of this belief. What if, in spite of all the best efforts of those conducting research into treatment and cures, these goals remain elusive into the foreseeable future? How do we care for people who are different from our expectations of what is normal, and what does that mean in terms of a philosophy of care? Do we treat them as diseased? Would that imply a certain derogatory stance toward the people for whom we care about? Or do we approach forgetful people with an attitude of respect, kindness, and acceptance of who they are in their new realities?

Just think for a moment: how does your attitude change if you know you are approaching someone you think is your teacher versus if you are approaching someone you think is diseased, cognitively impaired? We are very sensitive people and can sense the attitude behind those who care for us - whether we are forgetful or not. A central question thus becomes: How would you like to be approached if you were forgetful? What would you like the eyes to see that look at you?

Some argue that even if substantial therapeutic advances will be available in the near future, they may not be robust enough to slow the progression of forgetfulness among the many people who are experiencing cognitive changes as they age. The unfortunate by-product of the belief in the discovery of a cure is that we have not begun thinking about ways that our society can see forgetfulness as something more than a demon to be exorcised by a hoped-for medical treatment. Yet, rather than a debilitating disease that leaves those afflicted in a sad and lamentable state of existence, dementia may be another, altered state of consciousness, as valuable and important as our everyday or "normal" way of being. This requires, foremost, a curiosity, an openness to all that is, to look at forgetfulness, as it is, not in the way we believe to know it.

By engaging people to think about forgetfulness in the context of a wider horizon of possibilities, social change is possible. We may reduce the social stigma that people labeled with Alzheimer's disease experience. In that way we may not only accept and help others who are forgetful, but we may also be better prepared for our own inevitable forgetfulness. We believe it is time for society to think about and act toward forgetfulness and forgetful people in ways that may be currently unthinkable, but perhaps will become a reality in the future. Instead of being a crisis, forgetfulness may one day soon present an opportunity for knowing and deepening who we are.

Remembering the Late Red Hobart Thomas 1924 - 2009

by Candice Hershman

Red Hobart Thomas is a figure in humanistic psychology who left a deep impression on me regarding what it means to be a person who cares about Humanistic and Existential values. Red Thomas and I were acquainted through a variety of functions that I attended over the years in the Sonoma County humanistic and existential community. Among his endearing qualities were an open friendliness, terrific sense of humor, an ability to bring people together through his playing of music or telling a good joke, and his dynamic and unabashed presence that conveyed a genuine passion for living. He had a fabulous presence that shone as bright as his red hair, the source of his nickname.

Red Thomas was the first dean of the psychology department at Sonoma State University, which he co-founded with George McCabe and Gordon Tappan as a major hub of the Santa Rosa Center out of San Francisco State in 1956. At one time, the psychology department of Sonoma State University was considered only one of two major learning institutions in the country with a primary learning model that reflected humanistic and existential values. Red believed in the Student-Centered learning model based on Carl Roger's Person-Centered approach, and he continued to promote that form of student empowerment through administration and teaching after he helped found the Sonoma State School of Expressive Arts with Mac McCreary.

Although Red was remembered by many as a cutting edge administrator, his first passion was teaching. Red was able to implement a style of teaching in even some of the most seemingly mundane of courses with a design that addressed the needs of students based on Maslow's hierarchy. It was important to Red that students had an opportunity to explore their passions and inner experiences. Red had a talent for being a source of motivation and inspiration to his students.

Along with Art Warmoth, Pat Hansen, Sandi Stein, and Wayne Downey, Red Thomas also pioneered in the

organization of student learning communities. This extension of learning outside of the classroom environment and into a less formal, more personable forum with faculty and other students was a prime example of how teaching could take on the student centered, humanistic values that minimize institutionalized power differentials, and instead favor the power of authentic human contact in the natural context of relationships and real life.

In 1962, Red helped organize a conference at the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa featuring Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, Wilson Van Dusen, and Ludwig Lefebvre. Along with a few other conferences of the time, this conference was key in helping ground the roots of the humanistic movement. It was at this conference that the American Association for Humanistic Psychology commenced with its establishment.

In remembering Red Thomas, what has stood out to me more than anything was his ability to engage so naturally and with such life. Red always had a twinkle in his eye and was ready with a humorous silly comment that made one feel that being involved in the Humanistic-Existential community is about more than being at a meeting to plan and implement change. Being there was about being with people because one really wanted to be there for the joy of it. His pure enjoyment of others has stood out to me and reminded me that through our authentic engagement with each other as whole people, not simply as academicians and therapists, we build community and a genuine desire to create a world in which everybody can share that same ecstatic appreciation of life.

Upcoming Conference Announcements

Existential Psychology East-West Conference for 2010

The first Existential Psychology East-West Conference is being planned for March 31 through April 4, 2010, in Nanjing, China. The conference planning committee is beginning to search for individuals interested in participating in this conference including people wanting to attend, present, and/or engage in panel discussions on critical issues. The focus of the conference is on creating a dialogue, with mutual learning. More information on the conference will be available at www.depth-psychotherapyinstitute.com/Existential_EW_Conference/Index.html. Additionally, interested individuals are encouraged to contact Dr. Louis Hoffman (louis.hoffman@rockies.edu) to be added to an email list which will provide regular updates on the conference.

PLEASE JOIN US - BECOME AN AFFILIATE OF EHI!

Professional Affiliates:

1. Entitlement to a one page professional bio and photograph on the EHI website www.ehinstitute.org.
2. Eligibility for a 20% discount on EHI events, including conferences and workshops.

Professional, Regular, and Student Affiliates:

1. EHI student affiliates and regular affiliates will receive a 10% discount on all EHI events, including conferences and workshops.
2. Participation in the EHI listserv, which will afford you the opportunity to converse with EHI affiliates, some of whom have made substantial contributions to Existential-Humanistic psychology
3. Participation with fellow professionals and students in vibrant local learning communities, as well as globally on the worldwide web.
4. Access to the EHI Newsletter, which includes articles by EHI faculty on the theory and practice of Existential-Humanistic psychology. In addition, the newsletter will keep you informed about upcoming programs, conferences and workshops at the institute and in the field.
5. The opportunity to submit articles to be considered for the EHI Newsletter.
6. The opportunity to become acquainted with some of the most accomplished psychologists and therapists on the North American continent. You can find out who is an affiliate of EHI by going to the "members only" site at: www.ehinstitute.org.
7. The opportunity to contribute to the advancement of Existential-Humanistic psychology and impact in the psychology field by engaging with members of other disciplines and orientations.
8. The opportunity to develop and maintain life-long friendships with people who share your interests and values.
9. The chance to become an integral part of a community that will foster existential-humanistic values throughout the world.

Note: EHI is a program of Pacific Institute, a Non-Profit Public Service Organization. All contributions received from Affiliates are considered donations and gifts.

EHI SUPPORTER/AFFILIATE APPLICATION

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Professional Affiliate Dues: \$100
Student and Regular Affiliate Dues: \$50

Please make checks payable to **Pacific Institute**

and send all contributions to: EHI c/o Pacific Institute
432 Ivy Street
San Francisco CA 94102



About the Existential-Humanistic Institute

EHI provides a forum, a "home," for those mental health professionals, scholars, and students who seek in-depth training in existential-humanistic philosophy, practice, and inquiry. EHI is for trainees who believe that in optimal psychotherapy, as Rollo May said, it is not this or that symptom, but "the life of the client" that is "at stake" - and that it is precisely this life that must be supported, accompanied, and encountered.

The goal of the institute - via both its curriculum and newsletters - is to support existentially and humanistically-informed psychologies and psychotherapies throughout the world. By "existentially informed," we mean perspectives that stress freedom, experiential reflection, and responsibility. By "humanistically informed," we mean purviews that address two over-arching questions - What does it mean to be fully, experientially human, and how does that understanding illuminate the vital or fulfilled life?

Board Members

- Nader Shabahangi | President
- Kirk Schneider | Vice President
- Orah Krug | Director of Training
- Sonja Saltman
- Bob Edelstein
- Candice Miller Hershman
- Mary Madrigal
- Sibel Golden

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