

Compatibility of Epicureanism and Existential Therapy

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 30, 2022 at 8:57 AM

I want to explore the compatibility of Epicureanism and Existential Therapy and also applying philosophical thinking to the practice of therapy. A quick online search brings several articles -- Existential therapists have the potential for [using the philosophy of Epicurus in their practice of therapy](#).

First to explain Existential Therapy:

Quote

Existential therapy is a form of psychotherapy that explores the difficulties that an individual experiences but from a philosophical perspective. This type of therapy focuses on the holistic aspects of the human condition as a whole. Existential therapy focuses on the individual and not the symptoms that the individual is presenting with but also recognizes the power of the individual to choose their actions. Emotional and psychological difficulties are viewed as an inner conflict caused by an individual's confrontation with the givens of existence. Rather than exploring the past, the existential approach looks at the here and now. It can be highly effective with adolescents and adults that are struggling to make healthy life choices, as well as the consequences of their choices.

What is Existential Therapy?

Existential therapy is a type of talk therapy that is based on some of the main ideas behind existentialism as a philosophy. The goal of existential therapy is to assist individuals in accepting and overcoming existential fears that are inherent in being human. An example of these existential fears includes freedom and responsibility, isolation, meaninglessness, and death. Existential therapists evaluate a person's experience in four dimensions of existence; physical, social, spiritual, and psychological. Through these dimensions are the existential fears of that individual's life explored. Existential therapists look to help individuals live more authentically and to be less concerned with superficiality. Existential therapy focuses on each individual's uniqueness as well as how their choices shape their life. It also helps guide individuals on their journey to self-understanding and self-acceptance. Within existential therapy, the individual is empowered to take responsibility for the choices that shape their lives. There is no structure to existential therapy therefore the number of sessions is not

predetermined like with most cognitive-behavioral therapy. Existential therapy encourages individuals to:

- Evaluate their values, beliefs, and situation.
- Acknowledge their limitations as well as the possibilities for their lives.
- Find meaning and purpose in their lives.
- Develop more effective ways of communicating. (CRC Health, 2019)

The existential approach stresses that:

- All people have the capacity for self-awareness.
- Each person has a unique identity that can be known only through relationships with others.
- People must continually re-create themselves because life's meaning constantly changes.
- Anxiety is part of the human condition.

<https://www.claritychi.com/adult-therapy/...al-therapy/amp/>

Quote

The existential approach is first and foremost philosophical. It is concerned with the understanding of people's position in the world and with the clarification of what it means to be alive. It is also committed to exploring these questions with a receptive attitude, rather than a dogmatic one: the search for truth with an open mind and an attitude of wonder is the aim, not the fitting of the client into pre-established categories and interpretations.

The existential approach considers human nature to be open-ended, flexible and capable of an enormous range of experience. The person is in a constant process of becoming. I create myself as I exist. There is no essential, solid self, no given definition of one's personality and abilities.

Existential thinkers avoid restrictive models that categorise or label people. Instead, they look for the universals that can be observed transculturally. There is no existential personality theory which divides humanity up into types or reduces people to part components. Instead, there is a description of the different levels of experience and existence that people are inevitably confronted with.

Extracts are taken from 'Existential Therapy' (chapter Eight by Emmy van Deurzen, in Dryden, W. ed. The Dryden Handbook of Individual Therapy, London, Sage Publications, 2008.

<https://nspc.org.uk/about-the-scho...ntial-approach/>

To use all of this in a "self-help" manner:

I would suggest reading about Existential therapy and journaling, all while bringing in Epicurean principles.

I hope to post more on this soon.