

Association for Transpersonal Psychology

Newsletter

Winter 1978

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I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new chair of the Psychotherapy Committee. This committee has been functioning for several years and was chaired first by Jim Terrill, and last year by Roger Walsh. Obviously, the concept of transpersonal therapy means different things to different people. I would like to devote a large portion of this column in the future to hearing what you feel the concept of transpersonal therapy means. I invite those of you who call yourselves 'transpersonal therapists' to write me, in care of the Association, and let me know what you mean by that label. Also, I invite those of you who don't call yourself 'transpersonal therapists', but believe in your heart of hearts that you really are, to similarly write, and let me know what you mean by that. Please feel free to send poems, or quotes, that, for you, capture the essence or spirit. I would like to see us begin to dialogue and discourse in these pages as well as in the personal meetings that I am hoping to have with many of you over the coming year.

There are many ways in which we can share with each other the nature of the work we are doing and, in addition to working towards a common definition of 'transpersonal therapy', be able to provide a support system and a sharing of who we are and what we do. I certainly bring my own beliefs and values to the chairing of a committee like this as did Jim and Roger before me. As background, many of you have read Roger's article on Reflections on Psychotherapy in the December 1976 issue of the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. Roger shares very sensitively and very elegantly some of his personal experiences during the process of therapy. From conversations I've had with Jim, he notes that he has a gut-level intuitive feeling about what it means to be a 'Transpersonal Therapist' and feels that often when we try to talk about it we end up in meaningless head trips. He would like to see us share with each other specific, concrete examples of what we are really doing. Or to begin to have dialogues with different people of different orientations discussing a specific case. What would a Transpersonal Therapist's response be and how would it be different from others either in actual overt behavior or in the attitude of the person doing the therapy? Jim also suggests that it might be nice to share with each other books that we are reading that are both meaningful to us and also give us a flavor of what 'Transpersonal Therapy' is. In this regard, Jim suggests the current books he is reading by Ram Dass, both Grist for Mill and The Only Dance There Is.

Let me share briefly my own personal feelings, and again, I would enjoy your reactions and comments. I believe that it's important that our concept of the context of therapy be expanded beyond the traditional view of the fifty minute hour. Although I don't want to negate what may go on during the fifty minutes, I would like to see us come to equate therapy more closely with living and being. I would also like therapy to be seen in a larger context to include a definite relationship between the mind and the body and the application of this relationship to health care psychology. This would allow us to encompass information from the behavior sciences, from behavior medicine as well as from the spiritual disciplines, and to integrate this knowledge in serving both our physical and mental health.

Similarly, I would like to see an expansion of the concept of psychotherapy, meaning the therapy of the psyche. I've chosen for myself, to call psychotherapy mind learning, based on two Chinese words. I think this is more than a semantic distinction. Let me explain: the Chinese word for mind (translated 'self-nature') consists of three characters. The character for the sun; the character for rising; and the character for heart. The first two characters, sun and rising, when used together have the meaning 'sound'. The sound of the heart. When we can hear the sun rising in our heart, when we can hear the sound of our heart, we hear our self nature. There is a very delicate and intimate connection between our mind, our body, and our spirit.