

The Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential–Humanistic Therapy is a milestone in the annals of psychotherapy research. Not since Carl Rogers and colleagues' landmark studies of client-centered therapy has a treatise more convincingly upheld the centrality of existential–humanistic principles of practice to our profession than this trail-blazing volume. As this book demonstrates, it is high-time that existential–humanistic researchers speak for themselves about the relevance of their purview for a rapidly diversifying psychotherapeutic discipline. Even a cursory perusal of this volume makes clear that existential–humanistic and existential–integrative therapies are at the frontier of psychotherapy effectiveness research as well as the broader cultural shifts out of which this research emerges. Given the upheaval of our times, I predict that existential–humanistic and existential–integrative therapies will soon be at the vanguard of a new emphasis in professional training and practice, and this book will be at its hub.

–**KIRK J. SCHNEIDER, PhD**, AUTHOR OF *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EXISTENCE* (WITH ROLLO MAY),
EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC THERAPY (WITH ORAH KRUG), *EXISTENTIAL-INTEGRATIVE*
PSYCHOTHERAPY, AND *LIFE-ENHANCING ANXIETY: KEY TO A SANE WORLD*

This edited volume is the first of its kind; that is, it is the first systematic attempt to demonstrate the evidence-base for existential–humanistic therapy (EHT) based on the model of evidence-based practice in psychology. The editors have accomplished a challenging task of threading the needle between a conception of evidence-based psychotherapy that is too rigid and narrow to accommodate EHT, on the one hand, and demonstrating that EHT is on solid ground in terms of empirical support, on the other. This is a book that will be of great interest to any practitioners of EHT, as it not only provides evidential support for their practice but also highlights basic skills that require ongoing development as well as important multicultural competencies that are increasingly relevant in our multicultural and increasingly global world. The volume will also be essential reading in graduate courses that train students in existential and humanistic approaches to therapy.

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THE CADAVER, THE MEMORIAL BODY, AND THE RECOVERY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

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Wow, this is a fantastic book! It offers a solid case for the fact that existential–humanistic (EH) therapy is a valid, scientific, and empirically valid way of doing therapy. This is something we as EH practitioners have known forever, but it is good to see it in this way to support our claims and to be able to use as a touchpoint for those who fail to understand the power of a relational approach.

–**L. XOCHITL VALLEJOS, PhD, LPC**, BOARD CHAIR, ROCKY MOUNTAIN HUMANISTIC AND COUNSELING ASSOCIATION, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO, UNITED STATES

This book describes existential–humanistic therapy (EHT) in an encouraging and hopeful tone for psychologists who seek to defend and understand it. The research presented throughout the manuscript is impeccable. The contributing authors collectively provided high-quality research that reflects both seminal studies that have been foundational to the field and studies that reflect the evolving dialogue of these topics in the literature. When such research was not available, the authors transparently identified the gap and, as is indicated in the guidelines for evidence-based practice in psychology, provided the best available research from closely aligned therapies.

–**BRIAN S. HANNA, PsyD**, LICENSED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST, HANNA PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, PARK RIDGE, IL, UNITED STATES

Hoffman and Lac are leaders in the renaissance of contemporary existential–humanistic psychotherapy, which honors the virtues of this rich tradition but extends the concepts and practices to a greater diversity of people. This text shines bright in this same light, combining evidence-based and culturally responsive practices with the perennial wisdom shared across various existential–humanistic therapies.

–**MATTHEW LEMBERGER-TRUELOVE, PhD, LMHC**, PROFESSOR OF COUNSELING, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS, DENTON, TX, UNITED STATES; FELLOW, AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

There is an urgent need to establish the evidential foundations for existential–humanistic therapy. Not only does this text take a first, giant step forward in this endeavour, but it lays the necessary foundations for further development of this evidence base. This is an essential text for those interested in existential–humanistic practice and its evolution.

–**MICK COOPER, DPhil**, PROFESSOR OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON, LONDON, ENGLAND

CONTENTS

Contributors	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction: Evidence-Based Psychological Practice in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	3
<i>Louis Hoffman and Veronica Lac</i>	
I. FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH AND COMPETENCIES IN EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY	9
1. Approaching Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy From an Evidence-Based Perspective	11
<i>Louis Hoffman</i>	
2. Existential-Therapeutic Competencies	39
<i>Joel Vos</i>	
3. Research on Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	69
<i>Andrew M. Bland</i>	
II. EVIDENCE-BASED FOUNDATIONS OF EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC STANCES	101
4. Therapeutic Presence in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	103
<i>Orah T. Krug, Chris Bradshaw, Juanita Ratner, and Almudena Sánchez-Mazarro</i>	
5. Empathy in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	131
<i>Arthur C. Bohart, Jerrold Lee Shapiro, and Gayle Byock</i>	
6. Working With Emotions in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	157
<i>Brittany Varisco and Louis Hoffman</i>	

7. Authenticity, Self-Awareness, and Facing Life Directly in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	183
<i>Drake Spaeth, Joseph Alexander Vanderhoff, Marguerite Pintauro, and Louis Hoffman</i>	
8. Here-and-Now Work in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	207
<i>Justin J. Underwood</i>	
9. Working With Meaning in Life in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	225
<i>Joel Vos</i>	
10. Understanding Acceptance in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	253
<i>Roxanne Christensen and Aviva Vincent</i>	
11. Genuineness and the Real Relationship in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	267
<i>Zenobia Morrill</i>	
12. Therapist Self-Disclosure in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	293
<i>Derrick Sebree Jr., and Vanessa Brown</i>	
13. The Self in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	311
<i>Anne Y. J. Hsu</i>	
III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES IN EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY	333
14. Integrative Considerations of Mindfulness in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	335
<i>Donna Rockwell, O'Dell O. Johnson, and Shea Scharding</i>	
15. The Creative and Expressive Arts Therapies and Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	359
<i>Ilene A. Serlin, Rainbow Tin Hung Ho, Fulya Kurter Musnitsky, and J. Ryan Kennedy</i>	
16. Experiential Techniques in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy	381
<i>Trey Cole</i>	
17. An Existential-Humanistic Approach to Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy	397
<i>Aviva Vincent and Veronica Lac</i>	
Index	413
About the Editors	435

Introduction: Evidence-Based Psychological Practice in Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy

Louis Hoffman and Veronica Lac

For many years, we have heard misinformation about existential-humanistic (EH) psychotherapy suggesting that it cannot be practiced consistent with evidence-based practice in psychology (EBPP). In particular, students have informed us that they have been told this by professors, supervisors, practicum sites, and internships. This misinformation has led to restrictions inhibiting students' ability to learn EH psychotherapy in graduate schools, practicums, and internships while also restricting professionals' freedom to practice EH psychotherapy in some settings and creating barriers to seeking reimbursement from insurance companies. These factors have also created unfortunate obstacles to clients seeking this type of psychotherapy. This book sets the record straight and, hopefully, will open doors for students, professionals, and clients.

In his review of *Existential-Integrative Psychotherapy: Guideposts to the Core of Practice* by Kirk J. Schneider (2008), leading outcome researcher Bruce Wampold (2008) wrote

I have argued that the principles of change in EI [existential-integrative psychotherapy] are as scientific as those of any other psychological treatment (Wampold, 2007); I have no doubt that EI approaches would satisfy any criteria used to label other psychological treatments as scientific. (p. 13)

This is a strong endorsement. This volume compiles the evidence that demonstrates that Wampold was, indeed, correct.

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The Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Therapy, L. Hoffman and V. Lac (Editors)

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EH PSYCHOTHERAPY'S PLACE IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EH psychotherapy historically has fallen outside of mainstream psychology. Although scholars such as Rollo May and Kirk Schneider have written popular books that have drawn interest beyond humanistic and existential psychology, and in spite of May at one time being one of the most influential U.S. psychologists, EH psychotherapy has long been viewed as an alternative approach falling outside of mainstream psychology. Despite this, its influence has continually been a force. Shahar and Schiller (2016) have even gone as far as saying that EH psychology has taken over the field by stealth, as many of its concepts have been integrated into mainstream approaches. While this may be overly optimistic—especially given that when EH psychotherapy principles are integrated into other approaches, they are frequently simplified and changed—it demonstrates that EH psychology has had a continual impact upon the field in significant and impactful ways.

The growing monoculture in the field of psychology is harmful for the field and the suffering people seeking out mental health treatment (Leichsenring et al., 2016; Levy & Anderson, 2013). Theoretical and clinical diversity is good for the field. Most effective psychotherapists have at least a handful, if not an extensive collection, of stories of clients who previously experienced a different type of therapy with unsatisfactory results. In these cases, after unsuccessful results with other therapists, they found success with a different therapist or modality (see Hoffman, 2024). This does not demonstrate that one modality is superior to the others; it simply demonstrates that a particular modality was the right fit for a particular client. The other extreme of accepting all psychotherapies as valid, bona fide therapies is also dangerous, as evidenced by the death of a child that occurred during rebirthing therapy (Josefson, 2001). Balance is needed.

All psychotherapy modalities need to engage in rigorous reflection, scholarship, and research to continually assess and improve their effectiveness. While EH psychology has consistently engaged in meticulous study and self-examination, it has at times lacked in conducting research on EH psychotherapy. It has been better at utilizing research than conducting original research. We hope this volume will help address this. In the chapters, the contributors reliably engage prior research while also identifying gaps in the current literature. This, we believe, is one of the more important contributions of the current volume: identifying future research needs. We hope this book will inspire professionals engaging in research and students seeking dissertation topics to begin filling the current gaps. This will strengthen the standing of EH therapy beyond its current solid foundation while also identifying areas of growth and change that are needed.

Research should not be the only consideration in identifying appropriate forms of psychotherapy for clients. It is also important to consider client values along with individual and cultural differences. Different approaches to psychotherapy represent different values and desired outcomes. Though

some approaches to therapy value rationality and prioritize emotional regulation, others help clients embrace and value their emotions that bring about changes in how emotions are experienced. Some approaches prioritize happiness, whereas others value meaning and view happiness as a byproduct of living a good life. Still more approaches to psychotherapy focus on the individual first, and others prioritize relationships or culture. Of course, these are often differences in degrees rather than absolute distinctions, but they are significant nonetheless.

One of the great errors in the history of psychotherapy is not recognizing the values embedded in different approaches to psychotherapy and imposing them upon clients without consideration for their differences (see Hoffman & Cleare-Hoffman, 2025, Chapter 1). Instead, the appropriateness of fit has been based on outcomes determined by the norms of society and predetermined, acceptable sought outcomes rather than the values of the client. Efficiency, in both time and money, is also prioritized over client preferences and cultural differences. But there are different paths to improved mental health, and what is an ideal approach to mental health may vary between clients. If we are going to truly value diversity in individual and cultural differences, we must move beyond the psychotherapeutic monoculture that is dominating the field and embrace different therapeutic modalities. This also means decolonizing the field through the contributions of practitioners from marginalized spaces. When psychotherapists are able to appreciate the different modalities and embrace a willingness to help clients find the best fit for the client values and preferences, we are better able to serve those seeking mental health services.

EH psychotherapy has a long and vibrant history over the past 60 years. Included in this history is vibrant scholarship and a legacy of providing effective, compassionate psychotherapy services. This volume builds from this history to demonstrate the important place that EH psychotherapy occupies in the contemporary landscape of the mental health professions.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

The starting point for this book is the 2006 article in the *American Psychologist* by the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice and the three pillars it identified as the foundation of EBPP: (a) the best available research; (b) clinical experience; and (c) client characteristics, culture, and preference. This book was organized in a manner to demonstrate how EH psychotherapy addresses each of these pillars. In Chapter 1, Louis Hoffman begins by providing an overview of EH approaches to EBPP. This includes a history of EBPP and some challenges to specific ways that EBPP has evolved, including privileging certain research methodologies even when they may not be the most appropriate for the research question.

The second pillar of EBPP is clinical experience, which is consistent with psychotherapy competencies. This pillar is addressed separately by Joel Vos in Chapter 2. Vos's chapter discusses existential competencies across the different schools of existential therapy as well as competencies specific to particular schools. In the end, there is more overlap in existential competencies across the schools than differences and, as Vos maintains, there has been a gradual movement toward more convergence among the existential schools. Through addressing the existential competencies across the schools, this chapter provides a foundation for integrating other existential therapies, particularly those with the strongest research support, into EH psychotherapy.

In Chapter 3, Andrew M. Bland reviews the research on EH therapy and related therapies. To date, unfortunately, there has been limited direct research on EH therapy. In part, this is due to EH psychotherapists' resistance to outcome research and randomized clinical trials. However, conducting research also has been challenged by the lack of a structural framework for EH psychotherapy or case formulation. This is being addressed in what is intended as a companion volume to this one: *Case Formulation in Existential–Humanistic Therapy* (Hoffman & Cleare-Hoffman, 2025). In addition to reviewing the research, Bland's chapter helps identify specific needs for future outcome research.

In Part II, Chapters 4–13 review foundations of EH therapy, including presence, empathy, working with emotions, authenticity, self-awareness, facing life directly, working with the here-and-now, meaning, acceptance, genuineness, the real relationship, therapist self-disclosure, and working with the self. These chapters are written by established and emerging leaders in EH psychology, including Orah T. Krug, Arthur C. Bohart, Drake Spaeth, Zenobia Morrill, and others. Each of these chapters consider the other two pillars of EBPP: the best available research and client characteristics, culture, and preference. Therefore, this book provides an in-depth demonstration of how EH psychotherapy can be practiced consistent with the three pillars of EBPP.

The final section, Part III, includes four chapters on integrative strategies, including mindfulness, the creative and expressive arts, experiential techniques, and equine-facilitated psychotherapy. These were selected as examples of approaches that readily fit with EH principles. Each chapter follows the same structure as in Part II with additional considerations about how these approaches may, at times, require some adaptation to be integrated with EH psychotherapy. At the same time, we believe that the contributors to this volume have convincingly demonstrated that EH therapy has a strong research foundation, as supported by the literature.

The chapters were written with an assumption that readers will have at least a foundational knowledge of EH psychotherapy. This will help readers recognize some of the nuances within how EH therapists approach the specific topics covered. With regard to EBPP, there are many variations to how EBPP is understood. Therefore, an overview of the history and current understanding of EBPP is covered in Chapter 1. The book and chapters were not written with any assumptions about the readers' familiarity with EBPP.

CONCLUSION

This book is long overdue. For many years, EH psychotherapists have been battling to demonstrate effectiveness with no comprehensive resources to support their arguments. Although the support has long been available, until this current volume, individual researchers and practitioners have had to do the work themselves of compiling the evidence. *The Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential–Humanistic Therapy* changes that. Practitioners now have the evidence at hand to demonstrate to the critics and skeptics what we have known for many years: In terms of EBPP, EH psychotherapy is on solid ground.

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