

INTRODUCTION

DAVID J. CAIN, KEVIN KEENAN, AND SHAWN RUBIN

There are a lot of good reasons to read this book. If you are a graduate student learning therapy, a professor teaching therapy, a psychotherapy researcher, or a therapist who wants to incorporate humanistic concepts, relational emphases, and response styles into your current approach, this book has much to offer. Your teachers, the authors of the chapters, are among the most accomplished humanistic therapists and researchers in the field. The primary goal of the book, to translate psychotherapy research into practice, is accomplished with ample therapist–client dialogue that demonstrates how the core humanistic variables (e.g., empathy) and major schools (e.g., person-centered, Gestalt) can be optimally implemented in a seamless manner. No matter what your experience level as a therapist, this book has a range and depth of learning that will enhance your skills and benefit your clients whether

Proper steps were taken in all case studies reported in the second edition of *Humanistic Psychotherapies* to protect the confidentiality of clients.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14775-001>

Humanistic Psychotherapies: Handbook of Research and Practice, Second Edition, D. J. Cain, K. Keenan, and S. Rubin (Editors)

Copyright © 2016 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

in individual, couples, child, or family therapy. *Humanistic Psychotherapies: Handbook of Research and Practice, Second Edition* is unique in its review of the humanistic psychotherapy research literature from its inception. It illustrates clearly how to become a more evidence-based therapist while retaining one's core humanistic principles and values.

DEFINING HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPIES

The reader may fairly ask, "What defines therapy as humanistic?" The term *humanistic*, as used here, is understood to incorporate approaches variously defined as experiential, existential, relational, and phenomenological. Therapies that come under the humanistic umbrella share a number of core variables and emphases. They include

- an optimistic view of clients as resourceful and naturally inclined to grow and develop their potential.
- a belief that the quality of the relationship between therapist and client provides a safe sanctuary that supports the therapeutic process and that is growth inducing in and of itself. The primary endeavor of humanistic therapists, therefore, is the creation of an optimal therapeutic relationship that is individualized to adapt to clients' needs as they evolve throughout the course of therapy.
- the core role of therapist empathy in grasping the personal meaning of the client's experience, facilitating self-exploration and setting in motion a self-reflective process that promotes intrapersonal and interpersonal learning that leads to fresh perspectives and more effective ways of living.
- a phenomenological emphasis that focuses on clients' subjective world with the understanding that their current perception is reality and can best be understood by putting aside hypotheses, diagnoses, and preconceptions in an attempt to take in their experience as freshly as possible.
- a strong emphasis on the critical role emotion plays in both psychopathology and psychological health with an understanding of the adaptive role emotion plays in effective decision making, emotion regulation, and effective functioning.
- a focus on the self and self-concept of the client with the understanding that the way clients experience the self has a great influence on their behavior. Enhancing self-exploration, self-definition, reconstrual of the self, and the development of

self-knowledge and self-efficacy are primary endeavors of the humanistic therapist.

- a view that meaning is not a given but is constructed from the raw data of experience, including one's culture, values, perspectives, and personal history. Humanistic therapists strive to enable their clients to grasp the larger meanings and purposes of their lives.
- a view that people are essentially free to choose the manner and course of their lives and their attitude toward events and that freedom, choice, and responsibility are interwoven and inescapable.
- an understanding that all people must confront existential givens and the challenges they present, including (a) life versus death; (b) freedom, choice, and responsibility; (c) isolation versus connection; (d) meaning versus meaninglessness; (e) their "thrownness" (forces or events beyond one's control); (f) capacity for awareness; (g) anxiety as an inevitable aspect of the human condition; and (h) the fact that they are essentially embodied.
- a holistic view of people as unique, indivisible organisms composed of interrelated systems that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts. People are conceived as inseparable from their environment and are therefore best understood as beings-in-the-world.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPIES

In the past few decades, the research on humanistic psychotherapies has continued to accumulate. The effectiveness of all major branches of humanistic psychotherapy continues to be validated by new research carried out since the first edition of *Humanistic Psychotherapies* was published. The research supporting person-centered therapies and child therapy remains strong, and the evidence for focusing-oriented therapy, Gestalt therapy, and existential therapies is growing at a more modest pace. The good news is that Gestalt and existential scholar-practitioners have begun to embrace and produce considerably more research than in previous decades.

More recently, the integrative movement in psychotherapy has gained momentum and influence. As noted above, many of the core concepts and styles of practice common to humanistic psychotherapies have increasingly been incorporated into mainstream psychotherapies. This is especially so in terms of other therapeutic approaches incorporating an emotion focus in their work, with an understanding that core beliefs are fundamentally embedded

in emotion schemes. Furthermore, we are now beginning to understand that therapeutic learning is likely to be more integrated and lasting when it is experienced emotionally.

Other areas in which humanistic psychotherapies have made an impact include an emphasis on therapist presence, relational depth, a focus on the self and self-concept of the client, and more reliance on the client's resourcefulness for change. The positive psychology movement is clearly grounded in humanistic premises and values. Almost every major school of psychotherapy now understands and embraces the critical importance of Rogers' core therapist conditions of empathy, acceptance, and genuineness in facilitating client growth. Emphases on phenomenology and working in the subjective world of the client have also been embraced in mainstream psychotherapy.

Humanistic psychotherapists have also increasingly integrated concepts and methods from many therapeutic approaches. While remaining true to their core values and beliefs, humanistic therapies have incorporated aspects of other therapies in a manner that retains the integrity of the model used. This means that clients are viewed as capable partners with whom the therapist collaborates to make therapeutic adjustments and to create an optimal relationship and style of therapy that best fits their needs. This approach is guided by research of the past few decades that has clearly shown that client involvement is the best predictor of a good outcome.

Although it is likely that individual schools of psychotherapy will be maintained and taught in their pure forms, it is clear that most therapists will increasingly use concepts and methods from other sources to supplement their work and to meet the needs of clients who are not responding optimally to the core model. Emotion-focused therapy, while essentially grounded in person-centered therapy, has integrated aspects of experiential, Gestalt, and existential therapies. Therefore, it may be considered one of the first humanistic–integrative therapies. Similarly, integrated models of person-centered and existential–humanistic and Gestalt therapies have become more prominent in the past decade.

Developments in the field of humanistic psychotherapy have demonstrated that it has a renewed impact on the practice of psychotherapy that is far reaching. Kirk Schneider and Alfried Längle (2012) edited a special section of the journal *Psychotherapy* that made the case that

the renewal of humanism is a viable and growing phenomenon among the leading areas of psychotherapy and that . . . humanism is (1) a foundational element of therapeutic effectiveness; (2) a pivotal (and needed) dimension of therapeutic training and (3) a critical contributor to social well-being. (p. 427)

Invited authors of this special section of *Psychotherapy* indicated that (a) humanistic psychotherapy has become widespread in Europe, (b) multiculturalism

embraces many humanistic values, (c) humanistic values and practices have affected the practice of psychoanalytic and other schools of psychotherapy, (d) humanism serves as a common factor in effective psychotherapy, and (e) humanistic models of psychotherapy have increasingly been incorporated by the general field of psychotherapy. It can be fairly argued that many core elements of humanistic psychotherapy are vital aspects of all major approaches to psychotherapy.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

This second edition of *Humanistic Psychotherapies* gives us strong reasons for optimism. The facts are friendly. Seventy-five years of development in theory, practice, and research have demonstrated that humanistic approaches to psychotherapy are as effective or more effective than all other major approaches. Substantive growth in quantitative and qualitative research on humanistic psychotherapies has occurred over the past 25 years.

Each chapter in *Humanistic Psychotherapies* reviews research literature from 2000 to mid-2014 and also provides a brief summary of the research reviewed in the first edition. The research reviewed provides new evidence that supports the effectiveness of all major schools of humanistic therapies and humanistic variables for a wide range of problems.

Part I begins with a discussion of three core principles of humanistic psychotherapy that are key to creating positive change: relational connection and support, emotional expression and processing, and authenticity. Expanding on these fundamental concepts, Part II reviews the accumulating qualitative research that gives a glimpse into the inner world of psychotherapy as experienced by therapist and client while providing a close-to-the-bone sense of how therapy works. It also examines the continuing research support for empathy and working with clients' emotions as critical components of the psychotherapy process and future outcomes. Building on this research, Part III highlights how all major schools of humanistic psychotherapy (person-centered, Gestalt, focusing-oriented or experiential, existential, and emotion-focused therapy) have continued to evolve into more sophisticated and research-based forms of practice. Part IV demonstrates how various humanistic approaches for couples, families, and children, such as filial family therapy and child-centered play therapy, have been shown to be sufficiently effective to be considered empirically supported. Part V reviews the client and therapist variables that promote growth and the alleviation of psychopathology. Part VI ties everything together with a research-based synthesis of humanistic psychotherapies, compiling the best evidence we have into 20 proposed premises to promote the optimal practice of humanistic psychotherapy that will also benefit the larger field of psychotherapy.

Regrettably, some areas of humanistic therapies could not be included in the second edition, primarily because of either space limitations or an inadequate research base. These include culture and diversity, the self and self-concept in therapy, group and transpersonal therapy, feminist therapies, and therapies for extreme forms of psychopathology. I hope that these areas will be given the coverage they deserve in future reviews of humanistic psychotherapy.

In a recent article (Angus, Watson, Elliott, Schneider, & Timulak, 2014) reviewing the humanistic psychotherapy literature over the past 25 years (1990–2015), the results are consistent with those reported in this book. The article makes a strong case that “qualitative and quantitative research findings, including meta-analyses, support the identification of [humanistic psychotherapy] approaches as evidence-based treatments for a variety of psychological conditions” (Angus et al., 2014, p. 1). They also indicate that many humanistic therapies meet the standard for evidence-based treatments for many problems. Therefore, the findings presented in *Humanistic Psychotherapies* are increasingly supported by other current reviews of the research literature. Fortunately, the rate of new studies is increasing and continues to provide useful evidence that guides and refines practice. Our future looks bright, and humanistic psychotherapists have good reason to feel confident that they are providing their clients with a high level of care that consistently leads to good outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Angus, L., Watson, J. C., Elliott, R., Schneider, K., & Timulak, L. (2014). Humanistic psychotherapy research 1990–2015: From methodological innovation to evidence-supported treatment outcomes and beyond. *Psychotherapy Research*. Advance online publication. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25517088>
- Schneider, K. J., & Längle, A. (Eds.). (2012). Humanism in psychotherapy [special section]. *Psychotherapy*, 49, 427–481.