

"Irvin Yalom and the Art of Psychotherapy"

A 2017 poignant, intimate and in-depth interview with his son, Victor. Weaving together the central ideas and key life experiences that have formed the basis for his contributions to psychotherapy.

Notes taken by Kim Billington October 2021

- 'Let the patient teach you' was a message from his early teacher, Dr John C. Whitehorn
- Listen between the lines, what kind of friends do they have, who are their confidants?
- Temperament for counsellors: some have an innate quality of empathy
- Jerome Frank: focus on how people communicate, here and now matters and how people express themselves
- Working in a group method: you must become as vulnerable
- Group sliding off topic/ one dominating: "Can we stop for a moment and reflect on what.... said?"
- We have the freedom to create ourselves, but we often don't exercise it
- Isolation: we are born alone and die alone
- Jung said one third of his patients lacked meaning in life
- How would you really like to live?
- You learn a lot from your regrets. How could you live regret-free? What can you do between now and death that would fill your life with meaning?
- On your lifespan journey towards death, what are the events (markers)?
- There has been a branding of techniques, but the core, the heart and gut of therapy is the nature of the relationship
- Look for clues that existential issues may be sources of anxiety – beneath superficial problems
- What does give you meaning in life? What are the times in your life where you found great pleasure?
- Therapists need education on existential issues
- "I personally avoid diagnosis entirely. Diagnosis can get in the way. It can blind you to other things that contradict the diagnosis. The DSM has its roots in medicine."
- I chose my patients and see people I can offer something to over a few months.
- Stories make a good teaching vehicle. Ref: Mamma and the Meaning ... has stories that illustrate existential issues
- Carl Rogers had the golden triangle: Genuine, empathic, unconditional positive regard
- If there is no vitality in the session we may assume the patient feels the same as us. We can respond in the here and now: 'Compared to our earlier session, I'm sensing some distance between us today? What's happening?'
- Explain why we do this 'here and now' in therapy, 'Authentic exchange does not happen much in life. This here is a social microcosm.'
- Keep up the process check tool to see if therapy is on track: 'How are we doing today?'
- We want to have the client taking risks in every session. 'The more risks you take, the more work we can do.'
- Clients outside their comfort zone do better: 'How close to taking a risk have you come in this session? Let's go back to that moment.'
- Give feedback: 'It feels like you took a risk today.'
- Psychotherapy has been meaningful because I am invited by people into their innermost selves.
- Always ask about dreams, not to interpret, but because you learn more about them and what they have in their lives
- "I recommend people read widely different ideas, interact with colleagues and talk about the client cases and have multiple therapy sessions and supervision.'
- 'Initially I was negative about Skype therapy, but my mind got changed! I could see MORE of the client! There has been good therapeutic work over several months. Even in text therapy, a growing field in USA, my opinions are changing'. Also the therapist can get some 'real-time' data, and a sense of anonymity and sharing of things they have never shared face to face with their therapist. I'm open to trying new things.

Ref: <https://academy.psychotherapy.net/>

