



New Trends  
in Psychology

## Transpersonal Psychology

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**Abstract:** A relatively new field of psychology, transpersonal psychology wants the scientific approach of the whole range of human experiences, which includes the pain of trauma and dysfunction on the one hand and the peaks of creativity, intuition and peak functioning on the other. Transpersonal psychology is a study of human growth and development. Psychologists who subscribe to transpersonal psychology believe that the continuum begins with people who lack the identity of the ego and are essentially the basis of the development structure of humanity. The affected psychotic personality and limit would fall into this category. As we move toward functionality, people with stronger equal states and concise and definitive object relationships are represented as “normal”. Moving further into human development are mystics and meditators who are seen as transcending the conscious state and identifying a supreme being, God or universal force.

**Keywords:** transpersonal psychology; human existence; spirituality; mysticism; religion

### Introduction

Transpersonal psychology is a field or school of thought in psychology focused on the spiritual aspects of human life. The term transpersonal psychology was first introduced in the 1960s by psychologists such as Abraham Maslow and Victor Frankl. This field uses psychological methods and theories to examine the spiritual subject.

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The journal of transpersonal psychology began publication in 1969, and in 1971 the Association for Transpersonal Psychology was established. The field has its roots in the works of the '60s of psychologists such as William James and Carl Jung, who were deeply interested in the spiritual aspects of human nature. In addition to using psychology to better understand spiritual experiences, transpersonal psychology also strives to provide a deeper and richer understanding of individuals and help them reach their full potential.

As in most areas, there is no single definition. A first, more widespread definition is: transpersonal psychology is a type of psychological theory that embraces a wide variety of ideas that have nothing to do with religion and everything to do with the mind and behavior.

### **Transpersonal Psychology Concerns the Entire Human Experience**

Although not all definitions of transpersonal psychology are exactly the same, researchers Lajoie and Shapiro have suggested that there are several key factors that appear in most explanations of this field. These include spirituality, higher potential, transcendence and other states of consciousness. In her 2009 book *Eyes Wide Open: Cultivating Discernment on the Spiritual Path*, Mariana Caplan wrote: "Transpersonal psychologists seek to integrate timeless wisdom with modern Western psychology and translate spiritual principles into contemporary scientific language. Transpersonal psychology addresses the whole spectrum of human psychospiritual development - from our deepest wounds and needs to the existential crisis of the human being, to the most transcendent capacities of our consciousness".

Instead of focusing on a single school of psychological thinking or even a single discipline, transpersonal psychology seeks to incorporate a wide range of ideas, disciplines, and theories, such as philosophy, literature, health theories, art, social theory, science, cognitive and different traditions, says the University of Sofia, the former Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. The University of Sofia is a private institution that was originally established to educate students in transpersonal psychology and continues to transmit transpersonal values. Although transpersonal psychology is not often explored in traditional psychology programs, there is a growing interest in this perspective and how theories and ideas in this field can be applied to different subfields of psychology. Mindfulness meditation, for example, is an element of transpersonal psychology that is increasingly used.

Transpersonal psychology is sometimes confused with parapsychology, but it is important to note that the two aspects are not the same. While transpersonal psychology focuses on the spiritual side of human nature, parapsychology is concerned with the paranormal, such as psychic phenomena, including precognition, clairvoyance, near-death experiences, and psychokinesis.

There are different ways of thinking about human behavior. Psychologists use a variety of perspectives when studying how people think, feel, and behave. Some researchers focus on a particular school of thought, such as the biological perspective, while others take a more eclectic approach, which incorporates several points of view. There is no one perspective that is “better” than another; each simply emphasizes different aspects of human behavior.

The first years of psychology were dominated by a succession of different schools of thought. In a brief historical enumeration we can mention structuralism, functionalism, psychoanalysis, behavior and humanism - all these being different schools of psychological thinking. As psychology grew, the number and variety of subjects that psychologists investigated expanded. Since the early 1960s, the field of psychology has flourished, continuing to grow rapidly, as has the depth of the subjects studied by psychologists.

On closer inspection it can be said that few psychologists identify their perspective according to a certain school of thought. While there are still a few pure behaviorists or psychoanalysts, most psychologists today classify their work according to their area and perspective. Each subject in psychology can be viewed in several ways with different approaches to the same subject. An interesting example would be the subject of aggression. It could be analyzed as follows:

- A professional who emphasizes a biological perspective would look at how the brain and nervous system influence aggressive behavior;
- A professional who emphasizes a behavioral perspective would look at how environmental variables reinforce aggressive actions;
- A professional using an intercultural approach could consider how cultural and social influences contribute to aggressive or violent behavior.

In another approach, transpersonal psychology could be vaguely called the psychology of spirituality and those areas of the human mind that seek higher meanings in life and transcend the limited boundaries of the ego to access an increased capacity for wisdom, creativity, unconditional love and compassion. It

would honor the existence of transpersonal experiences being concerned with their significance for the individual and their effect on his behavior.

According to the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Sofia, an institution founded in 1975 and accredited by WSCUC (WASC Senior College and University Commission) “traditional psychology is interested in a continuum of human experience and behavior, ranging from severe dysfunction, mental and emotional illness to an end, to what is generally considered ‘normal’, healthy behavior at the other end and varying degrees of normalcy and mismatch between them’. Another definition of transpersonal psychology states that it is a full-spectrum psychology that encompasses all elements of psychology and then transcends it by adding a serious scientific interest to the immanent and transcendent dimensions of human experience: exceptional human functioning, experiences, performance, and achievement. genius, the nature and meaning of deep religious and mystical experiences, unusual states of consciousness, and how we could stimulate the fulfillment of our highest potential as human beings. Thus transpersonal psychology combines a variety of approaches in psychology, including behaviorism, cognitive psychology, and humanistic psychology, along with other disciplines, including Eastern and Western philosophy, mysticism, attention, and world religions.

Below are some elements about transpersonal psychology, starting from the role of the therapist in psychotherapy to the history of transpersonal psychology as a field.

1. Transpersonal psychology has no specific tools or methods.

“Transpersonal psychotherapy has its roots in a basic ideology and humiliation that works behind the scenes”, said psychotherapist, author and professor Jeffrey Sumber. “It’s less about a particular tool or methodology and more about an intention that motivates the intervention”, he said.

2. Relationships in transpersonal psychology are essential.

According to Sumber, “Transpersonal psychology is an approach to understanding how our minds function through our relationships with others, based on the belief that there is something greater and deeper in the space between which they operate on us”.

The relationship between the client and the therapist is as important as the client’s other relationships. “... The space between therapist and client is as sacred and transformative as that space between client and their problems, families and friends, etc.”, he says.

And both people change as a result of this relationship. As Sumber writes on his website, "... for positive change to take place for the client, it must also occur for the therapist at a certain level, through the bonds of our relationship".

3. The therapist is not seen as an expert.

Rather, the therapist is "the facilitator who assists the client in discovering their own truth and process," Sumber said. The only problem for expertise is the ability of therapists to reflect the client's own truth using as little of the therapist's own baggage as possible.

4. Transpersonal psychology does not judge the experiences of others.

Sumber said that transpersonal psychology is also based on the belief that both the client and the therapist both have their own experiences and neither is right, wrong, right or wrong, healthy or unhealthy.

"If a client brings a therapy experience that makes me feel uncomfortable, I have the ability to look at my own discomfort and work on it, and I can even reveal it to the client if necessary," according to Sumber.

5. Various well-known psychologists have been pioneers in transpersonal psychology.

According to the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, William James, Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow were just a few of the psychologists who played a pioneering role in transpersonal psychology. In fact, William James was the first to use the term "transpersonal" in a 1905 lecture, according to *The Handbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*, and he is named the founder of modern transpersonal psychology and psychiatry.

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