

Existential Concerns and Cognitive-Behavioral Procedures

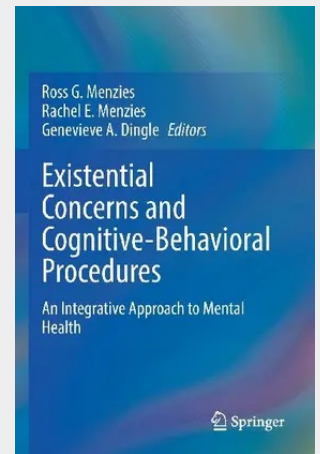
An Integrative Approach to Mental Health

Clients enter therapy grappling with a range of difficulties. They don't speak in diagnostic terms, but instead focus on the everyday problems that confront them. Their struggles may include isolation, loneliness, anxiety, guilt and regret, and problems making decisions in a world that offers seemingly endless choice. In contrast, the cognitive-behavior therapist is trained in the language of conditioning and extinction, avoidance and safety behaviors, behavioral activation and attentional biases. This book explores the ideas of the existentialist philosophers as a bridge between the suffering client and technically trained clinician. The volume is not a rejection of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), but seeks to place CBT in the broader context of the most popular philosophic tradition of the 19 and 20 centuries.

Therapists versed in existentialism argue that the individual's starting point is characterized by a sense of disorientation in the face of an apparently meaningless and absurd world. Each individual must become solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and authentically. Each of us must confront the 'Big 5' existential issues of death, isolation, identity, freedom and meaning and find our solutions to these problems.

The present volume explores each of these existential themes in turn. Each section opens with a theoretical chapter describing the relevant existential dilemma and its impact on human experience. The second chapter in each section explores its relationship to mental health disorders and psychopathology. The third chapter in each section explores the evidence for treating the existential issue from a CBT framework. This book will be of value to those interested in CBT, philosophy and mental health, and will appeal to psychotherapists, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists.

Part 1: Introductory Issues.- Chapter 1: Existentialism and the problems of being.- Chapter 2: Existentialism and its place in contemporary cognitive-behavior therapy.- Part 2: Death.- Chapter 3: Death awareness and terror management theory.- Chapter 4: Fears of death and their relationship to mental health.- Chapter 5: Creative approaches to treating the dread of death.- Part 3: Isolation.- Chapter 6: Existential Isolation: Theory, Empirical Findings, and Clinical Considerations.- Chapter 7: Isolation, loneliness and mental health.- Chapter 8: Social prescribing: A review of the literature.- Part 4: Identity.- Chapter 9: Identity and the Courage to Be: From Kierkegaard to Covid-19.- Chapter 10: Yet you may see the meaning of within: The role of identity concerns and the self in psychopathology.- Chapter 11: Clarifying identity and the self in a CBT context.- Part 5: Freedom.- Chapter 12: Freedom, responsibility and guilt.- Chapter 13: Failed potentialities, regret and their link to depression and related disorders.- Chapter 14: Reframing the past and the treatment of existential guilt and regret.- Part 6. Meaning.- Chapter 15: On the need for meaning.- Chapter 16: Meaninglessness, depression and suicidality: A review of the evidence.- Chapter 17: Letting go, creating meaning: The role of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy in helping people confront existential concerns and lead a vital life.



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