

Theoretical Orientation

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March 13, 2021

Section 1: Who am I?

Through my lens, life accounts with different traits and concepts that make it very simple or complex. At the forefront, the superficial aspects of life include reproduction and growth and needs to fulfill like hunger or thirst. It is then followed by characteristics such as survival, pleasure, and its means to achieve it. Life then, for humankind, becomes exponentially more complex as concepts such as reasoning and civilization emerge. Within this complex and straightforward window, life provides magical and tragic circumstances that shape each individual's landscape day in and day out. My life philosophy relates my background and life experiences with an existential objectiveness about life and solution-focused will.

In the last millennium, life has shifted its complexity with technology and globalization, changing the worldview of life and its meaning towards new horizons. Nowadays, survival needs, such as hunger or housing, are guaranteed for millions of people for the rest of their existence. Survival needs are no longer a priority. Instead, beauty and wealth have gained more importance and attention in our society. The individual is now driven to grow and excel as the world demands discipline and ambition. The purpose of life has changed, and its fairness in distributing opportunities can be very questionable. Life's conditions and objectives are much different for a kid born in Brazil's favelas and the kid of a CEO of an international company. It is here where culture becomes a central concept of life and the life philosophy each carries and pursuits.

I was born in Coronel Suarez, Argentina. A town located in the plain lands southwest of Buenos Aires province. I am the youngest of three, with a brother and a sister, both six and seven years older. During my childhood and my time as a dependant, we were a middle-income family. Both parents with an Italian background had parents or grandparents who came to Argentina

during the war and had succeeded in becoming well-to-do. My dad, a car salesman, and my mother, a high school teacher, invested every penny they could afford towards our development. I was fortunate to receive education in a catholic school, participate in an afternoon English program, take private and group tennis lessons, and play tennis competitions every year since I was eight years old. In an always-changing economy in a third-world country, my parents and the rest of the society had better and worse times that shared tension and worries. Still, fortunately, the parental bond kept the family together. I attribute the values such as compassion, honesty, and hard work as critical components of my family that has kept each strong and well. As a result, all three kids have reached independence and growth in this continuing competitive world.

I grew up admiring each individual of my family, allowing them to influence my personality with their tastes and ideals. The rest of the family's influence, such as grandparents, uncles, and cousins, helped shape the world perspective I have today. There are relatives more creative and others more analytical. There is a physicist, an accountant, educators, social workers, free wonders, architects, and entrepreneurs. Altogether, they have shared some of their wisdom along my path, and I believe they all are participants in the personality I own today. I became a tennis coach following my brothers' and coaches' courses and being an educator like my mother. I learned how to play guitar like my uncle and continue doing it to a level I can create, which my grandmother has but with a piano. And I am pursuing a graduate degree like my intellectual part of the family-like sister, aunts, and uncles have merged me to.

I have now lived more than a third of my life in the United States. It has been nine years since I left the yerba mate and football for coffee and American football. I came to play college tennis at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. In the last match of my second

season, I tore my ACL, and I was forced to take a red-shirt year. After I recovered, I joined a historically black college and university in Raleigh, North Carolina, called Shaw University, wherein 2017, I graduated with a bachelor in Psychology. After I graduated, I moved to work in a tennis academy in New York City, and after three years of city life, I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Life in the United States exposed me to the very extremes of moments of wealth and poverty. I had dinners in fancy restaurants in the Hamptons, and while working in NYC, I took the N35 with homeless people from the Bronx and Harlem. I enjoyed playing on a tennis court facing the ocean and in courts where other kids would throw rocks at me, and sometimes it would get even scarier. I may have been a second of losing my life and losing everything my family had due to poor decisions. This part of my life, away from my family, living on my own, and achieving things on my own, have been the experiences that had forced me to take control over my life and do something with it.

My background, along with my values, my experiences along with its learnings, and my goals along with the challenges, are all that have made what I am today and what I pursue tomorrow. Indeed, my experiences have shaped the perception I have of the philosophy of life. There are different concepts that people and life have shared with me, allowing me to stay healthy. One idea is “treat others like you would like to be treated,” or its counterpart, “do not treat others like you wouldn’t like to be treated.” Therefore I promote kindness, respect, patience, and positive values that bring harmony to life. The more I practice living in this way I encounter that these values reciprocate. A second concept is to find time to pursue growth and balance interpersonally. I amend life experiences, and I transcend by finding passion and joy in living and doing. I embrace the moment, or at least I strive for it. Life can be very complicated; I chose

to live it as simply as I can. I can complain and create chaos, or I can observe and maybe sympathize and learn.

Section 2: Personal Model of Counseling

Every theory of psychotherapy has something to contribute to the therapeutic relationship and competence of the therapist. Naturally, I choose to pick on those contributions and assimilate them to an extent to have them in my therapist's "toolbox" and use each learning when it is most appropriate to use. Perhaps, I am now more drawn to cognitive-behavioral and third-wave therapies and techniques like mindfulness and motivational interviewing. These techniques and theories have their roots in different psychotherapies.

To begin with, psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapies introduced me to the unconscious and what is not explicit. I appreciate the therapist's role in supportive therapies from where I take careful listening and observing while allowing the client to express. Simultaneously, the therapist is paying attention to gestures and wishes and how they use verbal and body information that can help the therapist guide the client to a solution. The behaviorist starts observing, the cognitivist starts listening, and the concept of bibliography for psychoeducation is introduced. It is important to note that mentalized-based therapy relates to mindfulness.

From the existential theories with concepts of authenticity and its wisdom about external anxiety and meaninglessness, the mindful therapist learns the importance of working along with consciousness-raising. Here hence the existential givens that raise anxiety and create overgeneralizations. These concepts are then performed with acceptance and mindfulness, cognitive restructuring and are taken into consideration as catastrophic expectations. Even Though existential may not be the most concrete of the theories, concepts such as authenticity

and the power of choosing are two concepts that help both the client and the therapist. The client should strive for authenticity, which requires accepting oneself and the power of choosing how to be. For the therapist to be authentic, it's a characteristic that is needed.

Perhaps the experimental theories are the first to make a radical change in future-oriented thinking to present-oriented sensory awareness then adopted by the three waves. It contributes comprehensive views about the individual, such as Mayas and polarities. This comprehension led the gestalts to approach the healthy individual as the one who could amend the polarities and unfinished businesses and, in this way, embrace the present. I believe the role experimental therapies played in psychotherapy is far more than how they view psychotherapy. Gestalt encouraged and motivated other theorists to look for practices that would enhance problem-solving with the focus of a better present. In an experimental treatment, emotion-focused therapy implements affect regulation, where cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies are used to increase adaptive emotions and decrease maladaptive ones (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). Emotion-focused therapy adds the emotional concept taken into consideration in third-wave treatments with emotional regulation or distress tolerance.

On a simple line of authenticity and sympathetic therapeutic relationship, person-centered therapies contributed more concrete concepts like genuineness, unconditional positive regard, accurate empathy, and the importance of the client's perception of genuineness that facilitates clients' feedback. As well as providing concrete characteristics of the therapist, from this psychotherapy is where one of the most attractive therapeutic techniques emerged, that is, motivational interviewing (MI). MI enhances intrinsic motivation to change by helping clients explore and resolve ambivalence (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). It allows the client to express and facilitates the therapeutic relationship to find a solution to the problem. Four principles

describe the therapist's role: express empathy, develop discrepancy, roll with resistance, and support self-efficacy. In difference with the existentialist who would let the client be whatever they want to be, the MI therapist acknowledges goals about desirable changes and helps achieve them. Four skills allow the therapist to do their work: open questions, affirmation, reflective listening, and summaries. Such practice is concise and precise. It does not dig in the past, keeps the relationship somewhat superficial, and transfers the reasoning into goals to be achieved. MI redirected the attention of therapies towards the powers of client autonomy and therapist empathy (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018, p. 221).

Finally, a significant contributor to the three waves was prolonged exposure therapy. Exposure therapies account with a model and a process that allows the patient to control the issue with calmness and objectivity. These therapies introduced breathing retraining, cue exposure, desensitization, and cognitive restructuring, as well as neurophysiology. Breathing retraining evolved in third-wave treatments with mindfulness and meditation. These therapies teach the importance of breathing and how to distress the present through techniques like imagery, finding meaning, relaxation, and others.

So far, these therapies share learnings about emotions, anxieties, and traumas and therapeutic skills that help the client cope with these symptoms. Separately, some have better methods than others and have proven their level of efficacy. However, psychotherapy evolved with behavior, cognitive, third-wave, integrative therapies with more concrete and efficient processes. The behaviorist adopted systematic desensitization to release anxieties, while the cognitivist adopted cognitive restructuring. Later, both theories adopted both concepts as essential tools to facilitate one of the most efficient therapeutic processes, cognitive-behavioral therapy. Nonetheless, these therapies have covered biological, neurological, existential, and

psychodynamic concepts through extensive methods and techniques. Overall, these two theories provide the highest level of psychoeducation and comprehension about the individual and resolutions towards becoming a healthy individual. The third-wave therapies then facilitate these processes by contributing to the importance of mindfulness and meditation.

No model does not fit my model because, as I said at the very beginning, every theory has something to teach. However, to become a sport psychologist, I will not be spending long sessions with an athlete as I would do with psychoanalysis, gestalt therapies, or lead with multicultural and gender-sensitive treatments.

Before rapping up with a conclusion of techniques and therapies I am drawn to, one model represents my philosophy of life: solution-based treatment. I believe that for any problem, besides existential givens, there is a possible solution. And I understand the snowball effect one can create by problem talking rather than solution talking. I am driven by a will to solve problems, and I believe that for most that one may have unfinished businesses, every troubled individual can find a better present. As I mentioned in the first section, life can be very questionable when distributing opportunities. This is in my consciousness, and as long as I live, I will balance these opportunities to whom they need it.

Older therapies contribute to the efficiency of evolved therapies mentioned above. As a future sport psychologist, I am more drawn to newer therapies that have adopted techniques and concepts that have work and continue proving their efficiency. The models that best fit with my personality are the existential and interpersonal philosophy, with cognitive-behavioral and third wave techniques. My philosophy is, to be honest, logical, and proactive. The methods I like are motivational interviewing, relaxation training, autogenic training, stress inoculation,

counterconditioning, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, dispute, and replacement of irrational beliefs.

Section 3: Sports Performance Orientation

I will be integrating concepts such as imagery, mindfulness, and cognitive restructuring, among others. Simultaneously, these three concepts will allow the shaping of positive visualizations, coping with nerves and pressures, and enhancing instructional and motivational self-talk.

Different imagery training methods have proven to enhance performance and self-efficacy (Fazel, F. et al., 2018). A challenge for this would be the level of the athlete's ability to use imagery. However, imagery has also shown positive effects to adopt technical mechanics required to perform (Fazel, F. et al., 2018).

The concept of mindfulness is one of my favorites. This skill facilitates the capacity to be more conscious of the present moment without judging or rejecting what one is experiencing (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018, p. 623). This concept's challenge is that it may be very abstract for young athletes to accomplish such a perspective. However, from personal experience as a coach, sharing this concept has allowed several of my students to have greater awareness and acceptance. One of many benefits is that mindfulness can assist coaches in providing fatigue management and reinforce the applicability of mental training in sports (Coimbra, D. R. et al., 2021)

Self-talk in sports is a concept that is used and shaped constantly. Van Raalte and colleagues' study describes two self-talk systems that involve behavioral concepts such as biological arousal awareness and cognitive restructuring. The first system is automatic, and it

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happens after a positive or negative performance such as “I am so good” or “I am so bad.” The second system requires working memory, hypothetical thinking, and mental simulations. These systems require awareness of physiological tensions, which are introduced in behavioral theories and cognitive restructuring when irrational beliefs emerge in system one.

The population I will be prompt to work with is junior high-performance/professional tennis players. Daily, I will generally be challenging irrational beliefs with cognitive restructuring and implementing motivational interviewing to help enhance motivational and instructional self-talk. I will also be promoting imagery to reinforce it in practice so that the skill is ready to be used in matches. Mindfulness will be enhanced with yoga and its phase of savasana, and then apply such centeredness onto their posture and daily care of their body and mental health.

The challenge I will face with all of them is getting started. These concepts are somewhat complicated for somebody who has ever been exposed to them. A kid who has never had yoga or meditation may get bored if they do not know the underlying benefits of such activities. Therefore the education of why these mental concepts are essential is vital for its facilitation.

The overall conclusion is:

I pursue a life that grows healthy values every day, keeping life simple and out of trouble. I believe that staying in the past does not provide a better living and that by amending any negative attachments to the past, one can live a better present and pursue a healthy future. Like in life, it is important to be objective and trustworthy within oneself and the world. As I mentioned, I tend to live solution-focused. The therapeutic concepts I choose are part of what I have naturally grown into, practically because they have helped me resolve personal problems and have shown positive effects on athletes I have worked with. Mindfulness, along with breathing

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retraining and imagery, has been great for flow-facilitating mechanics instruction. Similarly, relaxation techniques have helped with the flow as well as the awareness of physiological arousals. Lastly, cognitive reconstructing has allowed for shaping positive self-talk, building confidence, and intrinsic motivation.

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