

## Existential View in Treating Anxiety

Existentialism is a therapeutic approach that is grounded in the notion of “choice.” The goal of an existential approach is to guide individuals to a greater level of self-awareness regarding their response to the environment (person, place, thing, setting, etc.), and the role the individual has chosen as a participant. Existentialism is grounded in the here-and-now and therefore provides opportunity to rewrite scripts and choose new roles and responses. However, “choice” comes at a price of increased anxiety.

According to the Existential theory, “anxiety results from having to face choices without clear guidelines and without knowing what the outcomes will be, and from being aware that we are ultimately responsible for the consequences of our actions (Core, p. 223).” Deurzen, (2002a), further identifies the purpose of anxiety as a marker of living with the awareness that we are fully alive, and though the “feeling” of anxiety may not be initially welcome by the individual, it is necessary in order to challenge ourselves to become what we are capable of becoming. In short, challenging ourselves to grow creates unavoidable anxiety. The goal then becomes identifying personal strengths that can be utilized to welcome and manage levels of anxiety in a healthy productive way rather than resist the inevitability of anxiety that can if, “unmanaged,” create barriers to personal growth and experiencing life to its fullest.

As we begin to understand anxiety as an unavoidable component embedded within any life event that signifies change, we can assume that anxiety is present in all life events including, but not limited to work, school, home, interpersonal interactions, and daily living. Therefore, it can be interpreted that individuals who seek to gain better understanding of anxiety and how it interplays within their life will gain insight as to how this natural force can be managed as a resource for interpersonal growth.

### References:

- Corey, G. (2008). *Theory and practice of group counseling*. Brooks/Cole, Belmont, CA.
- Deurzen, E. Van. (2002a). *Existential therapy*. London: Society for Existential Analysts.