

WHAT IS PSYCHOSYNTHESIS?

In its most basic sense, psychosynthesis is simply a name for the process of personal growth: the natural tendency in each of us to harmonize or synthesize our various aspects at ever more inclusive levels of organization. In its more specific sense, Psychosynthesis is a name for the conscious attempt to cooperate with the natural process of personal development. All living things contain within them a drive to evolve, to become the fullest realization of themselves. This process can be supported consciously, and psychosynthesis is one means to do this.

Cooperating effectively with this process can be assisted by a conceptual understanding of the nature of this evolution, and by practical techniques. Psychosynthesis provides these and integrates them into an inclusive and ever-growing framework designed to support the individual, groups, and the planet in their process of unfolding.

As an inclusive approach to human growth, Psychosynthesis dates from 1911 and the early work of Roberto Assagioli, an Italian Psychiatrist. Though one of the pioneers of psychoanalysis in Italy, Assagioli maintained that Freud had not given sufficient weight to the "higher" aspects of the human personality, and recognized a need for a more inclusive concept of humanity. From this beginning Assagioli and an increasing number of psychotherapists, educators, physicians, social workers, clergy, and others have worked to develop and refine this inclusive view of human growth. The task is considered to be an open one, one that will never be finished. Each year, new discoveries in psychology, new developments in education, religion, anthropology, physics and other disciplines add to the principles and to the techniques of Psychosynthesis. Psychosynthesis, by its very nature, is always open to new approaches to human development.

Over the past sixty years, a number of conceptual points and a number of methods have proven themselves to be fundamental. These provide a working structure for Psychosynthesis.

A SYNTHESIS OF MANY TRADITIONS

Any comprehensive psychological and educational approach to the development of the whole person must draw from many traditions. While Eastern disciplines often have tended to emphasize the spiritual side of being, Western approaches usually have focused on the personality level. But humanity must be viewed as a whole and each aspect accorded its due importance. Psychosynthesis recognizes that we have a transpersonal essence, and at the same time holds that the individual's purpose in life is to manifest this essence, or Self, as fully as possible in the world of everyday personal and social existence.

STAGES IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Every person is an individual, and the psychosynthesis of each person follows a unique path. At the same time, the overall process of psychosynthesis can be divided into two stages: personal and transpersonal. In personal psychosynthesis, the integration of the personality takes place around the personal self, and the individual attains a level of

functioning in terms of work, relationships, and general living that is satisfactory to him and which might be termed “healthy” by current standards.

In the transpersonal stage the person learns to achieve alignment with and to transmit the energies of the transpersonal Self, manifesting such qualities as responsibility, the spirit of cooperation, global perspective, love and purpose, and having access to his or her own inner guidance and wisdom.

Often the two stages overlap: there can be a considerable amount of transpersonal activity long before the stage of personal integration is complete.

METHODS EMPLOYED IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Any method that assists in the personal evolution of a human being is a method useful in psychosynthesis. To be maximally effective, we clearly need to have a broad range of methods and techniques to meet the needs presented by different situations and people. As each person must be treated as an individual, an effort must be made to choose the methods best suited to each person’s existential situation, psychological type, goals, desires and path of development. Some of the methods more commonly used include guided imagery, movement, gestalt techniques, self-identification, creativity, meditation, will development, symbolic art work, journal keeping, ideal models and development of intuition, and many more. The emphasis is on fostering an on-going process of growth that can gain momentum and bring a more joyful and balanced actualization to our lives.

As this process goes on, we gain the freedom of choice, the power of decision over our actions, and the ability to regulate and direct many of the personality functions. This entails developing the personal will--the will of the personal self. Through this development we free ourselves from helpless or preprogrammed reaction to inner impulses and external situations and expectations. We become truly “centered” and gradually become able to follow our own path, guided by our inner knowing, or true Self.

As we reach toward the transpersonal Self, we can liberate and encourage the synthesizing energies that organize and integrate the personality. We can make ever increasing contact with the Will of our transpersonal Self, which provides clearer and clearer meaning and purpose in our personal lives and our social tasks. We become able to function in the world more serenely and effectively, in a spirit of cooperation and good will.

Psychosynthesis is a powerful and effective mode of wholistic therapy and is rapidly gaining recognition in the psychological and therapeutic field. It is also a positive and dynamic framework from which to view the evolution of our planet. Psychosynthesis principles and techniques have been used effectively in education, medicine, politics and business. It is rapidly growing in its sphere of application, range of techniques, and depth of understanding.