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A Psychosynthesis Twelve-Step Program for Transforming Consciousness: Creative Explorations of Inner Space

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Abstract

The author examines methods that are designed to expand and transform consciousness and argues that aspects of Transpersonal Psychology form the basis for the investigation of rituals, spiritual disciplines, and techniques that provoke shifts in awareness and energy. A Psychosynthesis model for understanding these experiences is outlined, and the concept of an inner source of guidance--the Higher Self--is examined. A twelve step program for facilitating the expansion and transformation of consciousness--Creative Explorations of Inner Space--is also presented.

Transforming consciousness is a difficult and complex process. In counseling, the term “transformation” can convey a wide spectrum of meanings. At the low end of the spectrum, transformation can imply a simple change in form or energetic state. For example, when water is heated to 212 degrees, it transforms into steam; but when the temperature falls below this, water quickly returns to its liquid state. Conventional, rationally oriented counseling, or talk therapy, can help clients confront and gain understanding and insight about their dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behaving. An increase in awareness of such patterns and their effects is an important first step on a path toward taking responsibility for and improving them (Dobson & Craig, 1996; Ellis & Harper, 1999). At the center of the spectrum, transformation can imply new growth, as when birds molt and grow new feathers or crabs sluff and grow new shells. Behaviorally oriented counseling can help clients better manage difficult dynamics, such as aggression, anxiety, pain and stress (Spiegler, 1997). At the high end of the spectrum, transformation can imply metamorphosis, “a marked or complete change of character, appearance or condition” (Guralnik, 1980, p. 893). A seed transforms into a living, growing plant. A caterpillar transforms into a butterfly.

The most complex transformations of consciousness can result from unusually powerful life experiences or from the persistent and disciplined use of inspiring methods and techniques that facilitate them. Transformation is a delicate and fragile process, however, and is not easy to achieve; specific principles seem to underlie it. For instance, in nature, the metamorphosis of a caterpillar seems to result from at least three interlocking factors: accurate timing, the safety of a chrysalis, and the successful completion of an internally driven process. When the process is complete, the caterpillar’s basic form has been restructured, and a butterfly emerges.

Accurate timing, safety, and the direction of an inner guiding principle also seem to be necessary for the restructuring, or transformation, of basic patterns within the human psyche. Campbell (1968) refers to the three steps involved in transformations of consciousness as

separation--initiation--return...A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous

forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (p.30)

Watzlawick (1993), however, suggested that much of counseling and psychotherapy inappropriately tries to help people transform consciousness with an approach that is too cognitive, with “the digital language of explanation, argument, analysis, confrontation, interpretation and so forth” (p. 47). Working with what he called right-hemisphere language (image, symbol, metaphor, and myth) seems to be the best path to therapeutic change because “in it the world image is conceived and expressed, and it is, therefore, the key to our being in, and our suffering in relation to, the world”(p. 46). How have people in the past tried to transform their internalized world images and the behaviors that express them? Where can an individual find a deeper understanding of processes that underlie complex transformations of consciousness?

Transpersonal Psychology

Transformations of consciousness have been widely researched in the field of Transpersonal Psychology (Assagioli, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 1999; Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986). The Latin prefix *trans* means “on the other side of” as implied by the word “transatlantic,” or “above and beyond,” as implied by the verb “transcend.” The Latin term *persona* means “mask.” The word “personality” is derived from the term *persona* and refers, in part, to the way an individual faces reality, those “habitual patterns and qualities of behavior...expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes” (Guralnik, 1980 p. 1062). Efforts within transpersonal psychology are intended to help people explore levels of energy and awareness beyond or on the other side of the masks and patterns of the personality.

Maslow (1968) coined the term *transpersonal*. In a letter to a colleague, Anthony Sutich (1976), Maslow said,

The main reason I'm writing is that, in the course of our conversations, we thought of using the word "transpersonal" instead of the clumsier word "transhumanistic" or "transhuman." The more I think of it, the more this word says what we are all

trying to say, that is, beyond individuality, beyond development of the individual person into something that is more inclusive than the individual person or which is bigger than he is. (Sutich, 1976, p. 16)

The need and search for transpersonal experience is as old as human kind. But what is the “something” that is more inclusive or “bigger” than the individual? Special ceremonies, rituals, disciplines, and powerful techniques have been used throughout time to explore these questions and provoke the regenerative effects of the transformative process. A few examples might be helpful

For centuries, in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, people have gone to caves, mountain tops, and other remote places to practice yoga, meditation, and other disciplines that are directed toward an experience of the “Self” (Gyasto, 1998; Yogananda, 1981). Various Yoga traditions use a specific rapid breathing technique called *pranayama* to facilitate unusual states of awareness (Satchidananda, 1998). This technique became widely known as *Rebirthing* in the late 1960's (Begg, 1999), and a derivative of it is now known as Holotropic breathwork (Grof, 1992; S. Taylor, 1998). Within Moslem Dervish orders, members practice howling, whirling, and trance dancing to achieve non-ordinary states of awareness (Garnett, 2000). Christian hermits, mystics, monks, and saints have, for centuries, through prayer, fasting, solitude, and austere discipline (e.g. self-flagellation) to attempt to reach spiritual or transpersonal states of awareness (Bobin, 1999; Frohlich, 1994; Romano, 1996).

For generations, Native Americans have purified themselves in the searing heat of the sweat lodge in search of transcendent experiences (Bucko, 1999). Some individuals completed rituals of severe physical stress, body piercing, and intense pain such as the Sun Dance to provoke trance states and their transforming effects (Walker, 2000). Plains Indians have a long tradition of going on vision quests to make contact with what they call the “spirit world” to find and, through symbolic identification, become one with animals or totems from nature from which they derived power, direction, and meaning (Dugan, 1985). Adaptations of the vision quest practice are growing in popularity in

the United States (Brown, 1989; Foster & Little, 1989; Kendz, 1999).

The Huichol Indians in Mexico use the hallucinogenic mescaline-imbued peyote cactus in nightlong drumming and chanting ceremonies and then symbolize the visions they experience in beautiful yarn paintings (Berrin, 1978; de la Cruz & Lumholz, 1998). Mexico's Highland Chinantecs use psilocybin mushrooms to engage in a dialogue with the divine. Merkur (1998) said it is the desire for religious and unitive experiences that lead to participation in these ceremonies (pp. 168-171).

Brown (1999) reports having had such a unitive experience in 1975 at the peak of a night-long Peyote circle ritual that was guided by a Huichol Indian Shaman.

"It was a very different world to which I returned when I lifted off the sleeping bag and looked around. The fire was alive! The stars were alive! The Shaman and the people in the circle were alive, connected--everything connected like the cells, muscles, organs of my body. A great secret had been experienced and revealed. I was separate and unique, and yet all of this was part of me, and I, a part of it.



"Shortly, Don Caterino instructed us to stand up and stretch. We could walk around the meadow for a few moments and experience the environment. I stood up, left the circle and wandered into the moon drenched meadow. The crickets and tree

frogs continued the music of the rattles everywhere. The field was alive. I was alive. I began to do a slow, spontaneous dance to life and, as I did, I felt powerful cascades of energy flow through me. "Suddenly, as I danced, a woman was beside me, dancing just like me. We came together, began to mirror one another's movements. She and I embraced and began to do a dance of unity. I lifted her off the ground, she lifted me. We pulled against one another with equal force, two bodies of equal strength, two souls sharing a common vision, locked in one harmonious dance of life.

"I lifted her onto my back, back to back, and held her there. It was as if she were a slain deer and I was the hunter. It was as if the hunter and the hunted had become one. It seemed as if I had taken the life of this deer so that I might live, yet in the full knowledge that my life, too, would someday be sacrificed so that Life would continue on, forever. Life and death were one. Male and female, one. The stars and the sparks of fire were one. The moon shadows of the giant redwood trees and the darkness of the night, one. One. ONE!!!"(pp.133-4; Halifax, 1981, p.71).

Such native practices seem to have always been rigorous, demanding, and reverent on every level; they have been conducted and supervised by wise elders of the community who are long-experienced in using the methodologies. They seem to have always been carried out in a sacred way and have been carefully interpreted. Of course, widespread, street use of psychoactive substances such as marijuana, methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and ketamine takes place in the United States today. Unfortunately, as a consequence of many factors (e.g., legitimate concerns about the dangers associated with such use of mind-altering substances, ignorance about the pleasurable if not transforming effects of drugs, the politics of the war on drugs, a sensationalist press) the use of psychoactive substances is seldom spoken about honestly; neither is it clearly understood, wisely guided, or meaningfully interpreted.

MDMA, or "ecstasy" as the drug is popularly known, is increasingly being used by high school students and others. Metzner, Dean of the California Institute of Integral Studies, called this drug an empathogen because it generates "a profound state of empathy for self and others in the most general and profound terms. A state of empathy where the feeling is that the self, the other, and the world is basically good, is all right"(Eisner, 1989, p. 33-34). "In a 1998 survey, 8% of high school seniors said they had tried using e, up from 5.8% the year before. In New York

City, according to another survey, 1 in 4 adolescents have tried ecstasy"(Cloud, 2000 p. 65). Few illicit drugs evoke more fear, consternation, and concern than does LSD. Yet, in an assessment of the clinical use of LSD and on the basis of participating in or analyzing more than 4000 sessions with a wide variety of psychiatric patients, Grof (1976) compared "its potential significance for psychiatry and psychology to that of the microscope for medicine or the telescope for astronomy"(p. 32-3). He states that beautifully abstract and aesthetic experiences, the reliving and resolution of childhood trauma, emotional release, and transpersonal or spiritual experiences are some of the positive effects that can result from the wise and careful use of such powerful agents (pp. 34-214).

Thus, to understand the dynamics of transformation, many researchers of Transpersonal Psychology investigate previously described rituals, rites-of-passage, methods, and techniques in an attempt to extract from them an understanding of principles that underlie transformations of consciousness. Practitioners attempt the careful, appropriate, and adapted use of such practices to help clients awaken and develop human resources such as creativity, imagination, intuition, illumination, and revelation (Ferrucci, 1982; Grof, 1988; Scotten, Chinen & Battista, 1996; Vaughan, 1989).

Campbell (1968) suggested that there are three steps to transformed consciousness--separation, initiation, and return. It is likely that a dynamic, experiential, transpersonal approach to counseling will ensure positive outcomes from the use of techniques that alter, focus, shatter, or expand normal consciousness. Three steps, however, must be followed: preparation, exploration, and integration. By purposefully separating from or "disidentifying" from ordinary life activities, preparation is made to enter unusual or altered states of consciousness. Exploration occurs through the use of explicit and often unfamiliar methods and techniques that drive awareness either more deeply inward or more expansively outward. Integration comes when the resulting visions, inspiration, and energy are grounded in specific action in daily life.

Psychosynthesis

A growing number of mental health practitioners are searching for both models (a) to understand how consciousness expands and transforms and (b) of safe and effective ways to aid such experiences for clients who want to have them. Psychosynthesis is such a model. It is a psychological and educational approach to human development that was first articulated by Italian psychoanalyst Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974), a student of Freud and a colleague of Jung. The term *Psychosynthesis* has at its root two Greek words: *syn*, which means "together", and *thesis*, which means "a placing." The concept of synthesis implies a placing together of parts to form an integrated whole; Psychosynthesis refers to a process directed toward the integration and harmonious expression of human nature--physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (Gerard, 1964).

The Psychosynthesis Model

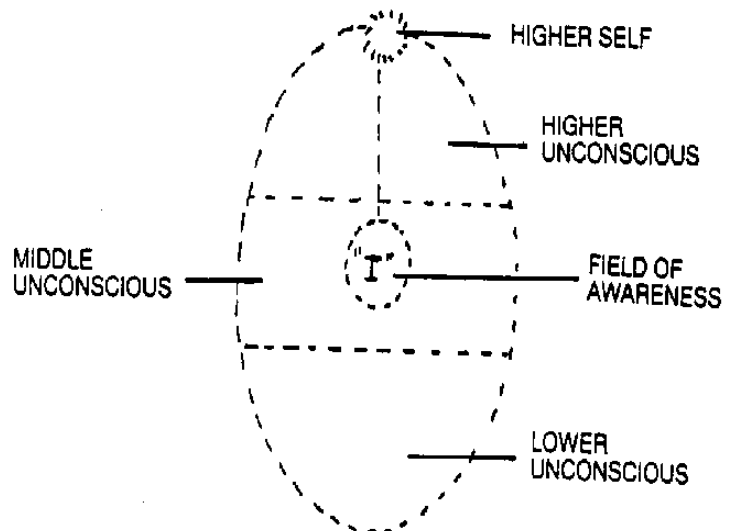
Assagioli (1965) described three levels of consciousness within the human psyche: the lower unconscious, the middle unconscious, and the higher unconscious (pp. 17-19). A simple description relates these levels to time. The lower unconscious might include energies and awareness that are associated with primitive instincts and passions, difficult dynamics, or traumas that have not been understood or integrated from the past, and the fears, resistances, and defenses that keep all this out of sight. The middle unconscious might include energies and awareness that are associated with challenges, motivations, and activities of the present time. In the higher unconscious could include energies and awareness that are associated with the talents, abilities, potentials, and resources that can be developed in the future. Psychosynthesis theory suggests there is a principle of growth within the human psyche, an inner guide--the Higher Self--that can provide the inspiration and wisdom that is necessary to understand more deeply, work more creatively, love more authentically, and meet the challenges of each stage in life successfully.

Throughout time, people have had the intuition that such an inner guide existed.

The Greeks called it man's inner *daimon*; in Egypt it was expressed by the concept of the *Ba-soul*; and the Romans worshiped it as the "genius" native to each individual. In more primitive societies, it was often thought of as a protective spirit within an animal or a fetish. (von Franz, 1972, p. 161)

According to Assagioli (1965), the Self is beyond or above the personality and is "unaffected by the flow of the mind-stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, it's 'projection' in the field of personality"(p. 19). He further differentiates between the little self and the higher, spiritual Self by saying that

the little self is acutely aware of itself as a distinct separate individual, and a sense of solitude or of separation sometimes comes in the existential experience. In contrast, the experience of the spiritual Self is a sense of freedom, of expansion, of communication with other Selves and with reality, and there is a



sense of Universality. It feels itself at the same time individual and universal. (p 87)

Wilber (1996) maintained that when individuals move into transpersonal levels of awareness and development, "an observing self" emerges in consciousness.

This observing self is usually called the Self with a capital S, or the Witness, or pure Presence, or pure awareness, or consciousness as such, and this Self as transparent Witness is a direct ray of the living Divine...In each case consciousness or the observing Self sheds an exclusive identity with a lesser and

shallower dimension, and opens up to deeper and higher and wider occasions, until it opens up to its own ultimate ground in Spirit itself. (pp. 197-199)

This higher, spiritual Self, however, is as difficult to define as it is to experience.

To all who are religious we can say that it is the neutral psychological term used for the soul; for those who are agnostic we can say...there is a higher center in man. (Assagioli, 1965, p. 86)

Symbols can point toward or lead to an experience of the spiritual Self, and there seem to be two distinct kinds.

The first group is composed of abstract or geometrical and nature symbols...the second group...is of a more or less personified type. In this group we find the Angel, the Inner Christ--in the mystical sense, the Inner Warrior, the Old Sage, and the Inner Master or Teacher...A technique which is very important and fruitful in establishing a relationship between the personal self and the spiritual Self...is the Technique of Inner Dialogue. (p. 203)

When guided by the inspiration of the Higher Self, growth, whether it is personal, professional, spiritual, organizational, or societal, seems to follow a spiraling and ever expanding progression through the lower, middle, and higher unconscious. Crisis catalyzes the process of change and heralds the need for healing, growth, or transformation. It shatters the comfortable, often automatic patterns of thinking or behaving and forces awareness to become focused in the present. According to Campbell,

The call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration--a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. (p. 51)

Dream

Brown (1990) gave testimony to the fascinating if not transforming effect on awareness of contact with the Higher Self. In 1975, faced with an unwanted but impending divorce, he went on a six-week-long wintertime solo Vision Quest in the wilderness of Quebec. On the third day of his quest he had this dream.

In the dream I found myself in a simple hut with an old man, a medicine man or Shaman. I told the old man that I sought to be a healer. He told me it was possible, but that I would have to undergo many things as preparation and as training.

The old man told me, "This face only knows one life. Consciousness is much broader than one life. In order to be a healer, it is necessary to know consciousness in its fullness. This face is tied to a personal history." Then he killed me by taking off my face.

I began to go on an incredible inner journey. I asked the old man for permission to descend into the depths, which he granted, and he wished me well. I felt his protection as I began my descent. I came to realize, over and over, how narrow were my beliefs, my knowledge, the limits of the world in which I lived. I began to realize that, to be a healer, one has to have "True Vision", for that which affects people originates in many places and on many different levels--never solely in the consensual world we so narrowly share with others, and not just from the dynamics of the present moment.

I came to a place of fear inside myself. It was the fear of letting go of the personal expression of life that I had come to know myself to be--my personal identity. I was also afraid to lose the love contacts I had developed in my life--family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances. I was afraid to be totally alone. Then I realized I would even have to let go of my contact with the old man to continue. Which I did.

I felt a complete, wonderful aloneness. I was completely with my Self, and my fear disappeared entirely. I realized that the center of myself, my Self, was enough to cling to. I felt peaceful, calm. Soon I was ready to descend further, centered on this Self awareness.

I sensed incredible music. I drew protection, strength and energy from it. I understood that all levels of consciousness--the dead, the living, the not-yet-born--exist at once, in one great symphony of Being.

I was purified many times: each purification allowed me to see another vision, provided new knowledge with which to heal. Never had I known the depths of this vocation, the trials that were necessary, and always deeper and more inclusive purification. I felt I had to resolve many conflicts from the past, and from past lives, to be clear in this one.

I entered a higher state of consciousness somehow, and merged with my Self. From this point of view I could see, understand, and dialogue with my own ego. I came to realize this ego needed to develop a sense of transparency, needed to let go of the blocks which prevented the flowing of power and energy through it. The blocks involved concerns about relatedness, the need for personal love, and patterns around getting needs met. My ego wondered how to validate its needs, how to be fulfilled personally. My ego knew so much depth, was aware of so many levels already, that its own needs were seldom getting met.

I dialogued with my ego. I told him he needed to live like others do. He needed to understand his patterns, share that understanding with others, *and* strive to get his needs met. I told him to relate to other people in this light and teach them new ways of meeting *their* needs with deeper awareness. He said this

perspective helped him let go of the illusion that he should be self-less and need-less. It was an illusion that he had to live above others, with a false sense of purity, pretending he had no needs, or simply being out of touch with them. The ego part of me needed to receive as deeply as he gave and, when he felt frustrated, disappointed or rejected, I would be with him. He said if that were so, then he could do anything.

At one point, I received the power to speak with the dead. These entities told me they often held the key to problems in the present. I thanked them for coming to me and for teaching me. I told them I would be open to further communication with them whenever it was necessary.

After many lessons, I was completely cleansed. The life energy, love energy, Christ energy could pass through me into the instant we call the present. To be a healer meant to be able to help people resolve the conflicts or the stuck elements of Mind manifest in them with this energy.

At every level I was amazed by what it meant to be a healer, and at every level I was worthy, able to do that which was necessary. I felt energy flow very strongly in my being. I began my ascent. I passed again the place of my fear. It no longer had control of me. Never had I known the depths of this vocation, the trials there were necessary, and always the deeper and more inclusive purifications. All of my channels of awareness were open and I felt in touch with a kind of pure energy that could flow from me into others.

I remember in the dream being ready to return to my body. I realized the process was about complete--the initiation--and I was ready to return to the time-and-space continuum once again. I became deeply aware of the narrowness of what I thought I had known before. The world is, and each one of us is, so infinitely much more than we allow ourselves to know.

I felt a great sense of humor as I waited for my new face. I felt excitement and joy, which let the old man know that I was ready. He knew well what it meant to be a healer. He knew that I did not know, and now he knew that I did know. The old man laughed, and we shared quite an expansive sense of humor, as he put my new face on and brought me back into the world." (pp. 51-52)

Fischer (1972) attempted to explain what is going on here.

Communication between the program of the 'Self' and its gradually learned projection, the worldly 'I', seems possible only during the hallucinatory or dream state where the 'I' and the 'Self' meet...We interpret the communication during these states as a striving for consistency between the 'I' and the 'Self'...who is speaking and to whom? The 'Self' and the 'I' are speaking--and to each other. The creative act is a luxurious bi-product of this dialogue and is the very source of art, science, literature and religion. (p. 171)

Psychosynthesis offers a theoretical framework that can provide a way to understand how consciousness evolves and a wide range of practical methods with which to connect to and align with the principle of inner

growth (Harmon, Roselli, Achterberg & Crampton, 1997; Weiser & Yeomans, 1984, 1985). There are 45 Psychosynthesis Institutes exist worldwide, 25 in the United States alone. A growing number of colleges and universities offer degree programs on both undergraduate and graduate levels with an emphasis in Psychosynthesis. More than a hundred dissertations, articles, and monographs, and an increasing number of books, address the application of Psychosynthesis in many areas of human endeavor--the arts (Assagioli, 1973; Harris, 1989; King, 1994), counseling (Brown, 1997a; Onken, 1991; Sliker, 1992), education (Chisholm, 1994; Mickey, 1999; Vargiu, 1971), medicine (Assagioli, 1967; Epstein, 1994; Ford, 1992; Gagan, 1984; Parks, 1973; Schaub, 1997; Slater, 1995), organization development (Levy & Merry, 1986; Taylor, 1984), religion (Hardy, 1989; Haronian, 1972; Hubig, 1974).

Mandala

Mandala art is a method that can provide a symbolic view of the inner world of feelings, drives, desire, needs, patterns, pain, and inspiration. The Sanskrit word mandala simply means "circle." In religious practice and in psychotherapy it refers to circular images that are drawn, painted, modeled or danced (Jung, 1972). Mandala art in many forms has been used throughout the world in the service of personal growth and spiritual transformation and as a process of self-expression. Tibetan Buddhism has used the mandala for thousands of years to capture images reflecting the deep unconscious, and through it depicts symbols for the countless demons and gods it believes both plague and uplift humanity (Brauen, 1997; Lauf, 1976, Tucci, 1970). Navajo sand painters use this circular form as the frame for their drawings and in their healing rites (Congdon-Martin, 1999; Sandner, 1979). Native Americans use the Medicine Wheel, a mandala form, to connect to and be inspired by earth energies and the wisdom of nature (May & Rodberg, 1996; Underwood, 2000). Mandala art is said to be able to activate the regenerative and curative powers of the mind, and also open the heart to the healing power of unconditional love (Arguelles & Arguelles, 1995; Cornell, 1994; Fincher, 2000).

How are mandalas created? A circle must lightly be drawn on a sheet of paper or on a canvas. It can be filled in spontaneously, letting the drawing emerge step-by-step in a creatively unpredictable way, like doodling. Or, the circle can be filled in with special images that have come from deep relaxation, meditation, dreams, through techniques of visualization or mental imagery, or from altered states of consciousness. Within the circle can also be captured important scenes from everyday life or objects of fascination from the world of nature.

Mandala art is a holistic tool for many reasons. The creation of these symbols involves many facets of the artist. The body is involved in the mechanical act of drawing, and the nervous system is often experienced in interesting, new ways, as fine motor skills are employed in the act of drawing. Mental patterns are reflected in the specific forms, structures, and architecture that emerge within the circle. Feelings are expressed through and reflected in the use of color. The completed mandala is often a beautiful and wholistic snapshot of what is going on within the psyche at the time, and reflecting on the interacting elements within the art expands awareness of these intrapsychic elements.

What is the value of mandala artwork? First, the act of drawing these symbols can shift attention from the outer to the inner world. This inward attunement can be relaxing, refreshing, and energizing regardless of the subject of the art. Second, creating mandala art is a private process of self-exploration and self-expression that requires no outside help. Third, as the ability to interpret mandalas improves, the artist discovers how mental, emotional, or spiritual energies flow or how they are blocked, where resistance lies, what defenses are at work, in what roles or patterns s/he is stuck. Fourth, mandala art can be a vehicle through which to acknowledge failure, celebrate success, or portray inspiring events from which much can then be learned. Fifth, mandala art can connect the artist to his or her Higher Self. One of life's greatest challenges is to discover and connect with the deep springs of wisdom that flow within. Creating mandala art affords a process through which the presence of this inner genius can be felt and provides a channel through which the I/Self dialogue can occur. Sixth, mandala art can reveal the

patterns and cycles that operate in life if the drawings are made regularly and then viewed as a sequence over time. Last, mandalas are powerful images to share with others. Through them, inner truths can be shared with family and friends in honest and open ways. The gift of such deep revelation can encourage, if not teach, loved ones how to connect with and share their own inner depths.

Creative Explorations of Inner Space: The CEIS Process

Transpersonal psychology is interested in helping people tap into something that is more inclusive or bigger than the individual person. Psychosynthesis refers to a process directed toward the integration and harmonious expression of the totality of our human nature--physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. I developed the CEIS process on the basis of 27 years' training in and experience with transpersonal psychology and Psychosynthesis. My objective was to help clients accomplish the aforementioned goals in as short a time as one clinical hour (Brown, 1997a). The CEIS process is designed to prepare participants for the inward adventure, guide them in an in-depth exploration, and lead them to integrate the discoveries made through inspired action in the world. Each technique can be used alone or with others to identify, illuminate, understand, address, and transform any specific issue or concern. Blank paper, colored felt tip pens, colored pencils, oil pastels or crayons are all that is required.. (See table 1 for an outline of the CEIS process.)

Preparation

Step 1: Solitude; alone time. The important first step is to create a supportive environment, a sacred space or chrysalis, in which to take this inner journey. A quiet and undisturbed location is required. Such disidentification can lead to a sense of objectivity and role distance from normal activities and concerns.

Step 2: Deep relaxation. As they begin to relax, with their eyes closed, clients are invited to turn their attention away from thoughts, worries, and concerns and focus instead on the natural rhythm of breathing. A sense of peace and well-being, a calm and centered presence, can develop in about five minutes.

Step 3: Reflective thinking. With eyes closed, clients are invited to choose a topic or question to explore in depth and, with eyes open, to write the topic of interest down in one sentence on the top of the paper. Examples: "Why am I angry at X," "How can I tell Y what I need," "What must I do to complete project Z?" Clients are given about 10 minutes to reflect, in writing, about their topic of choice and to detail what they know about it.

If it is difficult for clients to choose a specific topic, another approach is to ask them to make a list of five current activities or issues of interest or concern and rank them, writing about the most important topic for 10 minutes. The technique of reflective thinking can lead to focus and mental clarify. It can help develop concentration and coax all mental energies to flow in the same direction.

Step 4: Receptive thinking. With eyes closed, clients are invited to sit quietly in a receptive mode, to let deeper thoughts and feelings flow into awareness, to consider the reactions this topic provokes in themselves and in others. They are asked to open their eyes and write down their impressions and repeat the process two more times. Receptive thinking can help develop empathy and insight.

Exploration

Step 5: Visualization. With eyes closed, clients are invited to breathe deeply a few times, to summarize in one sentence all that has been written and, with eyes open, to write the sentence down. Then they are asked to condense the sentence into one word and write it down. With eyes closed, and after they have taken a few deep breaths, they are asked to allow an image or a mental picture to come to mind to symbolize the word they have chosen. They are encouraged to let their imaginations have free rein and advised not to criticize or judge the image but to accept and focus on the first image that emerges in awareness. They are asked to notice the size, shape, and color of the image; what is in the foreground and background; what kind of environment or context the image inhabits; and anything else that seems significant about the image. This takes approximately two minutes

Clients are informed that the image can be something from the real world, a caricature or figure, something remembered, a geometric figure, or whatever

comes to mind. They are encouraged to notice the emotions the imagery stimulates and to pay attention to the feelings it evokes.. Visualization can lead to the development of imagination, inspiration, and a broader perspective on how the inner and outer worlds relate.

Step 6: Mandala art. Clients are instructed to draw a circle on a piece of paper. Using the circle as a frame, but not necessarily being limited to staying within its circumference, they are asked to make a drawing of the image they have seen in their imagination. They can make a quick sketch first with pen or pencil, and color it in with crayons, colored pencils, felt tip pens, oil pastel crayons, or water colors. Clients are allowed to take as much time as possible to do the drawing, usually about 10 to 20 minutes. Creating mandala art can be a very satisfying, rewarding, fun, and enjoyable process. Clients are advised not be concerned with the artistic value of the drawing, however, because intellectual judgments or perfectionistic criticisms can prevent the symbolic drawing from emerging in a fluid and authentic way. Mandala art can help develop the capacity for pattern recognition and can enhance the capacity for creative self-expression.

Step 7: Cognitive analysis. Clients are encouraged to analyze and interpret the drawing, in writing, with such questions as, "what is the symbol in the circle," "what feelings does it evoke," "what do the colors mean," "what more is known about the topic from its symbolic representation?" Cognitive analysis can lead to the development of understanding and reason.

Step 8: Inner dialogue. With their eyes closed, and again, having taken a few deep breaths, clients are asked to relax and focus on the mental image, to see it clearly and feel connected to it emotionally, and to remember the meaning that is now associated with it. Then they are told to ask the following question out loud, directing the question to the visualized image: "What have you come to teach me at this time in my life?"

New thoughts, insights, sometimes startling but always meaningful--can be audible as if the image itself were answering the question. Clients are asked to let this transmission go on for as long as possible; they are then told to document these thoughts in writing, in quotation marks, repeating the question and writing two more times to take the process ever deeper.

Inner dialogue can lead to the development of intuition.

Step 9: Symbolic identification or psychodrama.

Clients are invited to stand up with their eyes closed and allow the image to return again; they are now told to imagine the image is in front of them as large as they are. The clients are instructed to take one step forward and enter the image; to become the image physically; to allow movements or gestures to occur or postures that might help them connect, identify with, and become the image completely. They are encouraged to make sounds, noises, or musical notes as they dramatize the image and enact it in a spontaneous, even exaggerated way. Then they are asked to imagine their "normal" selves are in front of the image they have become and to give that self a special subvocal message. When this is done, they are asked to sit down and document everything that has happened and everything they have learned from the experience. Symbolic identification can lead to more expressive uses of the body, to new sensations, and to the development of empathy and compassion. It can also provide a necessary behavioral component to what might otherwise simply be mental or internal explorations.

Integration

Step 10: Homework or strategic planning. Clients are invited to reflect on everything that has happened during the CEIS process and to think about what can be done with all that has been experienced and learned. They are asked to decide what homework can be done to reinforce and integrate the experience to move the resulting energies and inspiration into their daily lives. They are asked to write the word "Homework" on the paper and provide at least three small, practical steps that can meaningfully flow from the work they have completed, steps that can be taken in the near future. Defining specific homework can lead to the development of motivation and commitment.

Step 11: Closure. Clients are asked to date the mandala and hang it up in their everyday environment (e.g., in their bedrooms, kitchens, on a wall at home or work.) Viewing the mandala frequently can help the intuition remain open and flowing and can allow conscious and unconscious elements within the psyche to continue to interact. As further insights emerge and

are documented, it is less likely that the homework will be forgotten.

Step 12: Sharing. In the final step, clients are invited to find someone trustworthy with whom to share the experience so that a loved one be a keeper of the important and meaningful insights and inner guidance they have received during the CEIS process. Sharing helps develop a network of support for these and future efforts in growth and transformation; the methods of thinking and behaving learned during the process can evolve long after the exercise has been completed.

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CREATIVE EXPLORATIONS OF INNER SPACE

THE CEIS PROCESS OUTLINED

SYMPTOM	EFFECT	REMEDIAL TECHNIQUES	HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPED
1) overwhelmed	frantic, driven, absorbed in work	solitude, alone time, disidentification	role distance, objectivity
2) stress, tension physical	illness, anxiety, low productivity, fear	relaxation training, stretching exercises, breathing techniques	calm, centered, present, alert, energized
3) unfocused, scattered thinking	low job satisfaction unclear priorities	reflective thinking, meditation, journal writing	focus, concentration, mental clarity
4) poor decisions	misunderstandings, errors in judgement, personnel problems	active listening, receptive thinking, synoptic statements	insight, wisdom
5) narrow minded	tunnel vision, fixed attitudes, lost in detail	hypnosis, visualization, guided imagery	perspective, imagination, inspiration
6) shy, timid, fear of communicating	suspicious, playing the victim role	use of images, symbols illustrations & art,	pattern recognition, creative self-expression authentic self-disclosure
7) ungrounded or excess emotion	lost in meaningless activity, gossip, rumor	analytical skills	understanding, reason
8) too rational	distant, cold, aloof	inner dialogue	intuition
9) too assertive	generates hostility, resentment from others	psychodrama, symbolic identification role playing	empathy, compassion
10) missed deadlines, low morale	unclear values, priorities, goals	homework, strategic planning	motivation, commitment
11) forgetful	missed deadlines	closure	self-knowledge
12) self-doubt, low self-esteem	ineffective, incompetence	sharing	support, personal excellence

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