

Existential Theory and Approaches in Counselling

Counselling Theory & Approaches

What is Existential Counselling?

Focus on human existence



Addresses anxiety about life,
death, freedom, isolation, and
meaning

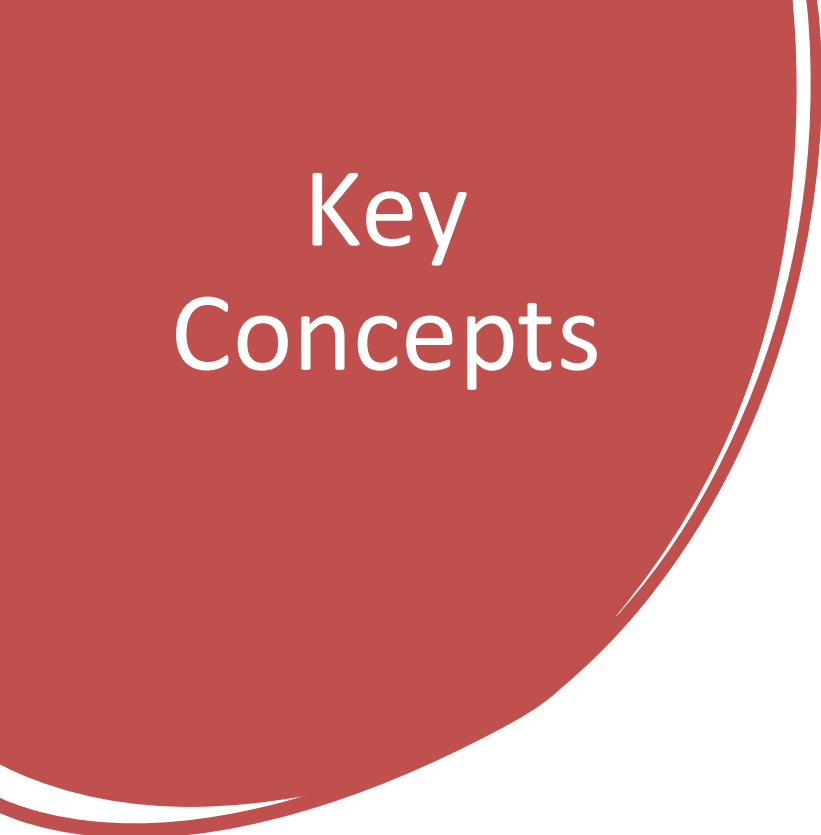


Philosophical rather than
technique-focused

Philosophical Foundations

Inspired by existential philosophers:

- Søren Kierkegaard
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Jean-Paul Sartre
- Viktor Frankl
- Martin Heidegger



Key Concepts

Existential Anxiety

Freedom and
Responsibility

Isolation

Meaninglessness

Authenticity

1. Rollo May:

“Freedom is man's capacity to take a hand in his own development. It is our capacity to mold ourselves.”

2. Viktor Frankl:

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

3. Irvin D. Yalom:

“Though the physicality of death destroys us, the idea of death saves us.”

4. Carl Rogers:

“The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination.”

5. Emmy van Deurzen:

“Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced.”

Existential Anxiety

Normal aspect of human experience.

Arises from awareness of freedom and responsibility.

Encourages clients to confront anxieties rather than avoid.





Freedom and Responsibility

Emphasis on free will

Clients are responsible
for their own choices

Counselling helps clients
accept responsibility for
their lives

Isolation

Existential isolation: fundamental aloneness

Encourages authentic relationships

Counselling explores feelings of loneliness and connection



Meaninglessness

Central existential
concern

Search for purpose is
fundamental

Viktor Frankl's
Logotherapy: Meaning-
oriented therapy



Authenticity

Living according to
one's values

Counselling
supports exploration
of authentic living

Helps clients align
actions and beliefs



Therapeutic Goals

Increased self-
awareness

Acceptance of
personal responsibility

Living authentically

Finding personal
meaning

Role of the Counsellor

Facilitative rather than directive

Encourages exploration and reflection

Supports clients facing existential concerns



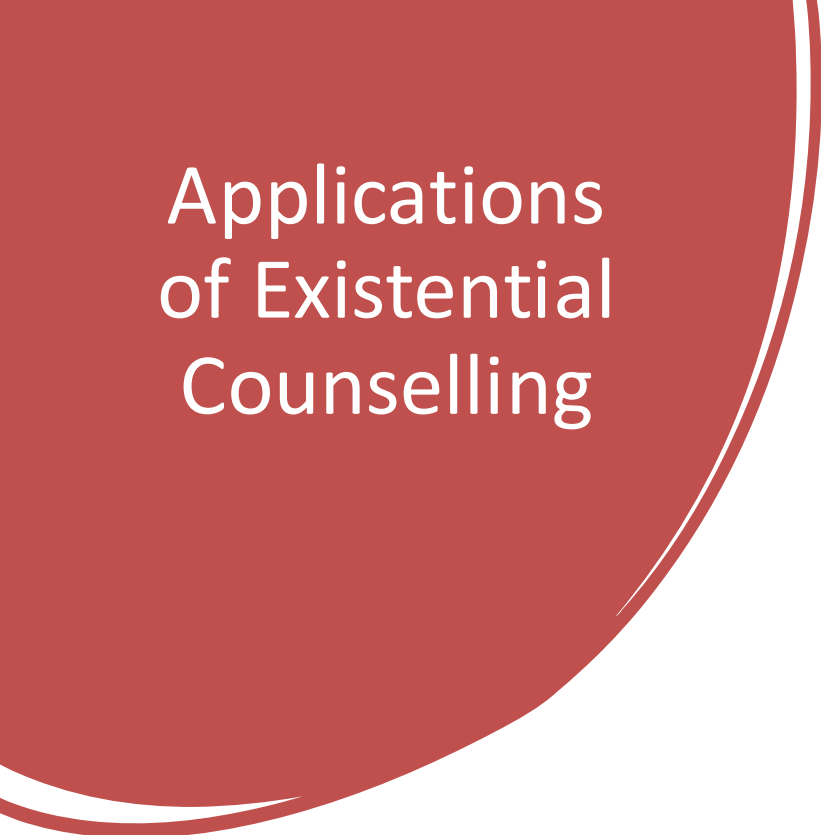
Therapeutic Techniques

Phenomenological
exploration

Socratic dialogue

Reflective listening

Exploration of
existential themes

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Applications of Existential Counselling

Grief and loss

Mid-life crises

Depression and
anxiety

Chronic illness and
end-of-life care

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths:

- Addresses fundamental life issues
- Empowers clients

Limitations:

- Abstract and philosophical
- May not suit all clients, especially those seeking structure



Recap

Existential counselling provides deep philosophical insights

Empowers individuals to live authentic, meaningful lives

Valuable for clients facing existential dilemmas