

Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy and ACT: Discovering the Universals in Psychological Healing

Session Abstracts, Objectives, and References

Oct 4- 25 (4 Tuesdays) from 1 PM - 3 PM EST

October 4, 2022

Critical Variables in Effective Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy: What are the Processes of Change?

William Richards, Steven C. Hayes, and Ronald Siegel

Part 1 – Steven Hayes, PhD: The long term positive social impact of psychedelic therapy requires its integration with a scientific approach, both in the careful examination of outcomes and in developing knowledge of processes of change. Although psychedelic therapy is a transformational technology, there is no reason to ignore what is already known about how change happens in psychosocial interventions more generally in trying to understand its impact. In this talk I will ground a discussion of the psychedelic therapy literature with developments in what is known about biopsychosocial processes of change more generally. I will argue that processes of change are best examined idiographically, and I will describe an "idionomic approach" we have been pursuing in studying processes of change, applying that approach to preliminary data in the area of psychedelic therapy.

Part 2- William Richards, PhD: Among topics addressed will be Interpersonal grounding, the centered presence of the therapist, sensitivity to the range of alternative states of consciousness, the competent structuring of expectations and preparatory instruction of techniques for “navigating within the mind”. The potential therapeutic efficacy of both the exploration of personal psychodynamic processes (psychoalytic therapy) and of symbolic-archetypal and mystical states of consciousness (psychedelic therapy) will be explored.

Part 3- Group conversation about these two topics moderated by Ronald Siegel, PsyD. The discussion will include a Q&A session which will tie it all together and provide examples on how to apply to your clinical practice.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the different strata of experiencing that can occur during the action of psychedelics and concomitant therapeutic responses.
- Discuss the importance of the therapist’s capacity for presence in developing therapeutic relationships and in establishing the structure required for safety and efficacy.

References

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October 11, 2022

Creating Transformational Change: Using Psychedelics as Tools for Healing, Growth, and Repair

Gita Vaid, Jason Luoma, and Ronald Siegel

Part 1- Gita Vaid: Psychedelic medicines when dosed correctly, in the appropriate context can act as powerful catalytic tools for healing, repair and new growth potentials moving healing paradigms towards wellness, resilience, emergence and self-actualization. An overview of the transformational process, methodology and a clinical example will be presented.

Part 2- Jason Luoma: The psychological flexibility model is one of the leading theories today being used to guide preparation and integration during psychedelic-assisted therapy and has already been tested in some of the few modern clinical trials on the topic. This presentation discusses how the psychological flexibility framework can be used to understand psychedelic experience as well as data suggesting that some of the effects of psychedelics occur through increasing psychological flexibility. Furthermore, it provides examples of how psychedelics and psychological flexibility approaches might be combined to create transformative experiences.

Part 3- Group conversation about these two topics moderated by Ronald Siegel, PsyD. The discussion will include a Q&A session which will tie it all together and provide examples on how to apply to your clinical practice.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Transformational Process and what features defines such a process
- Identify uses of the therapeutic relationship and it's importance
- Discuss how to expanded states of consciousness
- Describe how psychological flexibility processes can be used to understand psychedelic experience
- Discuss research support for psychological flexibility as a process of change in psychedelic-assisted therapy

References

Psychedelic Psychotherapy : Building Wholeness Through Connection

Gita Vaid, MD, Barry Walker

Global Advances in Health and Medicine 2/23/22

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October 18, 2022

Psychedelic Therapy and Research Innovations: The Roots of Change

Rosalind Watts, Janis Phelps, and Ronald Siegel

Part 1- Rosalind Watts: Psychedelics, when used therapeutically, can temporarily increase our connectedness to ourselves, each other, and the world around us. Psychedelic sessions can help us defuse from ruminations and old beliefs, connect to our senses and bodies, surrender to intense emotions, and find important meaning in these experiences. With substantial integration support, psychedelic sessions can help us grow in two directions at once. Like a tree we can dig down into our roots; our connection to family, childhood experiences, and all the difficult things our roots have had to grow around. We can also feel a new sense of the direction we want our branches to grow towards, what really matters to us now. A common theme of psychedelic therapy is a sense of interconnectedness with all things. Like trees in a forest, connected underground by a complex web of support, we can feel our innate belonging to each other and a beautiful interconnected web of life.

Part 2- Janis Phelps: The need for more effective treatments of mental health issues is a nationally recognized challenge in psychiatry and psychology. Research findings strongly support the efficacy of psychedelic medicines for several clinical symptomologies. Psychedelic medicine has had a mixed political and cultural life during the past 6 decades. This presentation will begin with a review of the

clinical research outcomes on psychedelic-assisted therapy for depression, anxiety, PTSD, end-of-life distress, and substance abuse. Clinical trials are underway in the US, UK and EU that will likely result in the availability of MDMA and psilocybin for legal use in US medical clinics for PTSD and depression, respectively, within 2 to 4 years. There is a national need to train medical and mental health professionals who wish to be ready to conduct psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. We will discuss the professional training being done by the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) and the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). MAPS focuses on well-designed research and training of licensed therapists for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. CIIS is highly successful as the first academically accredited certificate program for licensed medical and mental professionals, where they learn the full range of psychedelic-assisted therapy and research (www.ciis.edu/cptr).

The presenter, Dr. Janis Phelps, is the director and founder of the training program at CIIS, who developed the program in collaboration with researchers and practitioners from MAPS, the Heffter Research Institute, and the Usona Institute. An engaging discussion will follow the presentation on questions about the place for such training for licensed psychotherapists and medical professionals and where psychedelics might interface with the remarkable innovations and efficacy from ACT.

Part 3- Group conversation about these two topics moderated by Ronald Siegel, PsyD. The discussion will include a Q&A session which will tie it all together and provide examples on how to apply to your clinical practice.

Learning objectives

- Describe how psychedelic therapy can affect people's emotions and somatic experience.
- Describe how psychedelics can affect people's values.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the risks of these potential effects of psychedelic therapy.
- Identify three medical indications that can be effectively treated with MDMA- or psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy.
- State five reasons that safe set and setting is of paramount importance when providing psychedelic-assisted therapies.
- Analyze the similarities and differences in therapist competencies for psychedelic-assisted interventions vs. talk therapies or somatic-based psychotherapy.

References

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October 25, 2022

Changing our Relationship to End of Life: What Psychedelics and Contextual Behavioral Science Have to Say

Tony Bossis, Jennifer Gregg, and Ronald Siegel

Part 1- Anthony Bossis: This presentation will review the history and clinical findings from psychedelic research to relieve the psychological and existential suffering associated with a life-threatening illness or at the end of life. The NYU School of Medicine clinical trial published in 2016 demonstrated the efficacy of a single psilocybin-generated mystical experience in helping individuals with cancer cultivate meaning, enhance existential and psycho-spiritual well-being, and foster a greater acceptance of the dying process with less anxiety. The scientific findings of reduction in depression, anxiety, hopelessness, and demoralization along with improvements in spiritual well-being in cancer-associated distress will be presented along with implications for the future of palliative and hospice care. Psilocybin is the psychoactive compound found in specific species of mushrooms. Subjective features of a mystical experience include unity, sacredness, transcendence, ineffability, and an enhanced awareness of positive emotions including that of love. The psilocybin-generated mystical experience offers a novel therapeutic approach to promote an openness to the mystery of death and to a deeper understanding of the study of meaning and spirituality.

Part 2- Jennifer Gregg: This presentation will describe a contextual behavioral science (CBS) approach to advanced cancer and end of life. Contextual behavioral science approaches differ from traditional cognitive behavioral therapy in their emphasis on behavioral responses to difficult thoughts and emotions, rather than the content of those thoughts and emotions. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a CBS intervention, is a structured therapeutic approach that targets the mindful noticing of difficult experiences while focusing on sustained values-related behavior change. Importantly for end of life care, ACT focuses on changes in quality of life rather than psychological symptom reduction. Nonetheless, studies examining the application of ACT to cancer and other life-limiting conditions have generally shown significant improvements in depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. We will discuss the overall ACT framework for treating advanced illness and end of life distress, recent research findings, and difficulties with implementing this approach.

Part 3- Group conversation about these two topics moderated by Ronald Siegel, PsyD. The discussion will include a Q&A session which will tie it all together and provide examples on how to apply to your clinical practice.

Learning Objectives

- Identify factors in existential and psycho-spiritual distress in palliative and end-of-life care.
- Discuss the importance of meaning and transcendence in end-of-life distress and in psychedelic research.
- Identify implications from psychedelic research for palliative and hospice care.
- Describe the goals of a contextual behavioral science approach
- Identify the key elements of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Describe how an ACT approach to end of life care differs from traditional psychotherapeutic interventions

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