



TRANSPERSONAL WELLBEING

Counseling & Coaching

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Dedication

To the countless

Who've walked with me

Along this transpersonal journey:

Thank you.

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Introduction

It was always the transpersonal for me, long before I knew its name.

As a child, I fell deeply in love with nature. The descendent of both Amish and Mennonites, *stillen im lande*, perhaps I was destined to do so. Equally passionate about books, mine was a life of mind and body – and spirit, as the daughter of a Baptist minister. By late adolescence, I realized that fundamentalist monotheism wasn't for me, and by age 20, I'd adopted an earth-based spirituality instead. Forty years on, that path has become ever more meaningful to me.

And so, having grown up with concepts of angels, demons, deity, soul, life after death, and other interpretations of reality or parallel worlds, then transforming all this into an animist form of spirituality with a strong Jungian backdrop, my eventual encounter with transpersonal psychology was one of utter familiarity – a coming home.

I'd begun my career while still in secondary school, in fact, becoming a nurse's aide in a geriatric facility just 2 months following my 16th birthday and where I continued to work for more than 3 years. This proximity with elders, caring for and conversing with them, witnessing many a final passing and even tending their bodies after death, remains one of my most defining experiences. Never fearful of death but fascinated instead, I would later repeat this experience as a hospice volunteer, meditate on my own death as Buddhists do, and consider myself possibly a psychopomp.

Communicating with spirits, then, or at the very least entertaining the possibility of noncorporeal entities, working closely with ancestors in a broad concept of same, and moving with ease in the spectrum of consciousness, have long been an integral part of my life both personally and professionally. It was 1992 when I discovered transpersonal psychology, a clear framework for my own long-held worldview.

Transpersonal, as we'll soon explore in our first chapter, provides a way of addressing our understanding and experience beyond the personal and interpersonal realms, while surely reflecting back to both of those. Non-ordinary states of consciousness, anomalous experience, and an integration not only of mind and body but also of what is most often, even outside of religious frameworks, deemed 'soul' – the core of our being which in turn is interconnected to all else – is the transpersonal perspective. Its aim? Wholeness, and a deep, conscious, authentic approach to life, one imbued with meaning and purpose.

Transpersonal wellbeing is just that: an integration of mind, body, and 'soul', which values the spiritual or metaphysical aspects of life for construction of personal meaning. It doesn't adhere to any particular religious system or philosophical construct, nor is the presence of such necessary to it; the transpersonal view simply allows for the full range of human experience, including those which we humans may not be able to fully understand.

We're creatures of earth, part of this ecosystem in which we reside, yet we aren't merely a physical body. We identify with our minds, all that we can think, feel, imagine, and create, yet we're more even than this. There's an indefinable core within each of us that resonates with the fullness of our experience, where true self lies, even as the very notion of 'self' may be an illusion. For many of us, striving for this transcendent self, and beyond, as we develop and grow toward self-transcendence, oceanic boundlessness, and universal interconnectedness with all sentient beings, is indeed the essence of life.

This small booklet aims to provide an overview of transpersonal theory as it relates to human psychology. It then explores applications to counseling and coaching, how these methods for increased wellbeing can benefit from the transpersonal approach. Finally, we take a look at the

self-transcendent experience, to better understand its features – and the distinctions between spiritual awakening, and crisis.

In my maternal family line, I am the daughter of Joy, granddaughter of Marvel, and great-granddaughter of Fairy. For 6 decades thus far, I've attempted to live into this inheritance.

May it be so.

Transpersonal Psychology

What, then, is transpersonal psychology?

How does it differ from other approaches to our understanding of the human mind? And how does it relate to integrative medicine, spiritual psychology, and holistic health?

Transpersonal psychology is first a wellness model of human potential, rather than a disease orientation. It follows in the path of humanistic psychology, and precedes positive psychology, in this regard. It also strives to be an holistic approach, one that considers not only mind but also body, and above all, ‘spirit’ or spiritual / metaphysical matters, what one of its founders, Abraham Maslow, deemed the transcendent – our greatest potential. This as noted includes areas such as one’s religious or other spiritual beliefs and practices as they relate to one’s mental wellbeing; it also integrates the margins of human mental experience in areas such as anomalous experience, the mystical, or the paranormal, and in a full spectrum of consciousness.

When we think in terms of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal, the definition of this term gains clarity; the transpersonal is that which is beyond our own personhood and our interactions with other humans, to include a more esoteric realm. It’s important to note, however, that this is not pre-personal, or regressive, much as a young child might believe that their wishes create reality, or magical thinking as it’s known to psychologists. The child’s anger didn’t cause the accident, or the parents’ divorce, any more than shutting one’s eyes causes something to literally disappear. Rather, the transpersonal refers to the most advanced states and potentials of humanity, the highest that we may achieve, rather than a regression to a childish state of ‘believe and it will be so’.

Earlier major frameworks of psychology were the psychoanalytic (think: Freud), then behavioral, followed by the humanistic / existential movement that emerged in the 1950s-60s; transpersonal psychology, initially referred to as ‘the fourth force’, did not morph into a distinct model after all but instead an integration of these three. It further reintroduced the spiritual component that psychology had abandoned, in its 20th century rush to distinguish itself as a science and separate from philosophy. The spiritual, metaphysical, or esoteric realm was deemed significant to a majority of individuals, essential to self-identification and sense of meaning and purpose, and therefore couldn’t be left out of the study of the human mind, according to the transpersonal concept.

Thought of as ‘New Age’ or paranormal early on – such interest, which had arisen a century earlier in the theosophist and spiritualist movements, had become especially popular in the late 1960s and 1970s when transpersonal psychology was also in formation – it was not always respected in the profession. Today, with a resurgence in the promising area of psychedelic research, transpersonal psychology has come into its own as never before. Many consider the field now in its ‘second wave’; without moving away from its original intention, the transpersonal framework has increasingly focused on the individual within his/her ecosystem(s), for a clear alignment with both ecopsychology and ecospirituality; the emphasis on personal transformation as a goal has strengthened; and, there is increased sensitivity to embodiment, or the context in which the individual is situated, to include culture, gender, ethnicity, and more.

Alongside spiritual or mystical experience, often termed ‘anomalous’, is also the peak experience or phenomenon of bliss. While this was first included in the humanistic model, it’s prominent in transpersonal psychology. Those experiences which flood our brain with positive neurochemicals such as dopamine, to the degree that we feel as if we’ve experienced something life-altering, are rare – and are often related to the natural world. We witness profound beauty, or

an astonishing feat, or the power of natural phenomena, and we know that something in ourselves has forever changed. This sort of experience, along with the valuing of the spiritual or mystical, also places transpersonal psychology well within the areas of ecopsychology and ecospirituality, for a powerful connection between each of these and nature.

Human consciousness has long been debated in psychology, with some reducing it to mere biology while others conceptualize it as our awareness of inner and outer phenomena, something which sets us apart (we think) from other species. Still others including transpersonal psychologists see it as either inexplicable or not yet fully understood. Where the transpersonal concept focuses instead is on exploring the full spectrum of non-ordinary states of consciousness, such as lucid dreaming, trance, self-hypnosis, flow, ecstasy, and more. These states are considered alternate paths to knowledge and understanding, for increased insight and potential transformation.

At its origin, transpersonal theory was intended to integrate eastern psychospiritual traditions into western psychology for a truly 'east-west' approach to the human mind. (This is not to disregard the 'global south'; while the 'east-west' concept grew historically from the Silk Road trade route between East Asia and Europe, today it's often used as a comprehensive cross-cultural metaphor.) Psychology had emerged as a distinct discipline in western cultures because of the philosophical tradition of dualism that separated mind from body; eastern religions and healing arts, with no such concept, had no separation. Integration of the two, to whatever degree possible, was viewed as the most comprehensive approach to our understanding of the human mind.

Depth psychology (Carl Jung), psychosynthesis (Robert Assagioli), holotropic breathwork (Stanislav Grof), and integral theory (Ken Wilber) make up the roots of transpersonal psychology. Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shamanism have all contributed; monotheistic mystical traditions such as Gnosticism, Kabbalism, and Sufism are also relevant. Indigenous medical systems (e.g., traditional Chinese or India's Ayurveda) are seen as further means to address biopsychosocial concerns.

Transpersonal psychology considers the rational mind and beyond, to the superconscious: intuition, creativity and innovation, imagery and symbols, the material of the unconscious brought to light. It is transcendent or beyond-ego, extending the individual personhood beyond its own boundaries toward the dual experiences of oceanic boundlessness and universal interconnectedness that are hallmarks of the mystical experience. The pursuit of life-meaning and purpose, and one's own authenticity, are tantamount, hence the emphasis on the spiritual or metaphysical realm.

The concept of 'spiritual intelligence' is highly relevant. Maslow, as a founder of both humanistic and transpersonal psychology movements, initially conceived his now-foundational hierarchical model of human need (that multi-layered pyramid with which so many today are familiar) to peak with self-actualization, or personal development; later, he added 'transcendence' above it as the ultimate peak. Today, this has also been described as 'spiritual intelligence', using 'spiritual' not specific to religion but to a generalized profundity or deeply held sense of meaning. Spiritual intelligence has been conceived in 5 aspects: a capacity for transcendence, or extending beyond one's identity of self; an ability to enter advanced states of consciousness; a perspective of mundane life aspects as 'sacred', or meaningful and deeply valued; engagement of spiritual resources for problem-solving; and, an inclination toward prosocial behavior.

As to spiritual psychology, a similar field often (though erroneously) equated to transpersonal, this branch focuses keenly on spiritual principles as guiding factors in life. It's akin to another relatively new field, that of the philosopher-practitioner, and in many ways closer to religion than to psychology.

A life of meaning, one which values the mundane, explores the sublime, and contributes to the greater good. The transpersonal worldview.

Transpersonal Counseling

So now we've an understanding of what's meant by transpersonal, and how this applies to psychology.

Let's explore its practical application: transpersonal counseling or therapy, and coaching. (And how do they differ from one another?)

First, counseling.

The client hesitates to talk about what's been on her mind lately. Would it be understood? Accepted? Or seen as problematic or even pathological? Taking the plunge, she begins: You see, I've been having these strange dreams lately, in which a voice is calling to me, telling me I'm not on the path intended for me and that I must find it. When I awaken, I feel energized, but also a bit sad, as if I'm lost. This has been bothering me lately, but what's really a little unnerving is, sometimes I hear that same voice when I'm awake, as if it's whispering in my ear. I've never had any religion or believed in a god. But I do wonder if I might be having some sort of breakdown. Can you help me?

The therapist pauses, takes a slow breath, and responds. Yes, I know something of this. I wonder if this may be your 'inner voice' or intuition, your deep mind, drawing you toward your purpose, toward some life changes that may be more in line with your values. Could we explore this together? On the client's nod, the therapist describes and then proceeds with a guided meditation, after which the client is asked to write a response to whatever came up for her. When this is completed, they discuss what the client has written, and the therapist suggests a particular visualization as a daily exercise, to be followed by writing or similar in order to process any material that arises. Also recommended is a daily walk in a neighborhood park, specifically to listen for this voice with fewer distractions and the input of the natural world.

The transpersonal psychotherapist is fully grounded, first of all, in standard psychological practice; warning signs and indications of true pathology will be understood and appropriate course of action recommended. Beyond this foundation, however, is the additional understanding of the transpersonal realm of experience, and the skilled counselor not only knows the difference but how to traverse this landscape. Counseling is conducted in a collaborative manner by which the client, expert in his/her own psyche though seeking support, and the counselor, bringing his/her skill set to this process, work together in a model of growth that not only allows for but actively seeks transpersonal phenomena.

The counselor with a transpersonal framework tends also to have training in an array of complementary techniques, such as meditation, mindfulness, contemplative journaling, guided imagery and visualization, progressive relaxation, and others, in order to help the client fully explore the transpersonal experience. Above all, the counselor with a transpersonal framework will value those experiences of a spiritual or esoteric nature as part of the human psyche and meaningful to the client, without assumption of pathology.

Transpersonal counseling is generally insight-oriented. While the client may come to counseling with a specific objective, or problem to be solved, this is seen as the branch and not the root – as the outer manifestation of an inner issue. This is not to say that transpersonal counseling is necessarily focused on one's past nor that it will take a long period of time before results are discernable, as in psychoanalysis. However, it isn't a quick-fix approach either, as in solution-focused brief therapy – or coaching, for that matter.

Typical questions for the transpersonal approach: What is my purpose? Is there any meaning to my life? How can I learn to listen to my inner wisdom, my intuition? How can I feel less

lonely, connect more deeply with others? How can I understand and become my true self? Can I apply to my daily life those insights from my dreams, meditation and journaling, time spent in nature? How can I use exercise, breathing, nutrition to support my mental wellbeing? What about visualization, or ritual? How can I be more creative and how does that benefit wellness? What truly brings me joy, and how can I better align my life with that?

People also come to transpersonal counseling when they've experienced something inexplicable, something seemingly mystical or esoteric, or a peak experience or moment of bliss, or a shift in their relationship to the natural world or with others that they can't put into words. This may be a crisis or major shift in identity; it may be a life passage to be recognized and honored.

The transpersonal approach to therapy is especially useful for those with a history of trauma and/or addiction. Often, people develop addictive patterns of behavior as a direct result of earlier trauma, sometimes too early to be remembered or otherwise not recognized as such, as a way of numbing pain, quieting negative memories, or otherwise self-medicating the mind's discomfort. Whether or not this is a factor, both trauma and addiction have ritualized means of coping and often a distortion of present reality, both of which can benefit greatly from a transpersonal perspective.

Anxiety including panic, depression, phobias are all known to respond well to transpersonal therapy. When we consider not only the personal and interpersonal realms but also the transpersonal, we begin to view ourselves in a more comprehensive manner, and to develop resilience; finding our way through whatever challenges us becomes a far richer experience, one which includes the spiritual and/or metaphysical aspects of life that may bring us meaning and joy.

Some mental concerns include a distortion of reality, one of the more severe being schizophrenia. A transpersonal view might also deem this pathology – or might not, too. While transpersonal therapy isn't recommended in lieu of medical treatment, in tandem with it this approach can help the individual to better understand his/her experiences without necessarily framing them as pathological. The full spectrum of human consciousness may well allow for multiple views of reality, and this is worth exploration. The transpersonal lens would view the 'schizophrenic' person as someone having an anomalous experience and attempt to help them get through it, rather than labeling them as damaged or defective and the experience to be only medically controlled. Certainly, stability and protection from self-harm are of utmost importance, even so.

It's been said that a transpersonal approach to counseling utilizes lightwork, shadow-work, and bodywork. Lightwork is one phrase for those endeavors that aim to expand one's consciousness, such as lucid dreaming or the trance state. Shadow work, on the theory of Carl Jung that the 'shadow' represents material in one's unconscious that at some earlier time was deemed unacceptable, either by oneself or society, and hidden from the conscious mind; the 'work' is any attempt to bring these unknown or masked parts of the psyche into the light of consciousness, either to reclaim or to transform them. And bodywork, then, includes any physiological approaches to wellness that also have a positive effect on one's mental state, not only the obvious therapies such as massage or chiropractic but also quality sleep, good nutrition, and any other support of one's physical health.

How, then, does transpersonal counseling distinguish itself from that of integrative psychology and psychiatry, which also utilize complementary therapies alongside standard

approaches, and adhere to a biopsychosocial model that typically includes respect for the client's spiritual perspective?

While these are certainly areas of overlap, and wonderfully so – we need an ever-growing number of healthcare providers across the globe who understand and provide such comprehensive approach – the distinction is in emphasis, and in the transpersonal worldview itself. Transpersonal counseling not only respects the client's spiritual or metaphysical orientation and experience, but makes it a primary focus – as a source of meaning and purpose, values, identity, and more. Beyond self-understanding, transcendent growth is a key goal of the therapeutic process, while non-ordinary states of consciousness and mystical or anomalous experience are normalized and utilized.

And so, who benefits from a transpersonal approach to counseling? Who is the typical client?

Those striving toward integration and wholeness, self-awareness and development throughout the lifespan, and the understanding and conscious utilization of non-ordinary states of consciousness and mystical experience toward this end, will find that transpersonal psychology has much to offer. It would be less useful, and of less interest, to those who are more literally-minded, concrete thinkers without an interest in the intangible, spiritual, or metaphysical realm.

For those who come to counseling to solve a problem, fix a relationship, or learn better communication skills, for example, this approach may be beyond the scope of their more immediate need. Certainly, transpersonal counseling addresses all of these and much more. The emphasis, however, is one of personal transformation.

And a note of caution: for those undergoing treatment for schizophrenia, dissociative disorder (depersonalization, derealization, identity confusion or alteration, and/or amnesia), or an organic brain syndrome such as Alzheimer's, the transpersonal application of nonordinary states of consciousness may not be advisable. Discussion with one's medical doctor may or may not be useful, depending on his/her knowledge of transpersonal psychology; open dialogue with your transpersonal therapist in your first session is strongly recommended, so that those types of interventions can be avoided. The transpersonal model itself, however, can certainly help you to better understand your current mental state.

Transpersonal Coaching

How is coaching different from counseling? What's the transpersonal coaching model, and how does it differ from life coaching? Who would benefit from this?

It seems that everyone is a coach these days, and the training can range from minimal to comprehensive. A coach is a type of mentor who assists the client toward achieving a specific goal; the coach brings a skill set and collaboration to the relationship, motivating the client and often giving assignments between sessions to help further along the overall process.

The primary distinction between this and counseling is that coaching is specifically purpose-driven and goals-oriented, while counseling tends toward an insight orientation – and in the case of the transpersonal model, personal transformation. For the transpersonal coach, general education in psychology and specifically in the transpersonal area is essential; it simply isn't enough to take basic 'life-coach' training supplemented by complementary practices such as meditation. The transpersonal approach, after all, is delving into the psyche inclusive of non-ordinary states of consciousness and anomalous experience, and the coach needs fundamental psychological training in order to take proper precautions and provide quality service.

Transpersonal coaching utilizes the same framework and emphasis on spiritual or metaphysical experience as in counseling, yet is action-oriented and solution-focused, and typically short-term. It remains holistic or integrative, in which the client accesses inner resources for achieving his/her full potential or performance capability; he/she also utilizes insight, creativity, and unconscious ('shadow') material toward those stated goals, while the process overall is both expansive ('beyond-ego' or self) and interconnected (with all beings, for a 'tapping into' the collective consciousness, or species instinct). The goals that the client brings to the coaching process are initially discussed and modified as needed so as to be in keeping with the client's authentic self, meaning, and sense of purpose.

How can I best achieve my goal? The client asks. What steps can I take, and how can you support me in this process? Pausing a moment for reflection, the transpersonal coach responds, Do you feel confident that this goal is aligned with your personal values? What, in your value system, will support you in this process? Is there anything in your spiritual tradition or recent experience that can also help you achieve your goal? I'd like for you to consider a daily mindfulness meditation process as one of your skills toward this end. And with your permission, I'd like now to take you into a visualization process, so that we can both gain clarity in regard to your goal, and the objectives that will help you to achieve it.

Coaching isn't 'less' than counseling, but it is infinitely more pragmatic, and less insight-oriented. There is a goal, or set of them; together, client and coach set about identifying and then working on those objectives that will lead to goal realization. Counseling often also has a goal – to decrease one's depression, resolve a conflict, or adjust to a life change, for example – yet is far more insight- and growth-oriented, and less formulaic.

The transpersonal model lends itself well to both modalities, in its consideration not only of the personal and interpersonal, but transpersonal realm as well, for the most comprehensive approach – whether to coaching or to counseling.

And who benefits? For, again, there are countless coaches in today's professional world; why seek out one with a transpersonal perspective?

Anyone whose goal for the coaching outcome has a spiritual or metaphysical element, for a start. Or, anyone who wants a coaching style that includes his/her spiritual assets in the plan. A person who places great value on life meaning and purpose would also benefit, in that the

coaching process would center around this aspect. And anyone who welcomes a comprehensive, holistic approach that utilizes the fundamentals of psychology alongside a range of complementary modalities for a successful outcome.

A further word about training: while many coaches claim a psychological foundation, their training in same is too often sparse. And while this may be fine for many clients with a very practical goal in mind, there are always psychological considerations in every coaching encounter. Why hasn't the client been able to achieve this goal on his/her own? Where does his/her resistance come from, and how can he/she transform it so that it doesn't continue to get in the way? How do relationships affect the success or failure of this goal? What about communication style? And is there any history of trauma, or of maladaptive behavior patterns, lurking beneath the surface, waiting to sabotage his/her success?

Best, whenever possible, to work with a coach who also has a solid foundation in psychology. Even better: one with an understanding of the transpersonal model.

Emergence or Emergency? *The Self-Transcendent Experience*

The spiritual or mystical experience, lasting minutes or months, can look and feel a lot like psychosis. Or death. It can also be profoundly life-changing.

It's more common than one might think, occurring in an estimated 30% of people across an array of cultures. Outcome is most often described as positive: greater wellbeing, personal insight, life meaning, and prosociality.

Mystical experience is most often characterized as ineffable (indescribable), noetic (revealing new knowledge), an encounter with one's authentic self, transient, beyond personal control, transcending time, expansive (beyond personal boundaries), and interconnected to all other beings and/or the cosmos. William James, pioneer of modern psychology a century ago, was among the first to describe this in a scientific context.

Such phenomena are generally categorized as annihilating (ego death, oceanic boundlessness, near-death experience), and as relational (universal interconnectedness, increased compassion). Mild forms can be seen in daydreaming, getting 'lost' in a book or music, the 'flow state' of a creative endeavor, the experience of ecstasy or awe; more severe forms involve losing all sense of reality, or feeling as if one has died.

Such experience is often referred to as 'ego death', in fact, because one's insight of authentic self is paradoxically coupled with a sensation that the self is dissolving into the cosmic whole, the individual ceasing to exist as such. When accompanied by surrender, this is typically perceived as profoundly life-changing; when resisted, it can be terrifying.

Throughout time, mystics have been shunned as misfits, or locked away in asylums – or burnt at the stake. Within a religious framework, they may have been deemed holy and sanctified, or even deified, instead; indeed, it may be the stated goal of a spiritual tradition, as in Buddhism. If fortunate, the person going through such experience will have a well-informed and experienced guide, as in psychedelic treatment administration, or in a yoga ashram or cloistered nunnery.

In our modern era, we tend to pathologize instead, and medicate or hospitalize. We label this type of experience as dissociative disorder, schizophrenia, or other psychosis. Indeed, a true psychotic break from reality requires care, and is typically characterized as causing the person severe distress (though it may be blissful instead), with an inability to function in daily life.

But how can one truly know the difference?

Spiritual emergence, or awakening, most often occurs gradually, but can be sudden at times and temporarily overwhelm the individual, thus constituting a crisis or emergency. Duration can be anything from moments to months, and when more extended, can be easily mishandled or become maladaptive.

One distinction is simply whether the experience is viewed as beneficial or harmful, though there are exceptions to this. (The person with schizophrenia may see themselves as a god, for example.) Another is whether it's disabling to one's daily life, but again, this depends on how 'disabling' is defined and to what degree. A key identifying feature of spiritual emergence is often a heightened degree of compassion, as the brain tends to be flooded with neurochemicals related to empathy; this is not the case in psychosis, and can be a telling distinction.

It's not always either/or. The spiritual awakening can feel overwhelming to the person unprepared or unsupported, leading to severe distress which can morph into a neurotic episode.

The ideal scenario is a gradual development, with a mentor or senior who understands what's happening and how to guide the individual through the process. This is not always the case,

however, as in some less well supervised ayahuasca ceremonies, for example, or if such experience occurs spontaneously when no one else is present.

For the highly sensitive person, one who too easily slips into anomalous or paranormal experience or non-ordinary states of consciousness, an educated guide can be essential to mental wellbeing. Those who've experienced trauma at any time in their lives, sometimes too early in childhood to recall, are more likely to fall into this category, as the brain responds to trauma with hypervigilance and hypersensitive perception. Some who struggle with addiction may be attempting to self-medicate early trauma, and in particular to shut off such sensitivity.

Ideally, the transpersonal counselor or coach will have a solid background in psychology including the phenomena of both trauma and addiction, as well as education in and even personal encounter with mystical experience.

It's essential when undertaking any type of transpersonal endeavor, whether via psychedelics, sustained trance state, self-hypnosis, sweat-lodge, or other circumstance meant to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness, that one do so with safeguards in place – knowledge, and a supportive guide or community.

Conclusion

And so, we return full circle to the concept of transpersonal wellbeing.

When considering oneself as whole and fully integrated, we do well to consider a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual model of self and of wellness. It isn't sufficient to think of the self in terms of body, or mind, or even bodymind; we're also social creatures who benefit from interrelationship with others and an understanding of our social contexts. Too, ideally we include a focus on 'spirit health' or the soul, not necessarily in a religious sense but as our most authentic self, the core of our being.

Personal, interpersonal, transpersonal. The realm beyond, and our interest in and experience of same, is highly relevant to who we are, and to our subjective sense of wellbeing.

For many, this includes the ineffable – that which we can't explain. This may be esoteric or paranormal for some; for others, it may be aspects such as creativity, intuition, peak experience, or moments of insight, where words simply fail us.

In order to reach a state of wholeness, we consider the whole of our being. The transpersonal lens does just that.

My first encounter with transpersonal psychology, in 1992 and after I'd already completed my first psychology degree and a dozen years of working in healthcare, was one such 'Aha' moment of sudden awareness. It didn't feel new to me; rather, it felt deeply familiar, the worldview within which I'd already conducted my first 3 decades of life.

I'd come home.

A couple more degrees and certificates later (and years of private clinic and hospital work), and life took a new turn: I moved abroad, living in a succession of countries and traveling to more than 100 of them, to learn more about cultural contexts of psychology.

Today, settled now in Istanbul, in my 60th year, I am immersed in the transpersonal more than ever.

I am home.

Wishing you abundant wellbeing.

Further Reading

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The author holds graduate degrees in transpersonal (MA) and health (PhD) psychologies, and is additionally certified in acupuncture, a range of somatic therapies, clinical nutritional application, and mindfulness meditation. In clinical practice since 1988, she has conducted research in 100+ countries, and has engaged in an ecospirituality path for 40 years.