

The Unmet Needs of Existential therapy

Chair: Gianfranco Buffardi & Gideon Menda

Panelists:

Ernesto Spinelli, Evgenia Georganda, Kirk Schneider, Jason Upton,

Stephen Diamond, , Yaqui Martinez

Abstracts:

Gideon Menda Will present an introduction to the panel's topic 'what are the unmet needs of existential therapy' and will question how and where can we find the answer to the question 'what are the unmet needs of existential therapy'. He will reflect on our professional growth as existential therapists and our readiness to experience and explore the next step of growth.

Ernesto Spinelli will be focusing on how the inevitable rise of AI-based therapy will make most human-led manualised and quasi-medical approaches to therapy redundant. In turn, this will be an opportunity for existential therapy to offer that which has been - in my view - its unique approach to therapy. Less focused on helping, healing or educating, its phenomenological roots centre upon the relationally-attuned, descriptive exploration and clarification of the client's actual way of being. How one "trains" to be an existential therapist is a creative challenge which, I'm sure, will be discussed throughout the conference.

Evgenia Georganda focus on three main points: The need for further research to support with empirical validation our approach; The need for training programs that ensure high quality clinicians while incorporating the body and creative expression; and the need to reach out to a wider audience and. Integrate ethics of action into existential models — helping clients turn awareness into agency, and values into impact.

Kirk Schneider will speak briefly about the unmet need of increased clinical training in existential therapy, particularly in the U.S. This is especially problematic in light of the recent success of institutions such as Michigan School of Professional Psychology, Point Park University and the Existential-Humanistic Institute as well as the APA publishing program which has recently produced two major existential texts and a forthcoming third edition of another text. I also will touch on the related need of existential therapy and therapists to step out of our comfort zones and apply our perspective to the variety of social issues.

Stephen Diamond, will be speaking about the need to directly address the phenomenon of evil in existential therapy. Topic that is not often being address but often present in our work with clients.

Jason Upton will speak on existential therapy and the ethics of access. He will explore whether existential therapy in the UK perpetuates structural inequalities that limit who can access, train in, and contribute to the field. Reflecting on the economic gatekeeping embedded in training structures and the dominance of private practice, Jason will reflect on how the profession may unintentionally create barriers for marginalised and less privileged groups.

Yaqui Martinez will share his reflections on how existential therapy needs to reach populations that have been historically rendered invisible — a form of invisibility that may, in fact, represent a subtle way in which colonialism continues to persist. I will be referring to groups such as people living in poverty, Indigenous communities across Latin America, and even populations in countries beyond the traditionally dominant European and North American contexts.