

## *Cultivating Psychotherapist Artistry*

### Model Existential-Humanistic Training Programs

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The education and training of depth psychotherapists is multifaceted and lifelong, an ethic esteemed by those who espouse an existential-humanistic (E-H) orientation. Such an orientation represents an integrated theoretical, philosophical, and value system—a compass rose or point of reference—to navigate through the complexities of psychotherapy and life. Heeding the call to this vocation requires successful completion of a substantial body of formal coursework and supervised field experience consonant with the prevailing scientist-practitioner or professional school models of graduate training in clinical and counseling psychology and mental health counseling. In equal measure, its whole-person perspective requires an ongoing commitment to personal and professional development as well as the pursuit of meaningful work, relationships, and avocational interests—in other words, a commitment to being a “pro” (Bugental, 1978, p. 35). The existential-humanistic-integrative perspectives encourage the practitioner to creatively weave together the science, philosophy, and art of psychotherapy; the capacity to do so is the trademark of the “virtuoso” (Bugental, 1987, p. 264).

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*Authors' Note:* With deep gratitude, we thank our beloved mentor and friend James F. T. Bugental for his vision and verve in creating “The Art of the Psychotherapist” (Arts) courses. He stoutheartedly offered this innovative five-course series on an existential-humanistic approach to psychotherapy for more than a decade to younger colleagues, who now carry the torch of this illuminating perspective. Jim, we salute you for being a wise and spirited pioneer who opened new territories in psychotherapy and in the holistic education of psychotherapists. Your legacy ripples through us to our students and through them to future generations who value the art of life-changing psychotherapy.

The initial phase of adopting an E-H orientation begins when the student is first introduced to the wellspring of inspiration provided by the existential philosophers (e.g., Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty) or practitioners identified as drawing on a humanistic, existential, phenomenological, or E-H orientation, from Carl Rogers to the present (e.g., Charlotte Bühler, James Bugental, Clark Moustakas, Viktor Frankl, Rollo May, Sidney Jourard, Kirk Schneider, and Irvin Yalom). However, actualizing one's interest in the E-H perspective may be fraught with challenges pertaining to the acquisition of advanced education and training. Although humanistic proponents appear to be represented within academic institutions across the United States, there are currently relatively few programs leading to master's or doctoral degrees (Churchill, 1994) "centered around a humanistic orientation" (Arons, 1996, p. 5).<sup>1</sup> Traditional clinical or counseling training programs do not tend to foster "third force" attitudes such as education of the whole person, value placed on client and therapist subjectivity, and egalitarianism in the therapeutic relationship (Gendlin, 1994, p. 339) characterized by participants who embark on the journey as "fellow travelers" (Yalom, 2003, p. 6). Furthermore, academic textbooks often represent humanistic psychology in limited and historically encapsulated ways (Churchill, 1994). For example, Elkins (2009) observes that Rogers's theoretical and research contributions on client-centered psychotherapy are often marginalized or even ignored in clinical training programs. Our observation of introductory psychology and survey courses at the undergraduate level is that they typically do not provide the student with examples of the diversification that exists within the E-H orientation or its dynamic evolution. Although graduate

students at the master's level are encouraged to read original sources, they may not be required reading on course syllabi. Course texts typically cover substantial amounts of material designed to meet the standards set by accrediting bodies, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Well-written overviews of a variety of theories and practice perspectives are offered in the typical graduate text with the hope of tempting readers to study at greater depth on their own.

Another challenge for the student is that faculty members, clinical supervisors, and mentors identified as primarily drawing on an E-H perspective can be difficult to find in mainstream psychology graduate programs. For the graduate student enrolled in an APA- or CACREP-approved program, course offerings in humanistic, existential, phenomenological, constructivist, and transpersonal psychology are likely to be scant (e.g., see Heatherington et al., 2012, p. 365, lamenting the 80% "allegiance" to cognitive-behavioral therapy among the faculty in APA-approved doctoral programs). To compound the problem, there is a dearth of E-H-oriented practicum and internship placements (Gendlin, 1994), although individual supervisors may offer modeling and mentoring in the approach. Consequently, postgraduate training programs become an essential resource for psychotherapists who wish to integrate E-H perspectives into clinical practice, teaching, and research. Ensuring the availability of courses and training programs at the graduate and postgraduate levels is a mission for those who support this orientation and its current renaissance within the field of psychotherapy, especially in light of the exciting new research that suggests that "humanistic practice principles are a pivotal (and needed) dimension of therapeutic training" (Schneider & Längle,

2012b, p. 480; see also Chapter 26, a special section titled “The Renewal of Humanism in Psychotherapy: A Roundtable Discussion,” this volume).

Mounting research evidence affirms (Norcross & Wampold, 2011; Wampold, 2013) what E-H-oriented practitioners have long articulated (see Bugental, 1978, 1987; Elkins, 2009; May, 1983; May & Yalom, 1995; Rogers, 1980; Schneider & Krug, 2010): An effective therapeutic relationship requires something more profound than technical skill or theoretical understanding. Effective psychotherapy, regardless of orientation, is predicated on a humanistic relationship (Wampold, 2012). Elkins (2009) notes that “psychotherapy is more than science, and mechanistic techniques. It is also poetry and art” (p. 124). He advocates for less emphasis on the science of psychotherapy in training programs and more on the art of psychotherapy because it is the creative aspects of the work that support “the experience in which the client begins to feel the flow of her own creative becoming” (p. 120). Similarly, Elkins (2009) describes psychotherapy “that is more mysterious, circled about with awe, an experience in soul, one that touches the heart, nourishes the soul, and makes both client and therapist more human” (p. 119). To engage in such life-changing psychotherapy, the therapist must “prepare” by cultivating “subjective readiness” in tandem with acquiring traditional academic and applied training (Bugental, 1987, p. 269).

The call for balanced training is supported by research dating back to the landmark comprehensive reviews of therapy outcome research conducted by Bergin and Lambert (1978) and Lambert and Bergin (1994) and the fascinating “comparative study of psychotherapy” and the healing arts across orientations and cultures by Frank and Frank (1991). Groundbreaking, current psychotherapy outcome research challenges

the prevailing notion that particular modalities and techniques are primarily responsible for therapeutic effectiveness (Duncan, Miller, Wampold, & Hubbell, 2010; Norcross, 2002; Wampold, 2001, 2007). After reviewing a substantial number of meta-analyses concerning the therapy relationship, the interdivisional second Task Force on Evidence-Based Therapy (Norcross & Wampold, 2011) came to the conclusion that “the therapy relationship makes substantial and consistent contributions to psychotherapy outcome independent of the specific type of treatment [and that it] accounts for why clients improve (or fail to improve) at least as much as the particular treatment method” (Norcross & Wampold, 2011, p. 98). Norcross and Wampold (2011) go on to state that “practice and treatment guidelines should explicitly address therapist behaviors that promote a facilitative therapy relationship” (p. 98), which points to the need for training programs that cultivate the evolution of the therapist’s capacity for presence, mindfulness, and attunement (see Siegel, 2010).

The training programs highlighted in this chapter are grounded on the notion that the development of the therapist as a person and the acquisition of the skills and techniques of psychotherapy should be given equal emphasis. Elkins (2012) advocates for training that helps students develop superior personal and interpersonal skills by valuing empathy, acceptance, attunement, and connection. Elkins’s views on training dovetail with the skills demonstrated by master therapists in the APA-sponsored film *Qualities and Actions of Effective Therapists* (2011). Throughout the film, Bruce Wampold beautifully describes and illustrates the core capacities of effective therapists as illuminated through current psychotherapy outcome research. He relates that effective therapists demonstrate the ability to (a) facilitate a robust therapeutic alliance permeated with

empathic attunement; (b) help the client expand emotional engagement and modulation; (c) provide an explanation for the client's distress that is compatible with his or her worldview and provides avenues for change; (d) convey hope for the efficacy of the therapeutic plan and optimism about improved outcome for the client; (e) identify and focus on clients' strengths and assets and help clients harness them to facilitate the desired changes; and (f) continuously cultivate self-awareness through reflection, supervision, and personal therapy. Wampold also notes that distinctly skillful therapists seek continual improvement in a variety of ways throughout their careers.

Psychotherapist preparation from an E-H perspective is incomplete to the extent that it neglects the development of the therapist as a person—the wellspring and instrument of creativity and artistry. Bugental (1987) posited, “The most mature psychotherapists are more artists than technicians [in that] they bring to bear a wide variety of sensitivities and skills so that their clients can release their latent potentials for fuller living” (p. 264). The seasoned therapist deftly integrates a sound knowledge base acquired through formal academic study and extensive supervised clinical experience with finely honed perception, interpersonal sensitivity and attunement, intrapersonal awareness, and intuition (see Duncan, Chapter 29, “The Person of the Therapist: One Therapist's Journey to Relationship,” and Edelstein, Chapter 27, “Frames, Attitudes, and Skills of an Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapist,” this volume). The subjective realm is trusted, and access to this sensitive resource within is increasingly fluid and reflexive (Bugental, 1987). The “intimate journey” (Bugental, 1990) that constitutes life-changing depth psychotherapy requires such artistry.

In this chapter, we describe The Art of the Psychotherapist (or Arts) Workshop Series

and the Existential-Humanistic Institute's (EHI) certificate programs in E-H therapy: training programs designed to both explicitly and implicitly teach an E-H approach to psychotherapy. The courses immerse the psychotherapist in an environment permeated with the humanistic values of compassion, courage, creativity, love, spiritedness, intellectual and personal growth, and “I–thou” relationships as characterized by Buber (1970). The programs provide learning environments that invite authenticity, cultivate attunement to subjectivity, and stimulate the capacity to be more fully present, moment to moment, to what is most alive within oneself and within the client and to what is emergent in the therapeutic relationship. We believe that the Arts series, the EHI certificate programs, and the other programs and organizations highlighted in this chapter provide valuable models for educators and clinical supervisors interested in designing experientially based psychotherapist preparation programs. The highlighted programs and organizations also provide valuable examples for students, interns, and practitioners interested in further developing their artistry as psychotherapists.

The philosophy, content, and process of the Arts series and EHI certificate programs are described in the next sections of the chapter. This summary is followed by highlights of the results of informal surveys of participants in both programs conducted to explore the influence of the courses on personal and professional development and to illuminate the factors that make the courses attractive. We then briefly discuss and illustrate the most prominent themes observed in the survey respondents' narrative answers to our questions. We include a brief discussion of the relationship of the Arts series and EHI certificate programs to other E-H institutes and organizations and share our reflections on the importance of E-H training programs in today's world.

## THE ART OF THE PSYCHOTHERAPIST COURSES

The Arts program was an intensive five-course series based on an E-H approach to depth psychotherapy. The courses were conceived and developed by Bugental and several associates (J. F. T. Bugental, personal communication, February 2000).<sup>2</sup> Participants, many of whom were seasoned psychotherapists, came from throughout the United States and Canada and dedicated 6 or more days each year over a 4-year period to these trainings. Although the Arts series is no longer offered, we believe that Bugental's vision of postgraduate E-H education content and process will be of inspiration to both educators and students.

Reflecting Bugental's ongoing scholarship and more than 40 years of clinical practice, the Arts courses incorporated and enhanced values, beliefs, and practices from the rich traditions of existential and humanistic psychologies (Bugental & Kleiner, 1993; Bugental & Sterling, 1995; Sharp & Bugental, 2001). The emphasis of the Arts courses was on illuminating the subjective experience and attitude of each participant's evolving self-and-world construct system (i.e., his or her "implicit vision of [his or her] own identity and the character of [his or her] envisioned world") rather than on prescribing a rigid set of techniques (Bugental, 1999, p. 109). From humanistic psychology, there was an emphasis placed on possibilities, hope, and potential; from existential traditions, there was an emphasis placed on awe, limits, anxiety, terror, and the tragic aspects of life (Sharp & Bugental, 2001). The courses evolved from Bugental's lifelong practice and study of depth psychotherapy, particularly as elucidated in the following texts: *Psychotherapy and Process: The Fundamentals of an Existential-Humanistic Approach* (Bugental, 1978), *The Art of the Psychotherapist* (Bugental,

1987), and *Psychotherapy Isn't What You Think* (Bugental, 1999). A gifted educator as well as a psychotherapist, Bugental elegantly translated his reflections on psychotherapy into a highly effective curriculum with original teaching materials and experiential exercises.

### *Context and Atmosphere*

The content, structure, and atmosphere of the Arts courses reflected the philosophy and values described previously. The structure of the retreats, held in rural settings, not only facilitated focused, intensive clinical training sessions but also allowed time for reflection, relaxation, hiking, the expressive arts, and various group activities that typically fall outside of professional roles. Clinical training included lectures, demonstrations, role-plays, group exercises, review of audiotapes and videotapes, and the practice of journaling to capture the evolving personal integration. Emphasis was placed on listening closely to one's ongoing subjective experience and one's evolving sense of self, others, and possibilities.

A central goal of the Arts program was to create an atmosphere in which participants felt encouraged and safe to explore their subjective reactions to various aspects of clinical work, including what it means to be a psychotherapist in our contemporary world (Sharp & Bugental, 2001). That is, participants were encouraged to fully experience and convey to others as they felt comfortable the hope, awe, fear, dread, excitement, confusion, frustration, and exhilaration that are inherent aspects of conducting psychotherapy—and that are considered by some to be unprofessional, unacceptable, or unsafe to discuss with colleagues.

Time was also allotted during the evenings for singing, dancing, poetry reading, storytelling, creative presentations, and (given that the Arts courses evolved in California)

relaxing with one's peers in a hot tub. Thus, participants reaped the benefits not only of working closely and collaboratively but also of laughing, crying, imagining, playing, and otherwise fully sharing their humanity.

Another powerful element of the Arts courses was the ongoing opportunity to study and work closely with Bugental, a highly respected mentor, elder, and sage. His presence added an immense richness to the Arts programs. He shared his extensive knowledge of the history of psychology and demonstrated consummate skills in fostering trust, awareness, and growth. In addition, he disclosed aspects of his humanity that stirred the heart—his courage, humor, struggles with aging, and ongoing commitment to life as a quest. He remains a profound inspiration to Arts participants.

### *Overview of Course Content*

Arts I introduced Bugental's (1987, 1978) E-H perspective on depth psychotherapy. Through a mixture of didactic presentations and experiential exercises, participants developed greater sensitivity to the process dimensions of psychotherapy. Participants extended their range of communication skills, particularly in relation to monitoring, paralleling, and engaging client presence. Therapeutic resistance was described and worked with as an essential obstacle and window to change. Bugental's perspective on fundamental concepts such as presence, subjective awareness, searching, resistance, and the self-and-world construct system was presented (Bugental, 1987). Participants were encouraged to continually reflect on the meaning and influence of these dimensions in their work and lives.

Arts II and the ensuing courses built on and enhanced the material of Arts I. The ebb and flow between the courses in nonlinear fashion allowed material to be expanded and deepened within the context of each

presentation. Arts II initially focused on the primacy of the subjective—the therapist's inner experience, client readiness and reluctance, and intersubjectivity. Familiar difficulties, such as specific client patterns that concern therapists, were examined (e.g., therapist responses to clients with hair-trigger anger patterns, clients who collect and embrace injustice perceptions, clients who consistently express disproportionate dependency, and clients who seem unwilling to take responsibility for their actions or life). Attention was paid to clarifying and mobilizing implicit elements of psychotherapy such as client concern and intentionality and the therapist's *pou sto* or philosophical stance (Bugental, 1999, p. 85). Core tenets of Bugental's E-H perspective were expanded and interwoven throughout the remainder of the Arts courses. The structure and process of the program emphasized that each therapist must incorporate and amend these ideas in accord with his or her values, beliefs, and cultural and historical context.

Arts III focused on discovering one's own needs as a therapist and a person and on how these needs affect one's work. Included was emphasis on exploration of the therapist's self-and-world construct system, sexuality, and unwitting tendencies to keep the work shallow. Participants were encouraged to examine tendencies to objectify clients, to resist being present, and to become preoccupied with theory, technique, or diagnosis. The crucial importance of deepening the therapeutic alliance was addressed, as was client or therapist efforts to collude in sabotaging this process. Participants continually refined and maintained the therapeutic "container" through addressing the ongoing business, legal, and ethical aspects of therapy. Arts III through Arts V could be taken in any order.

Arts IV was specifically adapted to the needs and interests of the participants. A menu of possible topics was presented to enrollees in advance of the program, and

coverage of the various topics was based on participants' requests. The general goals of Arts IV were to explore and extend the scope of one's E-H orientation, to recognize special circumstances in which one's work may require adaptations, and to acknowledge personal limitations. Topics included assessing and taking into account client ego function, working with special populations (e.g., children, elders, and mandated clients), teaching and supervising, developing shorter-term models of E-H psychotherapy, and working with couples. In addition, technical skills were refined (e.g., establishing the therapeutic contract, coping with acting-out impulses, modulating intimacy and eroticism, and preparing for termination).

During Arts V, the *master course*, an even more significant shift in the teaching orientation occurred. The emphasis of Arts V was on further developing and refining individual styles and interests. Consequently, not only was the content based on the needs and interests of the enrollees, but the participants also did most of the teaching. Participants volunteered to present conceptual materials, learning exercises, or related artistic productions. Current issues in the profession were the subject of debates or the focus of exercises during this retreat. One cohort group incorporated a process group into its training, with the goals of refining participants' skills in group facilitation, expanding awareness of group dynamics, and deepening interpersonal and intrapersonal attunement.

An integral element of Arts V was the acknowledgment and integration of the fundamental change from primarily following the teachings of a revered mentor to taking more initiative and responsibility for the content and direction of the ongoing Arts courses. It was testimony to Bugental's wisdom that he designed the Arts courses in such a way that autonomy and authority were increasingly transferred to the group. He made it abundantly clear that a

fundamental task at hand in Arts V was to develop an ongoing program that sustained the growth and development of the participants rather than bolstering the authority or power of its creator.

A tremendous sense of community emerged out of participation in the Arts series. Two groups have continued to meet independently for more than 20 years. Participants develop deep friendships and provide mutual support for the growth and emergence of one another. This includes support for ongoing professional development, such as providing an opportunity to present a paper in progress, coteaching, writing for publication (Bugental & Bracke, 1992; Bugental & Heery, 1999; Bugental & Sapienza, 1994; Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2001; Sharp & Bugental, 2001), and taking part in peer consultation groups (M. Heery, personal communication, August 2000; M. M. Sterling, personal communication, August 2000).

## SURVEY OF ARTS PARTICIPANTS

A survey conducted by Pierson and Sharp (1999) was designed to investigate what it is about participation in the Arts courses that repeatedly beckoned friends and colleagues, what participants considered to be their most valuable learning experiences, and how the Arts courses influenced participants' work as therapists, their overall professional development, and their lives in general. The responses of our "coresearchers" (Rogers, 1985/1989, p. 285) reflected their personal experiences and, as such, provide the reader with an immeasurably enriched view of the courses. They also serve to illuminate important aspects of the series that others might wish to consider in the design of similar programs for the training and continuing education of E-H psychotherapists. What follows is an abbreviated presentation of the

survey and discussion of the results. For an expanded version with narrative examples of participant responses, please refer to Schneider et al. (2001, Chapter 40), the first edition of *The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology: Leading Edges in Theory and Practice*.

### **Method**

Everyone ( $N = 45$ ) who had completed five or more Arts courses by June 1999 was invited to participate in our survey. We developed a questionnaire that consisted of seven open-ended questions and five questions that requested demographic information. E-mail was selected as the primary medium for our survey. Heuristic and phenomenological methods were employed to analyze the survey responses (Pierson & Sharp, 1999).

### **Results**

#### *Participant Characteristics*

Nearly half (49%,  $n = 22$ ) of those queried responded to our survey. Demographic information provided by the 12 women and 10 men represented in the sample yielded a general picture of those who elected to participate in the Arts series and the ongoing autonomous cohort groups that continue to meet on a yearly basis. Respondents ranged in age from 41 to 59 years, with a mean age of 51 years. (Keep in mind that the majority of the respondents completed their first Arts course 10 or more years prior to the survey.) The highest academic degree completed for half of the group was the PhD, and for the other half, it was the master's. Years of experience as a counselor or psychotherapist ranged from 5 to 32 years, with a mean of 12 years and a median of 18 years. A majority of respondents (73.0%) indicated that they draw on the Arts courses in their work as therapists in private practice settings. Other

settings mentioned included social service agencies (18.2%), university counseling centers (13.6%), and academic departments (4.5%). In addition, 1 person indicated work in another profession.

#### *Themes Observed*

Distillation of the collection of narrative responses to each of the survey questions yielded one or more themes that seemed to capture the essence of what the respondents conveyed. For clarity and brevity, in this section, we present the most prominent themes observed (Table 41.1) among the answers to three of the survey questions:<sup>3</sup>

1. What compels you to continue to participate in the Arts program?
2. What impact does participation in the Arts program have on your (a) work as a therapist, (b) professional development, and (c) nonprofessional life?
3. What stands out for you as the most significant learning experience that you have had at an Arts training?

### **DISCUSSION**

Our survey respondents impressed us as being men and women who demonstrate a lifelong commitment to becoming master therapists—artists engaged in “the constant challenge to move past where one is and to explore where one is becoming” (Bugental, 1987, p. 5). They expressed that they deeply value the synergistic company of others on the same quest.

#### *Cultivation of Therapist Artistry*

The Arts courses were perceived to cultivate the personal qualities and skillful artistry that characterize therapists who seek to effectively practice life-changing psychotherapy from

**Table 41.1** Prominent Themes Observed Among Arts Participants' Answers to Survey Questions

<i>Question Focus</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Motivation to participate	1. Sense of connection and belonging to an intentional community
	2. Opportunity for professional and personal development
	3. Opportunity to learn directly from Bugental
Impact of the Arts courses	1. Increased understanding of the theoretical perspective, its efficacy, and its power
	2. Clarification and solidification of professional identity
	3. Increased confidence in the ability to practice from an E-H perspective
	4. Heightened sensitivity to one's subjective experience in the flow of therapy
	5. Generalization of the sensitivities and skills cultivated in the courses to daily living practices
Significant learning experiences	1. Experiences that stimulated professional and personal development (e.g., brought out potentials, enhanced effectiveness, and evoked fresh ways of being)
	2. Experiences that enhanced specific aspects of the therapeutic process and revealed or cultivated qualities related to the self as a therapist-artist
	3. Experiences that occurred in the context of relationship with Bugental

NOTE: Arts = The Art of the Psychotherapist. Refer to the Results section of the text for the actual survey questions posed to the participants.

an E-H perspective. Participants accepted the invitation to become immersed in the intimate retreat environment and perceived that it evoked more of what is potential in them as whole persons and more of what is potential in them as psychotherapists. To be sure, skills and techniques were practiced and honed throughout the courses, but accent was given to developing therapists' capacity to be fully present and to have fluid access to their subjectivity in service to clients. Following is a sampling of the ways in which this transformation was expressed:

I find that I can sit with people with more respect; less judgment; [and] more honesty, hope, and willingness to follow their growth. I also find myself going to places [and] levels of pain and despair that challenge me personally. I really care deeply for my clients. I am challenged to grow constantly in order to match the growth they exhibit in my presence. As I am increasingly in touch with deeper, subtler layers of my own experience, I can model that for my client and facilitate the client's deepening awareness as well.

### *Identification With the Perspective*

A hallmark of the professional is “a sense of personal identity with the work” (Bugental, 1978, p. 35). Survey respondents expressed that the Arts series helped them articulate and draw on the E-H theoretical base on which they ground their work as psychotherapists. This was conveyed in several ways. One person wrote,

The Arts courses have formed the base of my professional growth from 1987 to the present. Prior to that, I had a rather loosely developed framework. The Arts courses helped me [to] articulate my basic beliefs and to integrate them more consciously into my professional life.

### *Personal Outgrowths*

The personal dimension of respondents’ lives was clearly influenced by participation in the Arts series. Beautifully exemplifying this notion, one woman expressed, “Learnings from my work with Jim Bugental and as part of the [Arts] group transcends psychotherapy in that the art of psychotherapy is also an art for living.” Another example illustrates this theme: “I think that this perspective has smoothed my life, [smoothed] my thinking, and has given me tools to be a better family member and community citizen. . . . The emphasis on authenticity seeps into my daily life.”

A nutrient-rich environment for stretching and experiencing oneself and others in fresh ways and for becoming more aware of or enlarging one’s self-and-world construct system was provided.

My relationships with my wife, daughter, and son have changed in the sense that I am much more willing to be expressive of my feelings. . . . The Arts program has helped me [to] accept and value who I am

more than any other life experience. . . . [It has] helped me to see that what I call my “self” is not a static unchangeable aspect of my life experience.

### *Significance of Community*

In the midst of the increasingly technocratic and often fragmentary discipline of psychology, the Arts courses were perceived as offering participants a home base or an intentional community. More than half of the men and women who responded to our survey specifically mentioned that the feeling of connection with others in their Arts cohort and of belonging to a larger E-H community was an important factor in their choosing to participate in the Arts courses.

Participants in the Arts courses develop tremendous group cohesiveness. As is true in the working stages of productive groups, this sense of cohesiveness and the trust on which it is predicated created a climate conducive to profound intrapersonal and interpersonal exploration and to giving and receiving the type of constructive feedback that extends therapist sensitivities and skills. The environment fostered an ethic of shared commitment to one another’s personal and professional development. This experience was particularly pronounced in the survey responses from those who participated in the two longest-running cohort groups. Members felt encouraged to move beyond previously held creative boundaries in areas such as their work as therapists, educators, writers, and workshop presenters.

[The Arts program] inspires my professional development. I look at our group as the leaders of the next generation of existential psychotherapists, so it pushes me to contribute on a wider, bigger, broader scale [in the form of] professional writing,

presenting, [and so on] to our group and to the public at large.

The trainings give me a forum to . . . discuss my own perceptions and try out new ideas with a supportive, nonjudgmental group of colleagues. Since it is imperative to try to live the stance I am trying to teach, our Arts meetings are a hothouse in which to practice what I preach. I get to watch people I know and respect try out new material on me, which in turn encourages me to take new risks.

The invitation to live more authentically and at one's growing edge was implicit in every activity within the Arts curriculum, from participation in therapeutic skill-building exercises to late-night discussions in the hot tub. As one writer pithily reflected, "Because of some of the self-confrontation that has been my experience of Arts [courses], I feel like I live a bit more existentially in my life, which is to say more authentically."

### *Relationship With the Mentor*

Bugental's presence as a mentor, teacher, or elder was specifically mentioned as being an essential element of the Arts series for a number of people in our sample. The opportunity to study and work with him was cited as both a compelling reason to participate in the series and the catalyst for outstanding learning experiences. Bugental was highly esteemed and, frankly, loved by those who participated in the Arts series. This quality of personal regard was clearly reciprocated and permeated the atmosphere at the Arts retreats. The spirit of generativity (Erickson, 1982) was consistently demonstrated in Bugental's way of being in relationship. He offered younger colleagues profound respect for their individuality and individuation processes as psychotherapists.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF ARTS TO OTHER INSTITUTES**

The philosophy and design of the Arts program inspired collaborative professional activities such as teaching, conducting research, and program development. A brief review of a few noteworthy activities undertaken by Arts participants illuminates the influence of the Arts program on other institutions. For example, early in the 1990s, several participants conducted training programs in Russia based on the Arts courses. Later, a highly successful program was developed in California to train 19 psychotherapists visiting from Russia (Boyd, 1997–1998). As a result of these trainings, E-H institutes were created in Moscow and St. Petersburg. These institutes are now affiliated with Moscow State University and the Pedagogical State University of St. Petersburg, respectively. Students in St. Petersburg can receive university credit for Arts trainings (M. Heery, personal communication, June 2000).

The success of these projects led the trainers, most of whom had been participants in Bugental's Arts series, to envision and create the Existential-Humanistic Institute (EHI) located in the San Francisco Bay Area (Schneider, 1997–1998). EHI is a not-for-profit education, training, and service organization designed to promote the consideration and teaching of E-H principles in psychology and psychotherapy. A panel of seven members governs the organization. Its advisory board consists of noted scholars from throughout the United States and Canada. EHI offers workshops and training programs to professionals, students, and the general public, and it publishes a newsletter, *The Existential Humanist*, and maintains a website (<http://www.ehinstitute.org/>). Its yearly conference provides scholars and practitioners with the opportunity to present evolving work in theory, research,

and practice to interested individuals from around the country. Many EHI members are also affiliated with APA's Division 32 and the Association for Humanistic Psychology.

Inspired by the work of EHI, the Existential-Humanistic Northwest Professional Organization (<http://www.ehnorthwest.org>) was catalyzed by the Portland, Oregon, psychotherapist Bob Edelstein and a 12-member development board in 2010. Edelstein served on the board of EHI for several years and is a member of Arts Omega, an independent group of psychotherapists with roots in Bugental's Arts series. The Existential-Humanistic Northwest (EHNW) Professional Organization's goals and values include education for clinicians, advocacy for E-H psychotherapy, peer support and outreach, and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. This energetic organization offers an array of activities and events designed for those in the healing professions and others interested in the E-H perspective. Currently, this association offers monthly peer consultation and study groups; a bimonthly, networking luncheon accompanied by a psychotherapy-related focal presentation; practice-oriented workshops; and plans to regularly offer conferences showcasing E-H psychotherapy practice.

The International Institute for Humanistic Studies (<http://www.human-studies.com>), under the direction of Myrtle Heery, PhD, who originally co-taught with Bugental, provides a series of courses in existential-humanistic mindful psychotherapy, with a focus on individuals and groups. The institute also offers a variety of trainings oriented toward "personal growth through self-discovery" to professionals in the helping professions and to lay persons. Like EHI, its sister San Francisco Bay Area institute, the International Institute for Humanistic Studies offers programs in E-H therapy to international audiences.

Interest in E-H practice appears to be growing around the globe (Schneider & Längle, 2012a). Notable among observations

of this trend are the exciting East-West dialogues that occurred during the First International Conference on Existential Psychology in Nanjing, China, in May 2010 and the Second International Conference on Existential Psychology at Fudan University, Shanghai, China, in May 2012. A third conference is planned. Schneider and Längle (2012a) report that humanistic and existential training programs are offered throughout Europe, as well as in Japan, China, and Latin America (see also the special section Chapter 26, "The Renewal of Humanism in Psychotherapy: A Roundtable Discussion," this volume).

#### THE EHI CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Heartened by the recent groundbreaking research on contextual factors, the faculty of the EHI in 2012 launched a yearlong training program leading to a certificate in "Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Practice." It is the first formal training program in E-H therapy designed for licensed therapists and graduate students yearning to learn therapeutic principles of practice that go beyond behavioral techniques and treatment protocols. The powerful and effective teaching by their mentors Bugental, Yalom, and May inspired the EHI faculty and guided the development of the certificate programs. The faculty wanted to bestow on the next generation of therapists their interpretation of the unique education and training that Bugental, Yalom, and May had given them.

The EHI currently awards two certificates, one through EHI exclusively and the other in partnership with Saybrook University. In the fall of 2013, students who have completed the "Foundations" certificate will begin a 2-year advanced training program, culminating in certification as an *existential-humanistic therapist*.

The primary faculty members of EHI are acknowledged leaders in the field of existential and humanistic practice. They include Orah Krug, PhD, Director of Clinical Training and Certificate Programs and adjunct faculty, Saybrook University; Kirk Schneider, PhD, Vice President and adjunct faculty, Saybrook University; Nader Shabajangi, PhD, President and CEO, AgeSong Inc.; and Sonja Saltman, MS, Executive Director. They have been practicing, teaching, and writing about E-H therapy for more than 25 years.

### *Focus and Intention of the Certificate Programs*

The programs are intended to steep participants in the principles of E-H therapy, but unlike most training programs, they also focus on the development of the trainee as a whole person, appreciating not only that psychotherapy is an art as much as a science but also that personal development is encouraged by mentoring experiences. Most of the students have expressed a deep resonance with the existential worldview, having read existential philosophers or practitioners like May, Yalom, Bugental, and Schneider.

The learning objectives are grounded in the principles of practice. Consequently, students learn (a) to be present to the process dimension of therapy—presence to process encourages what is most alive in the moment to emerge; (b) to work with contextualized meanings and protective life patterns, understanding meaning making as an aspect of human nature grounded in one's particular context and understanding life protections as a means to cope with overwhelming experiences; (c) to work relationally with transference and countertransference enactments, cocreated by therapist and client, understanding that within a safe and intimate therapeutic relationship disowned painful experiences can be faced, resolved, or managed; and (d) to work not only with explicit existential

issues but also with implicit, unrecognized existential issues underlying the presenting problems. The advanced training deepens this learning and also explores how to use the E-H principles as a foundation on which to employ particular modalities or techniques such as cognitive-behavioral approaches or trauma techniques (see Schneider, 2008; Schneider & Krug, 2010).

As mentioned above, the programs differ from many other training programs in their emphasis not only on the principles of practice but equally on the development of the therapist as a whole person. Of course these learning objectives are interrelated. The principles of practice often become guideposts for participants' personal and professional ways of being in the world if they are valued and incorporated. Bugental (1987) emphatically believed that psychotherapeutic education must focus as much on the person as on the principles of practice. Recent research reaffirms his position, as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Therapy is much more than treatment modalities and techniques. Therapy is a very personal encounter between two people, requiring the therapist to possess sensitive attunement to underlying processes emerging in the self, in the other, and in the relationship. To this end, the mature therapist must cultivate personal and interpersonal qualities such as presence, empathy, and compassion. Consequently, we focus the trainees on their subjective and intersubjective experiences, including reflections on their historical contexts, their personal narratives, and their attachment styles. Participants are encouraged to continually attend to how these constructs affect their personal and professional lives.

### *Structure of the Certificate Programs*

In all of our programs, the learning is multifaceted, combining distance and residential

learning. This format allows us to work with international participants as well as state-side and local residents. Moreover, the residential time allows participants to put aside their daily lives and immerse themselves in a supportive, nurturing environment with faculty and students. We work, eat, and play together, all the while building an intimate community and a safe container for learning, personal reflection, and self-disclosure.

Students choose from several online courses and attend two 4-day, residential, experiential courses per year. In addition, there is a yearly 40-hour practicum (students determine the location) concurrent with 10 hours of consultation with an EHI faculty member by phone, Skype, or in person.

### *Overview of Course Content*

The online courses are intended not only to provide the participants with a survey of E-H psychotherapeutic theory but also to provide in-depth studies of prominent practitioners such as May, Bugental, and Yalom. The advanced online courses also include courses on existential philosophy and literature and on more specific topics determined by students' interests. The experiential, skill development courses bring the theories to life. An overarching assumption of E-H therapy is that it is the client's in-the-moment experiencing that forms both the underlying and the actual process in therapy. For this reason, we focus our students on the process dimension of therapy, through a mix of didactic presentations, relevant videos, faculty demonstrations, experiential exercises, and role-play practice.

The students not only view and practice how to work with process by cultivating interpersonal and intrapersonal presence but also are encouraged to experience and reflect on their own in-the-moment subjective experiencing. By bringing a focus to these

moments, students access their particular emotional reactions, opening themselves to significant, embodied learning experiences. Participants experience how they may rescue clients, avoid intimacy, focus on content, problem solve, and so on. They begin to appreciate that the way they work with clients is a reflection of their own contexts, attachment styles, and protective patterns of being. This type of learning is, we believe, unique and rare. It challenges students to shift their focus from "learning to do" to "learning to be." It requires a willingness to have an unknowing attitude, to accept, to risk, to be vulnerable, and to look deeply within oneself. Not all students are able or willing to swim in these waters, but those that are have reported life-changing experiences, as the results from the training questionnaires, described below, reveal. The learning environment of this educational program invites this openness because the faculty values and cultivates safety, intimacy, acceptance, collaboration, and play.

### **SURVEY OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

The training questionnaires were intended to assess the efficacy of the training program and its value to the participants, both professionally and personally. Pre- and posttraining questionnaires were developed that consisted of 6 open-ended questions and 12 evaluative questions. Before the start of the Foundations certificate program, the incoming students were given the pretraining questionnaire, and on completion of the yearlong program, they were given the posttraining questionnaire. There were eight students in the Foundations certificate program. One student was unable to take the second experiential due to illness and was consequently unable to complete the program and the posttraining

questionnaire. Six of the seven remaining students completed both questionnaires.

### *Participant Characteristics*

The Foundations program consisted of six doctoral students attending Saybrook University and two non-Saybrook students: one a therapist from Malaysia and the other a psychiatric resident from Austria. The range of our participants' therapeutic experience varied from just a few years in practice to more than 25 years. Their ages ranged from 28 to 62. They all expressed an affinity for the E-H perspective.

### *Summary of EHI Training Questionnaire Data*

From a training standpoint, we (i.e., Krug & Piwowski) were primarily interested in two major qualities of experience. First, to tailor the teaching of E-H theory and practice to the students' needs, we examined their responses to questions such as "What did you gain professionally from the program? What did you gain personally?" and "Having completed the certificate program, how comfortable do you feel with incorporating E-H theory and practice into your professional work?" These open-ended questions were intended to help us paint a thematic picture of what aspects really took root in the weeks following the second experiential training.

The second focus was to evaluate which E-H constructs students integrated in a deeper, broader, and more personal way than the others. This was accomplished by having students give their personal definitions of 12 E-H-specific terms, such as *process*, *life-limiting protections*, and *paradox*. They responded once prior to starting the training and then again after the second experiential session. Each student's response was matched from the pre- to postquestionnaires and examined for overall conceptual

understanding, as well as for level of personal integration and depth.

The next section presents themes gleaned from the open-ended, qualitative questions, which represents what students valued about the program. The following section examines the evaluative aspect of the research, which shed light on specific areas of student learning.

### *Open-Ended Questions*

From the postquestionnaires, five main themes emerged: (1) relationship to the unknown (3 instances), (2) personal growth and shifts (12 instances), (3) professional growth and shifts (10 instances), (4) deeper relationship to E-H concepts (10 instances), and (5) influential qualities of the experiential training (9 instances).

*Relationship to the Unknown.* During the check-in of the second experiential training, this theme emerged almost unanimously among the students. It appeared that the first training had stirred existential anxiety and a sense of groundlessness that stemmed from the "big questions" posed by the existential perspective. Students reported reexamining patterns of relating and core life choices, such as their place of residence, their relationship to career, and their given names.

In the postquestionnaire, this theme remained present, though it appeared with significantly less angst than in the check-in. One participant wrote, "The paradox of knowing and not knowing is much more present in my everyday life. . . . I am humbled and excited by all the unknowns." Similarly, another participant wrote, "I feel more comfortable with the unknown."

*Personal Growth and Shifts.* The person of the therapist has a pervasive presence in E-H therapy. E-H therapists understand the importance of self-development as a conduit

to deeper work with one's clients. A number of students reported experiencing personal shifts and growth as a result of the certificate program.

Some of the students found shifts and growth through confrontation with the program. For example, one student wrote, "The program has challenged me to walk my talk, to open to some of the existential questions myself." A number of others commented on the value of examining their own context. One student's statement captured well the sense of confrontation within a holding space: "The program illuminated and deepened my internal conflicts, while the group served as a place of safety."

Another subset of responses focused on an increased comfort with vulnerability. "The awareness of how much more growth I have ahead is no longer intimidating, and I am more willing to take risks." Another student reported, "I think I have . . . dropped some of my own protections. . . . My heart is more open." An integral part of these statements was their partnering with the sense of feeling affirmed and strengthened, which served as a ground from which to take risks toward exploring new territory.

Finally, a third subset simply celebrated the depth and breadth of personal change from the program. "It would not be a stretch to say I am a completely different person than I was before . . . more secure, present, willing, and mostly, alive." Or, as another student pithily remarked, "I am experiencing my Being more fully."

*Professional Growth and Shifts.* Several students commented on the ways in which they were already incorporating skills learned at the training into their professional environments. Generally, these statements fell into categories of overall confidence with the E-H orientation and more specific shifts in students' clinical work.

There was a resounding increase of confidence in the E-H perspective for most students. Examples included "E-H is the personal and professional perspective I want to take," "I have increased my confidence and reliance upon the E-H orientation—I have restructured my entire private practice," and "I have a deep enough foundation to continue developing myself as an existential practitioner." Other comments were directed toward therapy as a whole—"I feel a greater capacity to create healing conditions with the experience of the training"—or simply expressed gratitude for feeling validated in their preexistent ways of working with clients.

More specifically, students remarked on "learning to be in the moment with clients, rather than in my head." Students reflected on "relating in and from the moment" as a new option in their work, even as many expressed feeling "halfway to trusting this." Others spoke of the profound effect that grounded presence had on clients they typically worked with from a more analytical stance. Finally, a profound shift took place for one student, who learned "not to conceptualize my client's struggle as a problem to be solved."

In sum, these responses reflected an emerging appreciation of the profundity of moment-to-moment process and presence. Interestingly, the theoretical constructs of *presence* and *process* emerged as two of the areas of greatest evidence of integration in the evaluative portion of the research. Perhaps this is an unsurprising coincidence, given the previous theme of the personal nature of learning.

*Deeper Relationship to E-H Concepts.* Every student pointed toward a shift from a dryer, more theoretical knowing to a livelier, embodied kind of knowing. The following examples illustrate the various colorations of this fundamental movement: "I felt the concepts come alive," "We moved from words and theory to a lived experience," and "There

was a shift from theoretical to kinesthetic knowing.” Each of these statements shares a zestful quality that suggests that students revel in the new life given to old concepts.

Some students became more specific about how the concepts gained new life. One student “shifted from a ‘doing’ to a ‘being’ mode” in the weeks following the certificate training. Another commented that despite years of psychoanalytic training, which emphasized the importance of the past on one’s present functioning, she “gained a new understanding of how the past is present in therapy.” Finally, several students reported gaining more faith in and respect for process.

*Influential Qualities of the Experiential Training.* Much like the previous four themes, there seemed to be an undercurrent of appreciation for the personal touch to the training experience for students. This emerged in several ways.

First, students highly valued the instructors’ ability to model the concepts. One student observed, “The experientials were reflections of true encounters among like-minded people . . . willing to relate to one another at a much deeper level.” Several commented that the instructors allowed the moment to lead and modeled ways of being that eluded description but were deeply valuable.

Within the theme of modeling, students pointed out a cultivation of presence throughout the experiential trainings in particular. One student summed it up well: “This program was a living laboratory of presence.”

Finally, students commented on valuing the live demonstrations, being able to experience E-H work “in action,” and having chances to try it out from several different vantage points—as clients, therapists, observers, and students in a trial run that included specific instructor feedback. Overall, students commended the instructors on “balancing theory and relationship” with great mastery.

## EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Students were provided 12 prompts to “provide 1–2 sentences describing your current understanding of the following concepts, as they apply to E-H psychotherapy.” The 12 concepts included (1) process, (2) presence (intrapersonal vs. interpersonal), (3) freedom, (4) responsibility, (5) experience, (6) paradox, (7) meaning/meaning-making process, (8) choice, (9) being, (10) relational style, (11) self-and-world construct, and (12) life-limiting protections.

The process of evaluating the questionnaires developed somewhat organically. The researchers first independently examined one sample student’s pre- and postquestionnaire responses to determine their degree of agreement over what constituted changes in the understanding, depth, and integration of the concepts described above. After discovering a very high degree of agreement across all 12 of the sample answers, one researcher proceeded with independently evaluating the rest of the students’ responses.

Once an entire reading of all the questionnaires was completed, the researcher read each of the responses a second time, comparing the students’ pretraining answers with their posttraining answers. Each was assigned a “yes,” “somewhat,” or “no” to denote a significant increase in depth, understanding, and integration; some evidence of an increased depth; or no change from pre to post answers, respectively.

Following assignment of these three codes, each concept was tallied for the number of instances. For the sake of simplicity, all “somewhat” answers were placed under the “yes” category. Table 41.2 gives the rank order that emerged for significant or at least some evidence of deepening.

Given the context of such a small sample size, it may be helpful to look at this rank order as a 50:50 split: The items that were ranked in the top half were presence, life-limiting

**Table 41.2** Prominent Themes Observed Among EHI Certificate Program Participants' Answers to Survey Questions

<i>“Yes”—Significant or Some Evidence of Deepening</i>	
1	Presence (5)
2–3	Life-limiting protections and being (4)
4–6	Process, responsibility, and paradox (3)
7	Choice (2)
8–11	Freedom, experience, relational style, and self-and-world construct (1)
12	Meaning and meaning-making process (0)

protections, being, process, responsibility, and paradox. At least half of the students left the experiential with a deeper understanding of these concepts. Interestingly, these concepts, with the exception of responsibility, are readily apparent throughout the entirety of the open-ended themes above.

This co-occurrence may be viewed a couple of ways. First, it could be viewed as a validation of personalized learning, which states that things are best learned when the student creates an emotional bond with the subject. Second, it demonstrates a profound connection between what students actively value and the degree to which they integrate it into their understanding. In essence, the open-ended data state, “This is what I wanted, what I valued.” The evaluative data added, “What I valued, I learned with greater depth.”

From the instructors' standpoint, the lower half is as informative as the upper half. Where the upper half appears to illuminate the true emphasis of the training, the lower half speaks to aspects that may need strengthening or supplementation.

This finding is especially intriguing given the latest development of a “Part Two” of the certificate program for those who wish to advance their E-H training. It may also inform future “Part One” trainings by finding ways to make concepts like choice, freedom, experience, relational style, self-and-world

construct, and meaning/meaning-making process more accessible and experiential.

There does appear to be a shared quality to the lower half as well. A number of these concepts—freedom, choice, experience, meaning—might be considered rather large, difficult-to-describe concepts. It is entirely possible that the process of writing about these particular concepts was not the best way to capture students' understanding.

## CLOSING REFLECTIONS

In this chapter, we have presented the Arts courses and the contemporary EHI certificate programs in E-H practice as model E-H training programs. The experienced psychotherapists who contributed to our surveys repeatedly underscored the vital role that the courses play in their development as E-H practitioners. The courses are perceived to strengthen professional identity and, as once articulated in an Arts course flyer, the ability to put “this perspective into clinical actuality” (J. F. T. Bugental, personal communication, April 1996). They also appear to further stimulate participants' capacity for experiential freedom—“the freedom to profoundly feel, sense, and think” (K. J. Schneider, personal communication, September 1999)—the lifeblood of artistic expression.

We have discovered that there is a critical distinction between knowing about an E-H perspective from a theoretical or scholarly standpoint and “knowing” the perspective because it has been repeatedly modeled and personally experienced and affirmed, not only in one’s work as a psychotherapist but also in one’s way of being.

Becoming an E-H psychotherapist-artist is predicated on such multidimensional comprehension. It is also predicated on an internalized ethic that Bugental (1976) expressed beautifully in *The Search for Existential Identity*:

Psychotherapy is an art form. An art form seriously practiced by an artist worthy of that name calls for cultivated sensitivity, trained skills, disciplined emotion, and total personal investment. . . . Psychotherapy demands discipline from its responsible practitioners above all else. Only after one

has mastered the fundamentals, steeped [oneself] in the diversity of human experience, and explored more advanced possibilities can [one] improvise and create meaningfully and responsibly. (pp. 297–298)

The mission at the heart of the Arts and the present-day EHI certificate programs is to facilitate the actualization of this ethic. Within a contemporary psychotherapy climate heavily influenced by the managed-care industry, the medical model, and the press for positivistic, natural science–based, “empirically supported treatments” (APA, 2000), today, perhaps more than ever, we need psychotherapists who can “create meaningfully and responsibly” in collaborative relationships with their clients. Experiential training programs that honor both the art and the science of our profession are essential.

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## NOTES

1. At one time, the interested graduate student could contact schools included in the informative *West Georgia Directory of Graduate Programs in Humanistic-Transpersonal Psychology in North America* (Arons, 1996) and the Consortium for Diversified Psychology Programs (Taylor, 1999). Currently, excellent resources for postgraduate or continuing education can be found through Division 32 (Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Humanistic Psychology, and the EHI. Students may also identify E-H oriented graduate faculty by exploring department websites at institutions of higher learning across the United States, Canada, and the European nations.

2. Elizabeth Bugental, Myrtle Heery, Molly Sterling, and David Young have all made substantial contributions to the development and implementation of the Arts programs.

3. Analysis and discussion were restricted to three questions due to space limitations.

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