

The Existential Certainty - living with death and dying

Summary

Heidegger asks us all to view death as integral to life - but in the sense of our personal attitude towards death as the end of all our experience. One of the key existential truths is that the notion of dying is an aspect of our living and that to live life more fully, the anxiety around death or non-being must be confronted. For some this anxiety might be around death itself, for others it might be the process of dying, while paradoxically, some might welcome death and find life terrifying. But the one certainty is that we are all going to die.

As counsellors and therapists we encounter death in its many disguises and as Yalom (2008) profoundly says, if we flee from our anxiety over death we are living inauthentically and, ultimately, creating more anxiety and more problems for ourselves. This workshop will explore how existential philosophy and practice might contribute to our understanding of working with people who are facing the imminence of death as well as exploring how death awareness will benefit all. There will be an experiential focus to the day and an opportunity to discuss questions that arise from work with clients.

Who will benefit?

This course is designed for:

- Practising counsellors and psychotherapists who wish to extend their knowledge and understanding to include the existential tradition
- Practising counsellors and psychotherapists who are working with clients who have a terminal illness
- Trainee counsellors and psychotherapists who wish to include the knowledge and practice of the existential tradition in their learning
- Practitioners in the 'helping' profession who wish to incorporate existential issues into their practice

Learning outcomes

- to develop an understanding of the contribution of existential philosophy to the practice of counselling and psychotherapy
- to integrate the philosophical concepts into the practice of counselling and psychotherapy
- to assimilate the philosophical concepts around meaning as it relates to death and dying into current counselling and psychotherapy practice
- to understand how the relationship between counsellor/therapist can benefit the client

Content areas

- Philosophical understanding of death, loss, meaning, choices etc
- The Existential Givens
- Death Anxiety
- Suicide and responsibility
- Working with specific client groups (e.g. HIV, cancer, terminal illness, aging)