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Main Themes

Which techniques for existential therapy?

Keywords

life narrative, storytelling, dialogue, reconstruction, group work

Title

Tell It Again: Lifestyles Conceived by Narratives and Behind Them

Abstract for

Workshop

Abstract

Our existence in the contemporary world is shaped in such a way that we are often too preoccupied to stop and reflect on our way of being and the meanings we give to our life. Our everyday narratives, which easily gain social approval of our lifestyles, have become more and more automatic and out of our control. What can we say about autosuggestions for searches, mails and proposed interests across social media? What can we say about online memorials and memory pages created in the name of the deceased to communicate with them? Finally, what about chatGPT as a pretender to transcend the basic limitations and claim to provide answers to our deepest questions? The limiting situations, which motivate us to look at our life from the transcendental and authentic perspective often appear within a consumeristic framework.

We need to make extra efforts to look at ourselves and understand what we are doing in this world. How and who is creating the story we live in? How can we regain the authorship of our lives?

This workshop is intertwined in existential and narrative approaches and suggests ways to rethink and retell some important episodes of one's life through live dialogue. A special emphasis will be placed on storytelling as a process that allows us to communicate experiences — whether lived or imagined — with others. The role of others is also crucial, as they can "imaginatively simulate" retold life events and engage in a dialogic connection that reshapes our experiences.

"Whether we experience events in real life, watch them in a movie, or hear [or read] about them in a story, we build perceptual and memory representations in the same format" (Zacks, 2015). This is why not only the narrator, but also the listener can be touched and enriched by the stories of others, incorporating them into their own narrative and questioning others through their presence in life narratives. How can we feel the living reciprocity, when someone engages in our story emotionally — an engagement that can never be replaced by AI?

During the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to work in pairs on life narratives and then share their experiences in a group.

Biographical Note: Yuliya Bayramova holds an MSc in Developmental Psychology from Moscow State University, named after M.V. Lomonosov, in Baku, Azerbaijan. Over the past five years, she has been providing individual consultations and group work for children, adolescents, and young professionals at the Kairos Consulting Psychological Center. Her practice is grounded in gestalt therapy, as well as narrative and existential approaches. Yuliya has recently started a new position at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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