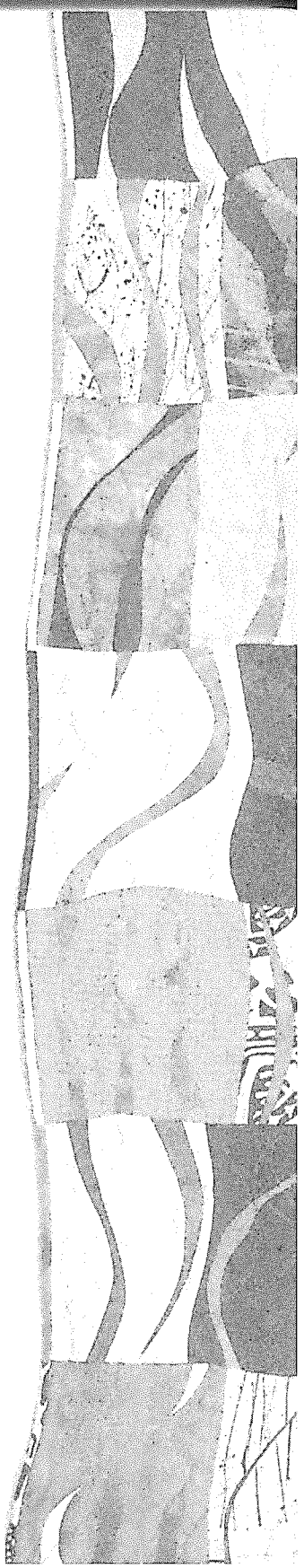


# **INTEGRATIVE MULTITHEORETICAL PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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# Preface

When psychotherapists survey the complex theoretical landscape before them, they face a puzzling dilemma. Should each therapist choose a single theory as a guide or should a counselor try to learn concepts and strategies from multiple theories and combine them in practice? There are challenges and pitfalls to each approach. If a psychotherapist decides to specialize in one theory, which theory should be chosen? Should the theory preferred by a favorite professor in graduate school be embraced? Is it best to choose the theory supported by the largest number of empirical research studies? Would it be wise to survey all the major theories and select one that is personally appealing? There is no clear answer how to choose a single theoretical orientation.

On the other hand, the decision to integrate ideas and interventions from different theoretical sources presents a new set of challenges that may be even more daunting. Which theories should be drawn upon? Should the same theories be combined for each client? If not, how do you decide which theories and skills to integrate? Should integrative choices be made based on the counselor's intuition, or is there a formula that can be followed? Many graduate students and psychotherapists end up feeling lost and confused when they try to sort through these questions.

This text is offered as a guidebook for psychotherapists who decide to explore diverse theoretical terrain rather than following a narrow path through the wilderness. This book introduces a new integrative approach called *Multitheoretical Psychotherapy* (MTP). There are several features of this approach that, hopefully, will make it a useful guide for counselors who are trying to build a broad repertoire of therapeutic skills and integrate them in clinical practice. First, MTP represents an attempt to combine and build upon the strengths of earlier approaches to counselor training, psychotherapy integration, and treatment planning. Specifically, the structure of the approach combines features developed by pioneers such as Allen Ivey, Arnold Lazarus, James Prochaska and Carlos DiClemente, Larry Beutler, Leslie Greenberg, and John Norcross. Second, this approach tries to provide a balance between simplicity and complexity. MTP starts with the straightforward premise that thoughts, actions, and feelings interact with one another and are shaped by biological, interpersonal, systemic, and cultural contexts. This simple foundation is used to organize seven theoretical models that can be used to conceptualize clients and guide interventions, resulting in a sophisticated

and integrated approach to psychotherapy. Third, there is an effort to translate elaborate theories into practical skills by describing key strategies that can be learned, practiced, and implemented with clients. Fourth, MTP describes a method for customizing psychotherapy to the needs of individual clients by engaging in integrative treatment planning based on collaborative dialogue with clients. Fifth, by including biopsychosocial, constructivist, and multicultural approaches, MTP offers a comprehensive and contemporary framework, including recent theoretical advances. Finally, we know that most experienced therapists eventually develop an integrative approach to psychotherapy. This book is designed to facilitate the process of development so that counselors can learn to practice psychotherapy integration more efficiently and more effectively.

MTP was developed as an integrative training method for practicum counselors and psychology interns at a university counseling center. I hope this approach to training and treatment will prove useful for a broad audience working in a variety of mental health and social service settings. The intended audience for this book includes graduate students and professionals from diverse academic fields including psychology, counseling, social work, psychiatry, nursing, and marriage and family therapy. MTP has not yet been tested using formal research methods. This text represents the first formal description of multitheoretical treatment and training. I hope that this book will promote qualitative and quantitative research that will support or refine the ideas that have been developed based on professional experience.

Because MTP grew out of my own professional work, it may be helpful to describe my development as an integrative psychotherapist. I had been practicing psychotherapy for ten years before consciously embracing the goal of integrating ideas and strategies from several different theories. In graduate school in the 1980s, I had learned to practice an informal style of common factors and assimilative integration (although I had not yet learned these labels) based on a vaguely-defined humanistic philosophy. Then, in 1995, I attended the third *Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference*, sponsored by the Milton Erickson Foundation. This conference is presented every five years and offers an opportunity for psychotherapists from around the world to listen to and observe the masters of our field. Among the living legends that I learned from were Aaron Beck, James Bugental, Albert Ellis, Mary Goulding, William Glasser, Jay Haley, James Hillman, Donald Meichenbaum, Salvador Minuchin, Eugene Gendlin, Alexander Lowen, Erving Polster, Miriam Polster, Ernest Rossi, and Jeffrey Zeig. After attending my first *Evolution* conference, I embraced the personal goal of gaining a working knowledge of the major systems of psychotherapy and integrating diverse skills into my professional repertoire. At that time, I did not know that this personal goal would eventually lead me to write a book about multitheoretical psychotherapy.

In 1999, I had an opportunity to teach a graduate seminar on psychotherapy integration for clinical psychology students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. This class gave me an opportunity to read and teach from John Norcross and Marvin Goldfried's *Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration*. When I compared my own evolving approach to integration with the established approaches in the field, I noticed a couple of interesting differences. First, some approaches described ways to choose between theories, selecting the best approach for each client. I noticed that instead of choosing between theories, I often *combined strategies* from more than one theory with the same client and even within the same session. Second, some integrative approaches described in the literature combined two or three theories but seemed to imply that the same theoretical combination would be useful for all clients. In contrast, I observed myself drawing from *different combinations* of theories based on the unique features of different clients and their presenting concerns. Although I realized that my personal approach to integration was different than the published approaches, I wasn't sure how to clearly articulate these differences or how to help graduate students learn to make effective integrative choices.

A break-through came the following year when Michael Gavetti, a psychology intern I had supervised, made the observation that there were lots of books on beginning counseling skills but few describing intermediate or advanced skills. Michael and I began compiling a list of "intermediate skills" from different theoretical approaches to psychotherapy. Identifying a catalog of interventions drawn from different sources provided a new way to describe how psychotherapists could integrate different theories. Rather than trying to reconcile theoretical differences, psychotherapy could be integrated at the level of therapeutic action. This new approach started with a catalog of key strategies but later expanded to include integrative treatment planning and multitheoretical conceptualization. Over the last five years, my colleagues and I have tried to develop and articulate a user-friendly approach to combining ideas and skills from different psychotherapy theories, based on the needs of individual clients. As you read this book, hopefully you will be able to expand your repertoire of intervention strategies and learn effective methods for integrating these skills in clinical practice. If you would like to find out about other educational resources or training opportunities, please view the MTP website: [www.multitheoretical.com](http://www.multitheoretical.com).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by thanking Michael Gavetti for planting the seed of an idea that eventually led to the development of a new approach to psychotherapy integration. Allen Ivey and Bruce Wampold were the first two scholars in my

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*Jeff Brooks-Harris*

*Kailua, Hawaii*



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