

Post-Trauma - the “Golden Hour” and PE Versus Existential Logotherapy - Implications and Challenges

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Abstract

Being exposed to trauma has the risk of developing one of the post-traumatic disorders. A quick psychiatric and psychological intervention is necessary. Research about the importance of early intervention coined the “golden hour” is being introduced. A logotherapy existential treatment is offered as a possible intervention besides the short-term intervention. The origin of logotherapy in existential philosophy and literature is presented. Issues about combination of psychiatry and psychotherapy are the patient’s recognition of the disorder and dealing with the transference that is characterized by the medication as an intrusive act to a miracle solution. A mediation of the psychotherapist is recommended.

A case study of post-trauma is being introduced. A discussion about the parallel between the existential suffering in the world and the need to find meaning as part of the legacy of Camus, Frankal and Sharabi - is presented. The discussion offers to combine the therapeutic alliance - thus enabling to make the treatment more flexible, fitting it to the needs of the specific patient.

Keywords

Post-trauma, Golden hour, TFP-CBT, PE, Existential philosophy, Logotherapy, Psychiatric medication, Therapeutic Alliance.

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Freud has coined the term trauma. He supposed that the women he was treating in Vienna suffered trauma and that what caused them psychosomatic disorders. Talking about it can release them from their symptoms, and he called this talking the “talking cure” [1]. That was the scientific name of the new treatment called today psychotherapy. Later he changed his theory and declared that there was no real trauma. That implies our investigation here. Because this attitude of denying the existence of horrible deeds that the patient has experienced is still here. People are not always validating the

existence of the trauma, and the severe consequences it adheres. This denial is as horrid as the trauma itself, if not worse. The first world war exposed millions of soldiers to traumatic events. Then there was another concept being created due to the symptoms of the young veterans - the “shock shell”. Years later, Krystal has investigated post-traumatic stress after being at the Holocaust [2]. He has found that repression can help post-traumatic people to rehabilitate their life and to have a long and healthy life as much as possible. He advocates for integrating the symptoms of the post-

trauma thus enabling a healing.

Research discovered the concept of a neurobiological critical timing Van der Kolk [3]. This timing, at the hours, days and weeks after the trauma - in which an effective intervention can inhibit the development of one of the trauma disorders.

Meta-analysis has found that an early intervention is preventing the symptoms of post traumatic disorders to become worse [4-7].

The basic book of Herman about post-trauma [8] identifies the stages of recycling, in which the creation of trust in the first therapy interview is critical. Beyond the specific psychotherapies, there are the common factors [9], like empathy, setting and the therapeutic alliance [10] that enhance the success of the psychotherapy.

The other psychotherapies effective in treating post-traumatic stress disorder following multiple traumatic events, based on meta-analysis are Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) which helps patients identify, challenge, and modify unhelpful or distorted beliefs related to the trauma (such as self-blame or the belief that the world is entirely dangerous). Prolonged Exposure (PE) which teaches patients to gradually approach trauma-related memories, feelings, and situations they have been avoiding. This helps the brain learn that these reminders are not dangerous. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a structured therapy where patients focus briefly on the trauma memory while experiencing bilateral stimulation (typically eye movements), which reduces the emotional vividness of the memory. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is a broad category of treatment that uses cognitive and behavioral techniques to address the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors following trauma [5,11].

Camus [12] being defined by the existential philosopher Sartre as an existential writer, has written, influenced by the first world war and at the beginning of the second one, his book "the Stranger". Camus described his hero as protective of his impulsive friend, and then, being influenced by sun and heat of the seashore, and being threatened to his life - shooting and killing a man. Being in the dark prison he understands the absurdity of life. They want to execute him. He is adoring the sun and trees he watches from the narrow high window in his cell. This is an existential rebel. He refuses the priest that is almost forced him to pray to God.

In the next story, the hero is in his hometown, Tipaza, in Algeria. He is not innocent anymore. The story was written in 1942. The prose is poetic, magnetic. The hero is depressed but watching a fascinating view of his village transforms him for a few minutes.

Frankal is describing the same feelings. Being trapped in a concentration camp, knowing his chances to live are low, He experiences cruelty, Sadism, hunger, and cold. A horrible manifesto of absurdity. But is being called by the other prisoners to watch the fascinating sky.

In the story of the hostage who was released after more than two years in the Hamas very deep channels to discover that his wife and two daughters to be murdered - the same element exists - absurd. But here again. What enables him to survey the entrance and the life 300 meters under the ground - is friendship and caring for other people. The three of them describe cruelty that comes from the hands of human beings. Fran H. Norris's research about mass violence intentionality [13] indicates that traumatic events stemming from intentional human cruelty, such as terrorism or assault, result in more severe and enduring PTSD symptoms compared to natural disasters. These acts of "malicious human intent" cause greater psychological impairment by violating the victim's sense of safety and justice.

A writer that represents existential philosophy is Albert Camus. The stranger describes a man who is detached emotionally, but he does take care of his mother-funeral and a man he got to know. Being overwhelmed by the existential realm of heat and the brilliance of the sun, he meets the man who stole his friend's wife. This man threatened him with a knife being shone by the sun. The hero shoots him several times. Later, being judged for his detached personality he is doomed to the death penalty. In his dark prison he adores the sun. The writing becomes poetic. Finally, not admitting any religion he is refusing the priest demanding he to separate with life. In these last hours of his, in the climax of absurd - since he wouldn't kill the man he would kill him - he finds meaning. The sun outside. A young soft woman he was attached to. The memory of his childhood village. And then he believes in God.

Each of them describes moments in which you have to be totally selfish. But they all have a goal. It seems that the goals have to do with accepting the existential cruelty of life, with love and with creativity.

Frankel [14], who was already a physician and a psychiatrist before the war - created an existential psychotherapy called logotherapy. The book is being opened by a question he asks a patient. Why don't you want to commit suicide. What is the meaning of your life that prevents you from living in this world which is full of suffering. He describes in his book the other prisoners at the concentration camp felt desperate in front of the cruelty and inhumanity. Some of the prisoners committed suicide by the electric fence of the camp. The prisoners who survived were able to convey meaning and some positive views while experiencing the hell. The meaning that helped him to stay alive is the hope for a better future imagining meaningful goals. One goal was to write again the book he finished writing its script, before travelling in the suffocating trains leading the east. Another meaning was meeting his wife. Coming back home to meet his parents.

A study [15] explores the role of suffering within Viktor Frankl's logotherapy framework and examines its application to modern mental health care and daily life. Logotherapy, which emphasizes finding meaning through suffering, contrasts with other therapeutic approaches that focus primarily on symptom relief or cognitive

restructuring. By highlighting the central tenet that individuals can choose their attitude toward suffering and find purpose in adversity, this study delves into how logotherapy aids patients in clinical settings, particularly those experiencing existential crises, chronic illness, or trauma. It also addresses criticisms of the approach, including its focus on individual responsibility and the limited empirical support for its efficacy in treating severe mental health disorders. Furthermore, the research integrates a spiritual dimension, considering how logotherapy's principles align with broader philosophical and religious concepts of suffering and redemption. Ultimately, this study contributes to understanding how meaning-making can serve as a valuable psychological tool, offering insights for both clinical practice and personal coping strategies. Implications for research, practice, and theory are discussed, critically evaluating logotherapy's role in contemporary therapeutic interventions.

Meta analysis of 130 research articles have found the efficacy of logotherapy and existential psychotherapy over different populations [16].

The article conveys the main techniques of logotherapy. Logotherapy includes Socratic dialogue. Through guided dialogue, clients are able to recognize and evaluate unique patterns within their personal experiences.

Other techniques of logotherapy include attitude modulation. This technique, which involves the altering of one's perspective, can assist clients in perceiving pain and difficulties as valuable life teachers. Dereflexion is a technique in which by shifting the focus away from the self, clients can gain distance from physical symptoms and related distress. Another one is paradoxical intention (PI). That means encouraging clients to intentionally engage with their symptoms. This engagement can have a liberating effect.

Another review [17] examines the impact of logotherapy on the development of self-confidence and self-esteem across various clinical and non-clinical populations. Drawing on a meta-analysis of 14 research studies, the findings indicate that logotherapeutic interventions - centered on meaning-discovery, Socratic dialogue, and value-based reflection - significantly enhance personal optimism and self-understanding. The method has proven particularly effective for vulnerable groups, including adolescents in residential care, oncology patients, and the elderly. However, the literature also highlights critical clinical caveats: the potential for existential frustration to exacerbate despair, the risk of guilt stemming from unrealistic altruistic expectations, and a notable attrition of therapeutic effects in short-term follow-ups. Furthermore, methodological limitations persist, specifically regarding the scarcity of data on individual versus group formats and the contraindication of this approach for patients with impaired reality testing. These findings suggest that while logotherapy is a potent tool for psychological resilience, its application requires careful clinical screening and long-term maintenance strategies.

Meaning-based psychotherapy positively impacts cancer by reducing death anxiety and fostering cancer patients' post-traumatic growth according to a March 2024 systematic review [18]. Results suggest that logotherapy decreases depressive symptoms, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress, whereas improves meaning in life, quality of life, physical symptom perception, and post-traumatic growth in women with BC and GC. Implementing logotherapy in cancer care units through a multidisciplinary approach could be valuable, considering biopsychosocial factors, and incorporating aspects of self-image and sexuality in treatment would also be beneficial.

To evaluate the efficacy of logotherapy for depressive symptoms, an investigation meta-analyzed 35 studies [19]. Results showed that logotherapy had a significant, very large effect compared to passive controls (waiting list) at postintervention and follow-up. In comparison to active controls (e.g., other interventions), results showed that logotherapy had a significant, large effect at postintervention and a medium to large effect at follow-up. All mean effect sizes showed significant heterogeneity, explained in part by moderators of study location, measures used, and type of active control. Overall, logotherapy appears to be effective in reducing depressive symptoms compared to no treatment and other treatments. Given heterogeneity, more research is needed, particularly outside of Asia and in comparison, with bona fide psychotherapeutic approaches.

Research advocates combining psychological interventions with medications, mentioning that post-trauma has been recognized hundreds of years before, watching soldiers after a war being shattered, and using alcohol as a psychiatric medication [20].

Research about panic disorder has found that psychiatric medication will be of use if the patient is recognizing that he has a mental disorder [21]. This is an admission not easy to make, and it is part of a psychotherapist work to elaborate. Another understanding is that psychotherapists should have knowledge about psychiatric medications, mostly by reading and being educated [21].

A Case Study

- Amir has come to my clinic and he was referred to me by the rehabilitation ward of the Ministry of Security. He was 28 years old. His parents were born in Ukraine and they came to Israel as immigrants 2 years before he was born. He had blonde hair and a big bird. He didn't look like the typical Israeli young man. It was interesting that his name was Amir, and it seemed that like many other immigrants - his parents wanted him to be assimilated in this country. Amir was born in the same town where I am living and where my clinic is. He studied in high school which is about a kilometer from my clinic. He was a very good pupil. He wasn't very social but he had some good friends. It was difficult for him to get acquainted with girls. But he had some experiences with them and there was one girlfriend to whom he had a period of 2 years together.

He describes himself as having quite a nice life. He told me how he enjoyed little pleasures like going to the beach with his friends. Drinking beers. Exceptions of the new package of clothes that he ordered. The simple pleasures of life that other young men his age were enjoying. He also told me after asking him that he guesses it did have meaning in life. Of course he didn't deal with that consciously. But he had a few purposes. Looking better. Being more comfortable with girls. Looking for the army service where he can prove his masculinity and also loyalty and devotion to his country.

- When he came to the clinic it was just after he separated from his girlfriend.
- The separation had to do with his symptoms. Amir suffered from frequent flashbacks. Actually 70% from the time he had flashbacks. I told him that 70% of the time to have flashbacks is a very high percentage. I told him that he must be suffering a lot. And he did agree with me. He was suffering anxiety attacks. His sleep was not good. He used either to isolate himself or to get angry at people like his family, close friends or his girlfriend. He was quite depressed. He was worried about his future. Since the 7th of October 2023 he has been in the army. He was recruited. Before he was recruited, he was studying computer sciences at a very good university in Israel. So actually, he was taken from the university to the war.
- Amir told me about horrible deeds that he was evidence to. He himself had to kill people in order to defend himself and his friends because otherwise he was about to die. He was watching D-9 tractors picking up many stones whose rotten bodies were falling apart. Besides that two of his close friends at the unit where he was serving were killed. He saw them dead just a few seconds after they were smiling and talking with him. Two other friends of his that didn't serve with him but he knew them from high school were hardly wounded. Amir described a defense of detachment when all these horrors were informed by a gloomy officer of his.
- The announcements made him feel it was an unreal dream. He walked to the desert around his army basement. He stood in front of the beautiful heels, yellow grey air. He started whispering. "Not Shlomi, no, no. Not Shlomi. He was caressing himself. His voice became louder, like a weeping allowing the cry of a fox. Then he fell on his knees. He started crying in a shouting voice. Like a child. And then he started really screaming. Screaming to the God view he always felt so kind. Why, why. He was aware that he had not walked far enough. But he thought. Let them hear me. Let them realize what an absurd meaningless stupid war we participate in. He wanted his voice to get so far, to reach his parents in our town. To make his grandmother hear him and caress his cheek, comforting him like he was a child. And then his feelings flooded him severely. He fell on the ground. Suddenly near his cheek there were several little white stones. It was funny and horrible. That is the way his friends are. Under the stones. He got up tighter. He started walking heavily to his basement. He needed his friends. They were sitting half trying to joke, suffocating by grief. Trying to suppress it. They smiled at him

when he entered. One very tall man, wearing army clothes, was walking unsteady to him. He hugged him so heavily, protecting, joining him.

- Later they met at the funeral. All his units. Besides the soldiers that had to stay in the basement. Alone. What would happen if they were attacked? Like on the seventh of October. Should they come to the funerals, or being not so sentimental obeying the rules of society, and just protecting the border next to them. Then he had a flashback. Imagining his friends being slaughtered by the vulgar wild terrorists. The woman soldier being raped harshly with a group of terrorists. A bunch of them. One after the other. And they are smiling, feeling they are going to do some bad, but still being trapped to thus group rape. She, Ronit are shouting. Her mouth is being shut by a bunch. Ronit is struggling. No escape. Maybe she even does it? Dare him to think that.
- At this point he felt his body cracking. He fell on the little stone road near the graves. He vomited a disgusting pour. He was having a panic attack. He wanted to die. To be hospitalized in a psychiatrist hospital. He was ashamed of himself. Dazzled. He's a lunatic. Again and again like torturing waves he was betitled by this flashback about Ronit being raped by a bunch of young terrorists. And then a new element appeared in his flashback. Another fat older unshaved terrorist. Smoking cannabis. Beating the earth with his boots. And another one. Like hundreds of terries. Like the way they intruded at the twilight of the Saturday. On the seventh of October. For sure they are going to make her go crazy. They are going to tear her. If she stays alive, she would live a life of mostly horror. Oh Ronit. At this moment he starts screaming.
- People around him are holding him. He is feeling relieved by their touch and care. He can lose control and relax a bit. They will know where to carry him to. Israelis. This holding. He loves Israelis. No one is like them in the whole world. And then he lost his conscience again.
- Didn't feel like he just did what he had to do. It felt real, like a movie. Or like some kind of a dream. The detachment continued through the two years and a half of the war. In the two years there were no symptoms. He was functioning well. When he got home, he used to sit in his room feeling void. He even didn't know how to explain what he was feeling but it was like emptiness and loneliness. Also felt angry at his family laughing together in the living room while he was coming from the horrors that reminded him of the independence world in Israeli 1948 and of the Holocaust. He also told me about the novel he loved so much that was called "War and Peace. This novel was written by Tolstoy. Lucky to me," he said, " we didn't have to study it at high school so I could enjoy the book. I think I read it at least twice and now I'm reading it for the third time. I am so much identifying myself with the characters in this book. Andre' is like me. He's seen horrible things on the battlefield. He came home to say that the woman he loved is not committed to him as he expected her to be. He is kind of looking to die again at the next battle. Because coming from the war to noble society at Moscow -

keeping on her dances in or on her gossip made him feel so astonished and hurt. I said to him. “maybe it was a kind of depersonalization”. “I don’t know what personalization is but I know that finally he died. Before he died, he was looking at the high blue sky and it felt like purification. And on the other hand, there was this man that I really identified with.”

- “Who is he?” I asked.
- “This is Bazooohov. He’s a noble and a rich fat naive man. At the end he loves the same woman that Andre loves. And he gets her. But when the war starts, he is quite hedonistic. It seems like he had no meaningful purpose in his life. He’s being married to a woman who is promiscuous and shallow. And then he gets recruited to the world. He is being evidence of horrible events. And then he’s being captured by the French army. The same army that Napoleon was commanding. And he goes for days and weeks in a long long line of people through the snow. The hostages that were weak were shot by the French soldiers harnessing everyone. Finally, what saves Bazooohov mentally and physically is a simple farmer who is walking next to him. This farmer for example tells him a universal truth. I work hard so I go to sleep like a stone and I get up like bread. He conveys him the simple philosophy about life and that’s the meaning that Bazooohov was needing.
- So, at the end of this wonderful novel which is not novel because it is so long it’s like hundreds of pages so at the end of that there is like an essay. In this essay Tolstoy conveys his normal human opinion about war and peace. I don’t remember it that well but what he says is that the war is so unnecessary and so cruel. And I do agree with him but there is this gap between what he’s saying and between you know my need to protect my country, Israel. Do what people who told me why do you go to fight with guns? You can just be a logistics soldier. You can serve a day of intelligence. If you serve at the intelligence level you can later work with computers. High tech companies will be chasing you. I could do that but finally I got up in this unit with high quality soldiers. It is called Ssayeret”. I know what Ssayeret is. These were the special units that it was quite difficult to be accepted to. I mean to explain to me that he wanted to do meaningful service in the army. And then I asked him but you know that you could have been killed and it is dangerous”.
- “You are right but I was a kid. I didn’t think about this. Just thinking about living and being committed as a kid who grew up in this town, I wanted to fight back. My childhood was embodied with alarms and rockets. I didn’t want to have them. I just wanted to defend my fellows, my family, and my country. Other people around me had the same values. So obviously I also wanted to actualize these values of loving your country and doing what you have to do.
- The psychotherapy went on. I think the relationship between us was good. Months have passed. The psychotherapy has continued. There were no marvelous changes. But we were working together. Actually I loved working with Amir. If there was something very honest about him.
- And another thing. He was very creative. Actually, Amir

was a dancer. Though he was quite masculine he danced ballet dances. He showed me videos of him dancing. It was marvelous. His body and the woman dancer who danced with him was so noble. I didn’t realize that I could love ballet that much. When I was a child me and my sister just escaped as quickly as possible from the ballet program that my mother tried to sign us to. When I started talking with a mirror about the meaning of his life he said to me well. What meaning can my life have now? My mother is sad because of my situation. I feel guilty because I left my girlfriend. I feel agony because of my friends that I lost. My father doesn’t really understand what is going about me. Our country is keeping shopping driving to vacations in Greece. Like nothing happened”.

- I had no choice but to be emphatic. I understand what you feel. I know that soldiers that came from the 1948 war felt like that. 6000 young soldiers were killed in that world that gave us our country. Even my uncle I added was killed in this war. I know how it is to live in a family that is grieving. But let me help you and let me think about the future. What do you want from your future? What are your dreams? What you want from your future, the things that are important to you, these are your meanings. This is logo therapy. And then I explained to him about Viktor Frankl and about Camille and about existential psychotherapy. And it seems that something really woke up like it shone in his face. In his face that looks so not Israeli like he came from the Vikings country. He leaned his head and smiled. He was quiet for a few minutes. I was quiet. But for me it is difficult to be quiet for too long so I said something that sounded quiet to me but not but still I said it. I trust you. I trust us. I trust your family and your country. I trust your dancing so much. I trust the girls that you are going to be their boyfriends. I trust you to love and to cherish the girl to whom you’re going to marry. I trust you that your children will be very meaningful to you. I am a trustee. You are an Amir and you can do that.

Discussion

Post trauma has been one of the most prominent disorders in our time. But it seems that post trauma begins from ancient history of the human being. The first scene in the Bible is that Hava and Adam were to leave heaven as a result of the sin that they have done. Post trauma has been called by various names since then. Since Freud worked at the end of the 19th century the post trauma is defined as a reaction of a person to an event that either endangers the individual life or sanity, or other people around him. Actually, the reaction of the person is normal given that the event is horror. The disorder of post trauma is a cluster of disorders, aiming to make a differentiation between the different disorders. The differential element is mostly by the time from the event to the reactions that are typically, and also the severity of the symptoms. Fortunately, the post trauma has become a very known and validated disorder. The awareness of this disorder is not only professional but known today to the public.

So the question of needing to treat this disorder, and as urgent as

possible, is already ground. There are meta-analyses proving that the immediacy of the intervention is crucial, both psychological and medically. This finding, symbolically, got the term - the golden hour.

The combination of psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment is quite often necessary. Resistance of the patients should be recognized and discussed. The psychotherapist should be the mediator about this combination, given that patients tend to talk about their medication in the psychotherapy. Issues of resistance, complaints about the psychiatrist treatment and more are to be discussed, and should be calmed by the psychotherapist.

Issues about combination of psychiatry and psychotherapy are the patient's recognition of the disorder and dealing with the transference that is characterized by the medication as an intrusive act to a miracle solution.

Philosophy and literature can help to explain processes that the science of psychiatry or psychology are unable to capture beyond the rational cortical capture.

To capture deeply the horror of the trauma the wish to even commit suicide, as a result of the void in life, stemming from evidencing again and again the results of human cruelty.

Existential philosophy expressing itself in literature of the 20th century is parallel to the process that the human being is suffering from. Camou's literature and Frankal's evidence represent the horror and absurdity of the world, which influence human beings because of the ontological, especially human cruelty ontology.

The last piece of literature is Sharabi's story about being captured and becoming one of the hostages. Released after more than two years to discover that his wife, daughters and brother were killed.

How can a person survive such horrors? A kind of remedy is being offered. Human connection. The sensual impression of world beauty. Creativity to be renewed. Goals of vision to actualize. The logotherapy that Frankal has created does not promise the world to be cured. Or to have no human cruelty or experiences. No ontological traumas. But it does promise to help people to find their meaning to life.

And still much is needed to research about post trauma as much as a lot of research has already been done and for right because this is a very major problem of our time.

There needs to be research concerning the people who are suffering from post-trauma but are too shy or ignorant about their symptoms, thus endangering their life and accepting the psychiatrist and psychologist help that can alleviate their condition. The research should focus on what population is prone to this problem. What identifies those people? And the third point is how to locate them, and how to overcome their resistance after

they have already started treatment.

Another issue which is very important is the need to combine to the specific intervention like PE or a certain medication the ingredient that determined the most the success of the treatment - flexibility and the creativity that psychiatrists and psychologists can have while treating post trauma. We know that adhering to a specific defined regime of therapy can limit and lower the results. And it is also proven in research that most psychotherapists are eclectic. So, it is very important to check that. The research should focus on the differences between professionals that totally adhere and the professionals who allow themselves to be more flexible and creative. It should be checked whether there are differences in the results of the treatment and also what characterizes the professionals who are more flexible and creative in comparison to the professionals who tend more to adhere to the proven statistical treatments.

Obviously, the challenge of post trauma is very big. There are many horrors that happen in our world. But it is still important to remember that human cruelty is the main reason for post trauma. How can we limit human cruelty? Can we find other solutions, for example to disagreements between countries or between tribes? Psychiatrists and psychotherapists professionals being evidenced in the clinic of the huge and horrible results of violence in our world - can be the messengers to this purpose. This purpose of transforming violence between countries to create a more subtle way of solution. In the past when two men were fighting over a woman they stood one against each other ending in killing one of them. Now this is considered barbaric. The same thing we can say about wars. It is a very barbaric way to solve problems. So much to do and to think and to invent in this issue.

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