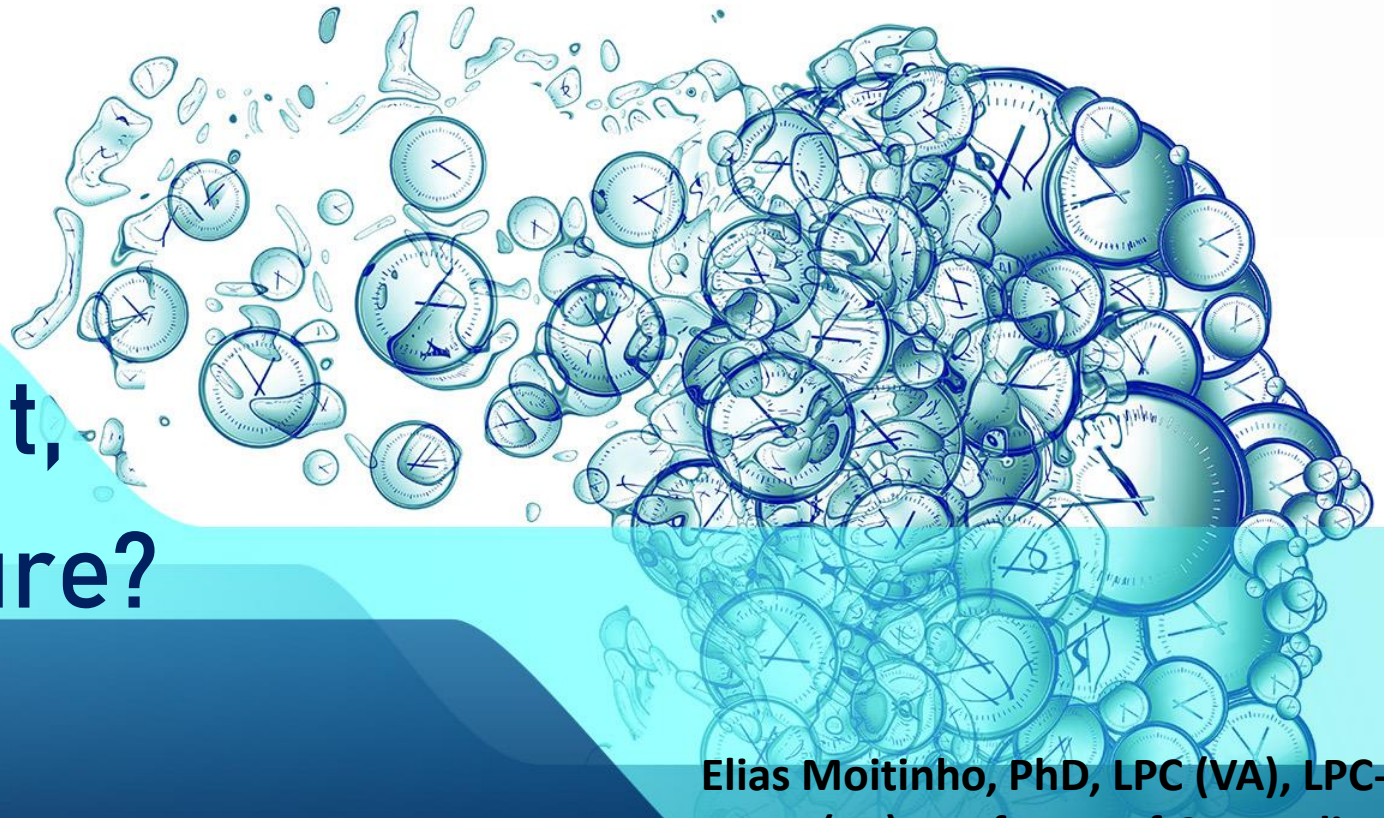


**Past,
Present,
or Future?**



**Temporal Focus and
Time Perspective in Counseling**

**Elias Moitinho, PhD, LPC (VA), LPC-S (TX),
LMFT (TX), Professor of Counseling, Chair
Liberty University**

Learning Objectives

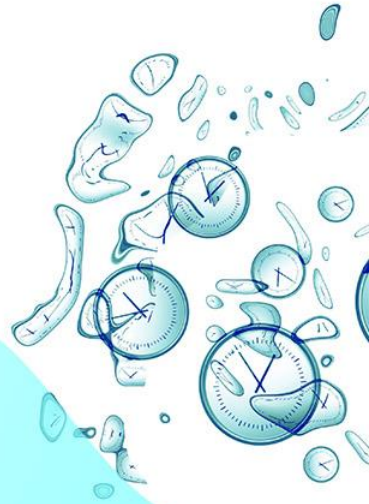
Participants will:

1. Explore the concepts of temporal focus, time perspective, and time orientation (i.e., past, present, or future) and their relevance to counseling.
2. Identify the primary temporal focus, time perspective, or time orientation (i.e., past, present, or future) of prominent counseling theories.
3. Describe strategies in counseling treatment to address or focus on a specific time (i.e., past, present, or future) in the client's life.

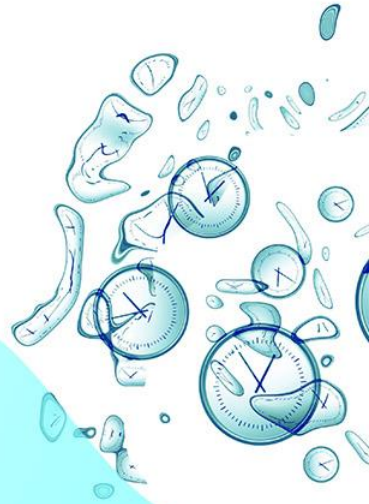


Learning Objective 1

Explore the concepts of temporal focus, time perspective, and time orientation (i.e., past, present, or future) and their relevance to counseling.



- PAST
 - History: memorials (D-Day; Vietnam; 9-11)
 - Archeology: study of ancient civilizations
 - Paleontology: study of fossils
- PRESENT
 - History: connects the past with the present
- FUTURE
 - Visionaries (New technologies)
 - NASA (Moon, Mars, space exploration)



Living Through Time

PAST

The Good

The Bad

The Ugly

- Trauma
- ACES
- CSA
- Losses

PRESENT

Here and Now

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviors

CLIENTS

Psychopathology

Ruminate

Worry/Hopeless

Enjoy vs Stuck

Survival mode

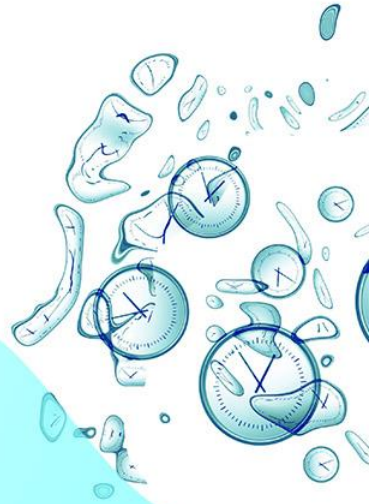
FUTURE

Goals

Aspirations

Dreams

Unknown



In the Present . . .

THE PAST

Ruminate

Regret

Dwell on

Feel guilt

Feel stuck

Revisit

Reminisce

Reflect on

Study

THE PRESENT

Enjoy

Aware of

Take actions

Take risks

Rush through

Gain insights

Learn from the past

Evaluate the
past/present

Remember/forget
the past

THE FUTURE

Save for

Plan for

Look forward to

Dream about

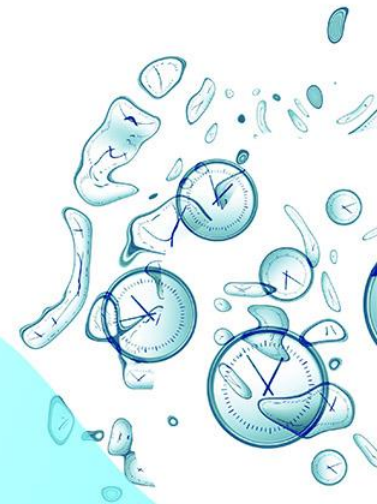
Set goals

Forecast

Anticipate

Consider

FEEL

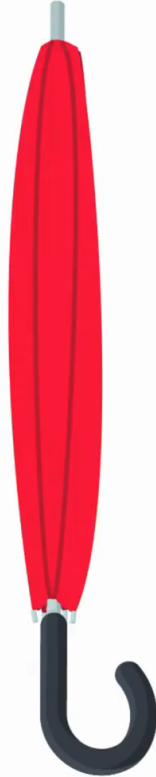


Motivated
Excited
Hopeful
Hopeless
Anxious
Fearful
Dread

Time Perspective

Temporal Focus

Time Attitude



Time Orientation

Temporal Orientation



Temporal Focus

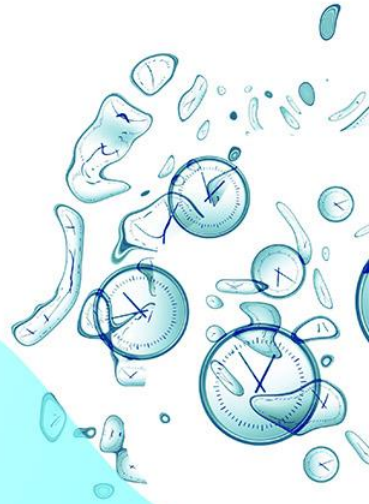
“the extent to which individuals characteristically direct their attention to the past, present, and/or future.”

(Shipp & Aeon, 2019, p. 37)

- Think about the past
 - memories
- Live in the moment
- Think about the future
 - Short- or long-term

- Individual tendency to shift focus
- High or low focus on a time frame
- Current situation influence focus

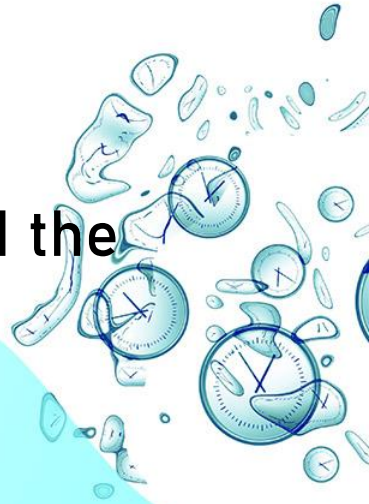
(Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009)



Time Orientation

“Thoughts and behaviors primarily directed toward the past, present, or future.”

(Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009, p. 4)



Temporal Orientation

“Cognitive involvement predominantly in the past, present, or future.”

(Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009, p. 4)

Time Attitude

“How positively or negatively an individual feels about the past, present, future”

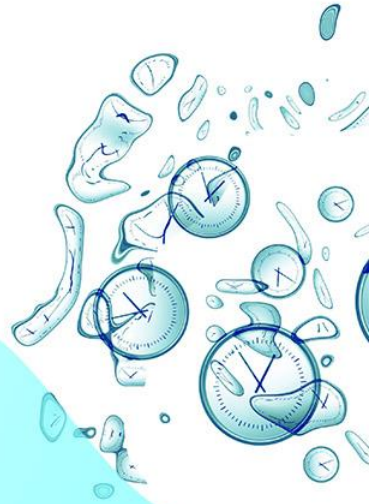
(Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009, p. 4)

Time Perspective

- “how individuals subjectively experience and perceive time . . . how individuals mentally time travel from the present moment to the retrospected past or anticipated future.”

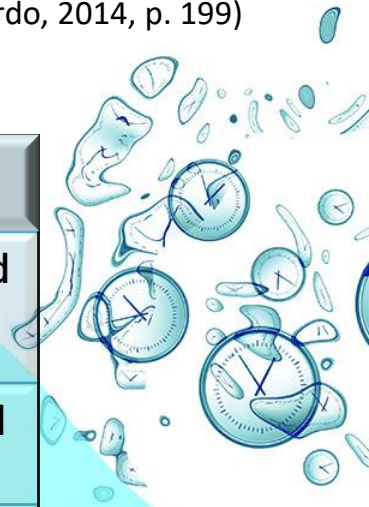


(Levasseur, 2020, p. 235)



Time Perspective (TP) by Zimbardo

Time Zones	Definition
Past Positive	A positive focus on the memories of the good old days, family, and tradition.
Past Negative	A negative focus that recalls abuse, failures, and regrets over missed opportunities.
Present Hedonistic	A focus on pleasure, risk taking, and sensation seeking.
Present Fatalistic	A focus on not taking control of situations because of a belief that life is fated to play out a certain way, no matter what one does.
Future-oriented	Working for goals, meeting deadlines, and achieving objectives.
Transcendental Future	Spiritual life after death of the body is what matters most.



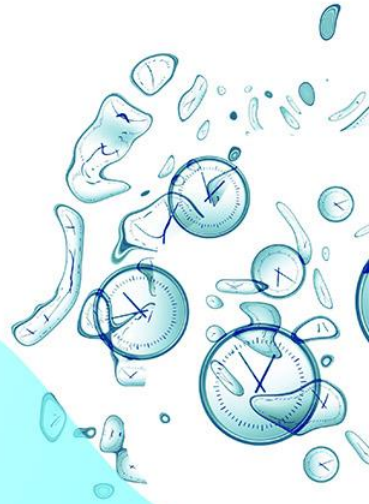
Conceptual Time Perspective Model

HOW DO YOU ...
MAKE A DECISION OR
TAKE AN ACTION?

Based on ...
MEMORIES
(Abstract Thinking)
PAST ORIENTED

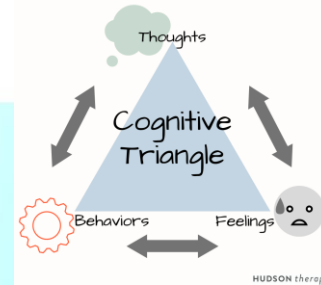
Based on ...
IMMEDIATE
SITUATION/
STIMULATION
(Real/Physical)
PRESENT ORIENTED

Based on ...
ANTECIPATED
CONSEQUENCES
(Abstract Thinking)
FUTURE ORIENTED



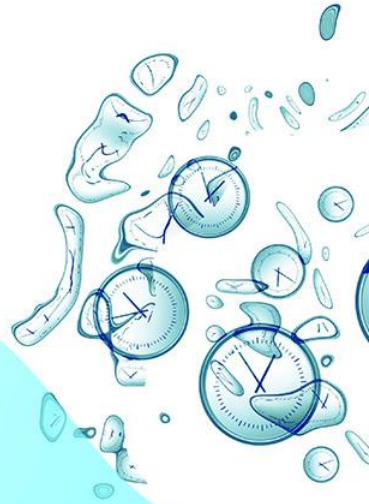
Relevance/Implications for Counseling

- **One's Time Perspective will influence**
 - Decision-making Thinking
 - Emotions Feelings
 - Actions Behaviors
- **Counselor and client may have different time perspectives**
- **Counseling theories may emphasize time perspective (past, present, future) differently from a client's time perspective**
 - E.g., explore the past vs don't dwell on the past



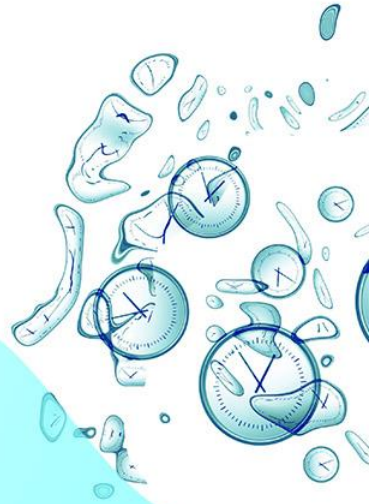
Learning Objective 2

Identify the primary temporal focus, time perspective, or time orientation (i.e., past, present, or future) of prominent counseling theories.



Counseling Theories and Time

- Past-focused
- Present-focused
- Futured focused



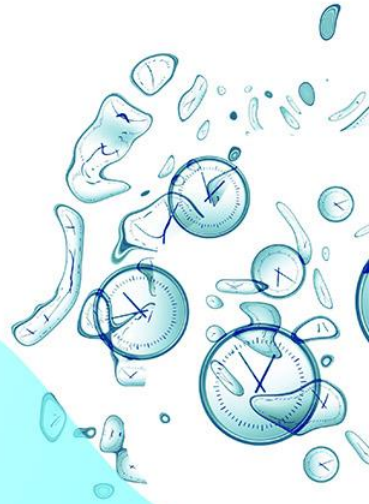
PAST-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
PSYCHOANALYTIC	<p>“Personality problems have their roots in repressed childhood conflicts.” (Corey, 2021, p. 432)</p> <p>The goal is to make the unconscious conscious. (Murdock, 2017)</p>



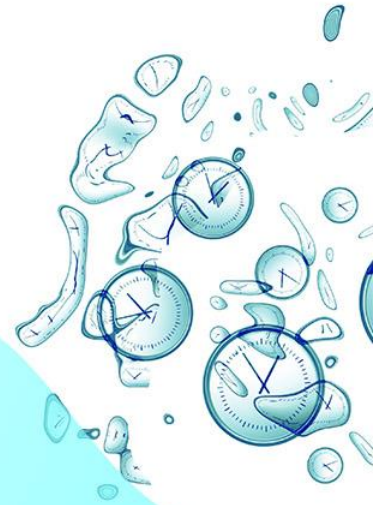
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
ADLERIAN	<p>The focus is on the client's perception of the past (<i>early recollections</i>)</p> <p>(Murdock, 2017; Corey, 2021)</p>



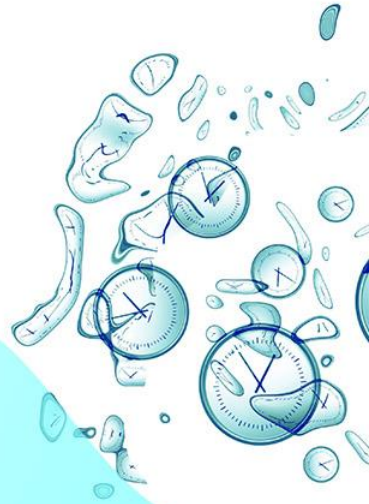
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
<p>PERSON-CENTERED</p>	<p>“attention is given to the present moment” (Corey, 2021, p. 432)</p> <p>Being fully present with the client and displaying the core conditions in the therapeutic encounter. (Corey, 2021; Murdock, 2017; Tan, 2022)</p>



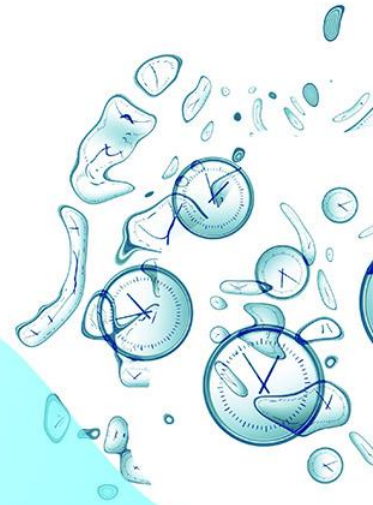
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
GESTALT	<p>Focuses on what the client is experiencing in the here and now. Clients needs to gain awareness of their thinking, feeling, and behaving to grow and strive for wholeness.</p> <p>(Corey, 2021; Murdock 2017; Tan, 2022)</p>



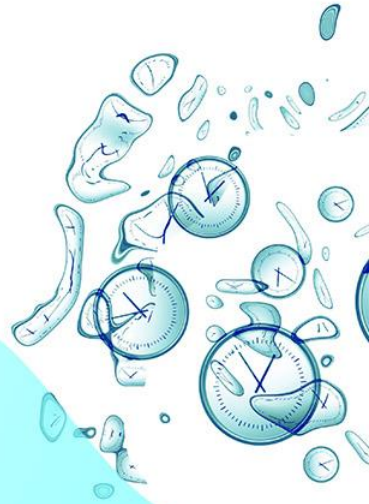
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
BEHAVIOR	<p>Focuses on client's present (current) behaviors/problems.</p> <p>“Behavior therapy deals with the client's current problems and factors influencing them today rather than analyzing possible historical determinants.” (Corey, 2021, p. 237)</p>



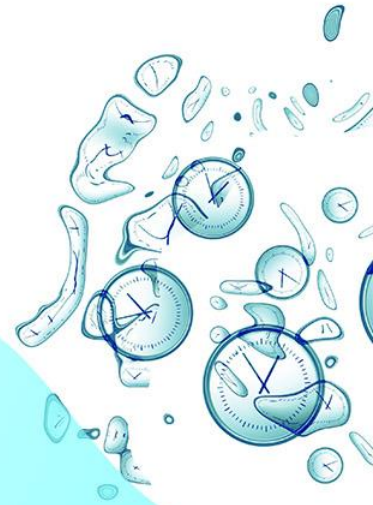
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
CBT REBT	Focuses on the client's thinking (automatic thoughts) in the present/moment. Through cognitive restructuring, cognitive distortions and irrational thinking are replaced with reality-based and rational thinking. (Corey 2021; Murdock, 2017, Tan, 2022)



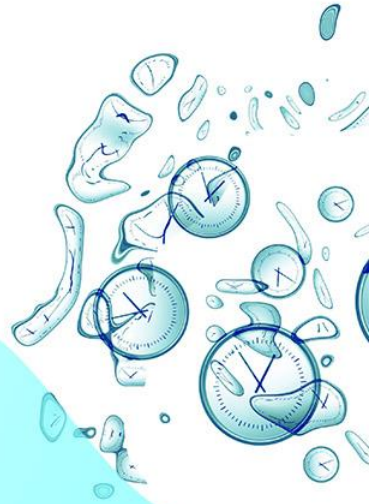
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
MINDFULNESS ACT DBT MBCT MBSR	Nonjudgmental awareness (acceptance) of the present moment is essential. (Tan, 2022)



PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
REALITY CHOICE THEORY	“The basic focus is on what clients are doing and how to get them to evaluate whether their present actions are working for them.” (Corey, 2021, p. 434)



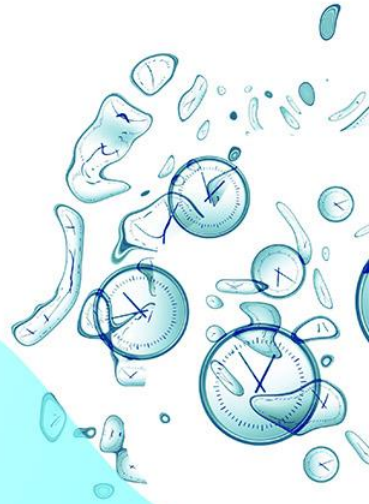
“5. What happened in the past that was painful has a great deal to do with what we are today, but revisiting this painful past can contribute little or nothing to what we need to do now: improve an important, present relationship.”

See The Ten Axioms of Choice Theory

<https://wglasser.com/quickstart-guide-to-choice-theory/#axioms>

PRESENT-FOCUSED

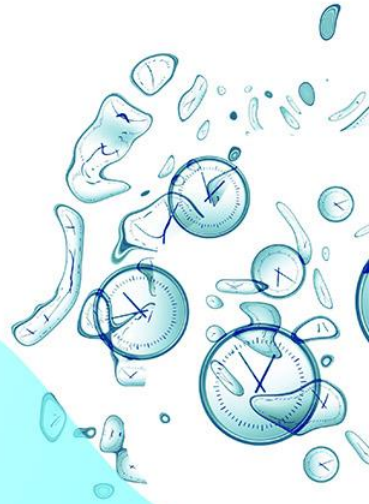
THEORY	RATIONALE
SYSTEMS	“The present is more important than exploring past experiences.” (Corey, 2021, p. 434)



- Many systemic theories have a different time perspective. For example: Bowen's multigenerational family systems theory and genograms. (Past and Present)

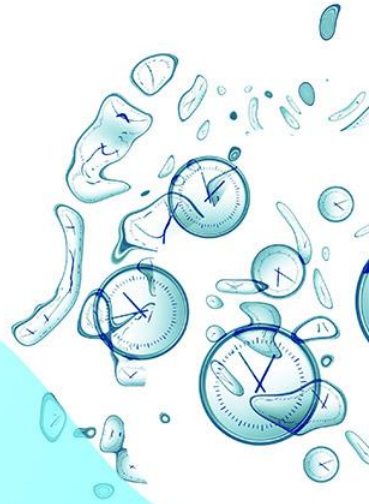
PRESENT-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
FEMINIST	Focus on “current” social, political, and cultural issues/narratives affecting/oppressing women. It takes a lifespan perspective. (Corey, 2021)



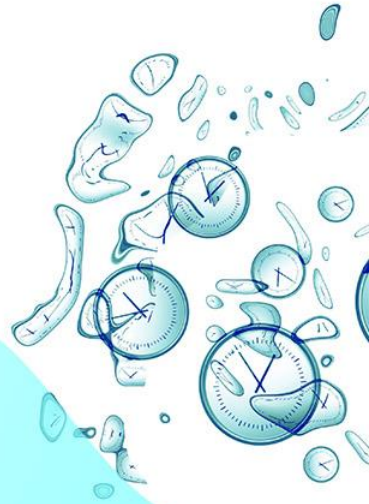
FUTURE-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
POSTMODERN SFBT NARRATIVE	Address both the present and the future. Focuses on future solutions. (Corey, 2021)



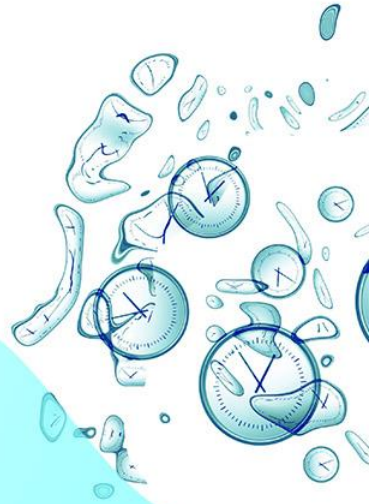
PRESENT & FUTURE-FOCUSED

THEORY	RATIONALE
EXISTENTIAL	<p>“Interest is on the present and what one is becoming. The approach has a future orientation and stresses self-awareness before action.” (Corey, p. 433)</p>



PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE-FOCUSED

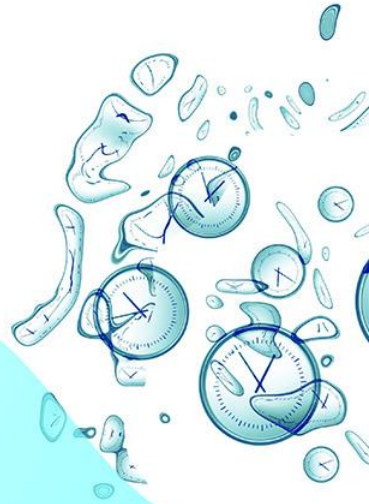
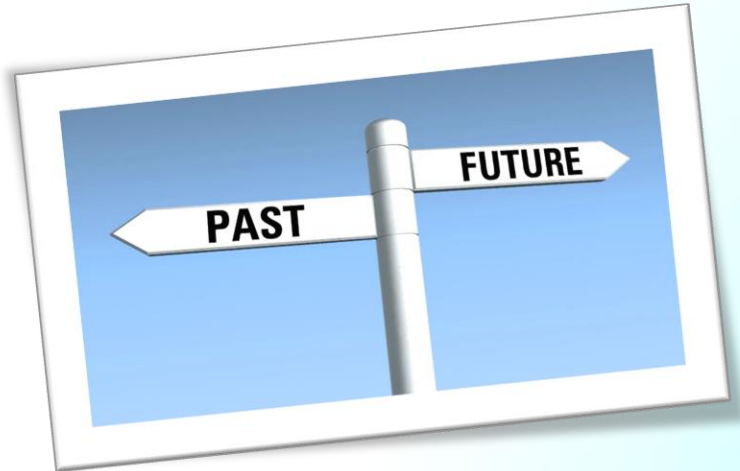
THEORY	RATIONALE
Psychosocial (Erik Erikson)	Describes psychosocial development through the lifespan.



- Not a counseling theory

Learning objective 3

- Describe strategies in counseling treatment to address or focus on a specific time (i.e., past, present, or future) in the client's life.



Time Perspective Therapy

“An overall balanced time perspective usually results in greater emotional well-being.”

(Zimbardo, Sword, & Sword, 2012, p. 66, 67)



Time Zone	
Low Past Negative	“The stuff that happened in my past wasn’t so bad”
High Past Positive	“I enjoy thinking about the past”
Low Present Fatalism	“I can make things better if I try”
High (selected) Present Hedonism	“I love life; I enjoy my significant others”
High-medium Future	“The best is yet to come”
Moderate Transcendental Future	“There is an after life, and it’s good”

Timeline Technique

- **To help adolescents plan for future career**
(Weiss & Harris (2018))
- **Positive and Negative Timelines**
(Suddaby & Landau, 1998)
- **The Timeline Followback Interview**
- **Solutions Timeline**
(Lucey & Staton, 2003)



Spiritual Life Map

- A creative drawing technique to depict a client's spiritual journey in chronological sequence
- “An illustrated account of the client's relationship with God (or transcendence) over time.”
(Hodge, 2005, p. 316)
- Serves as an assessment tool to learn about the client's worldview and spirituality
- Helps address trauma and existential themes

(Hodge, 2005; Curry, 2009)

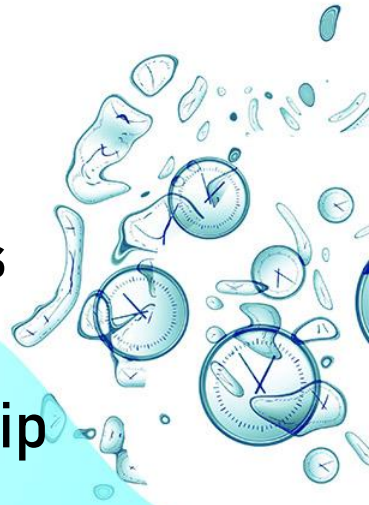
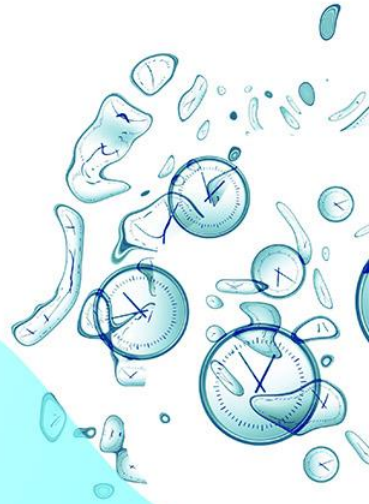
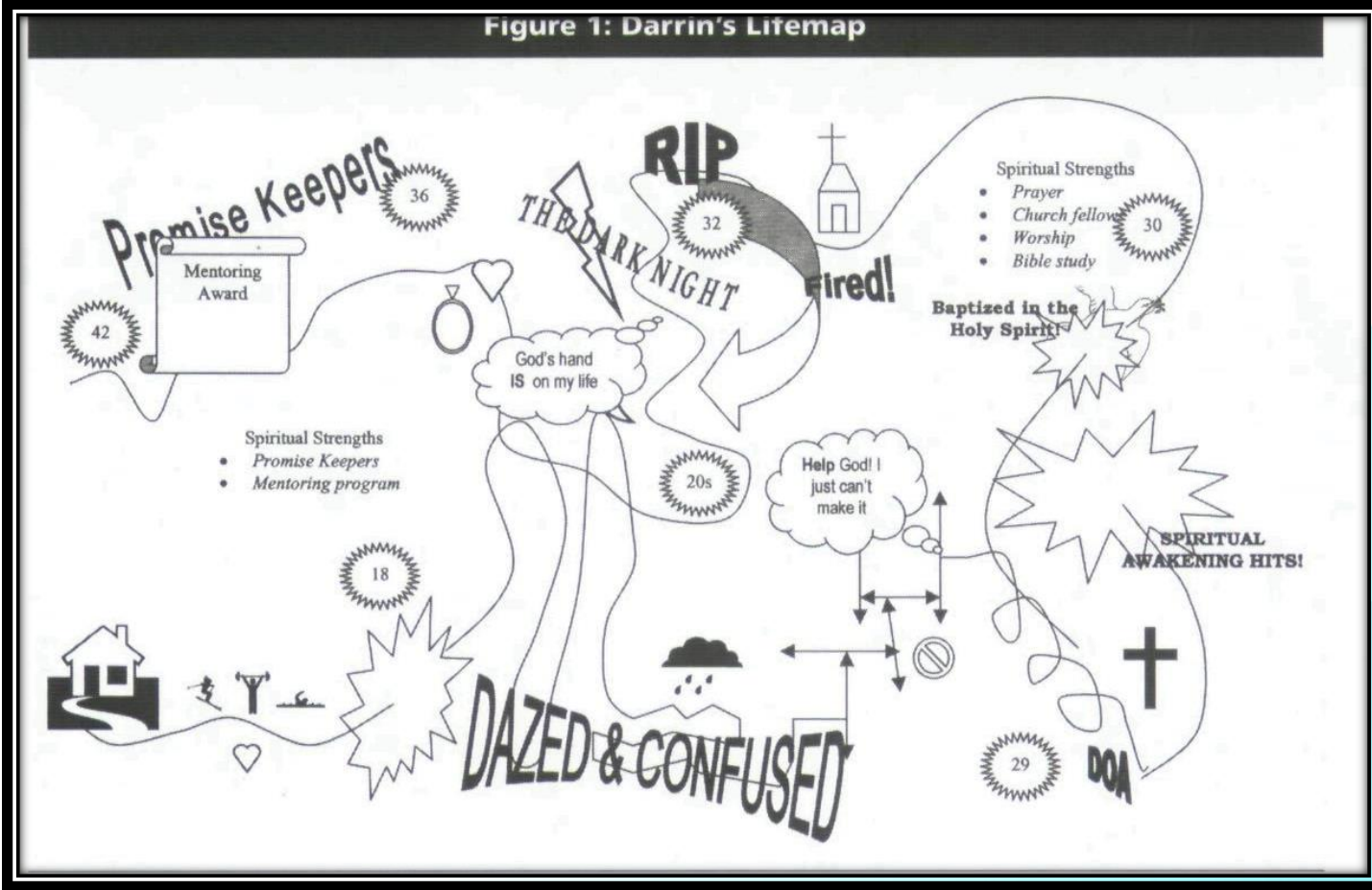


Figure 1: Darrin's Lifemap



Hodge, D. R. (2005). Developing a spiritual assessment toolbox: A discussion of the strengths and limitations of five different assessment methods. *Health & Social Work, 30* (4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/30.4.314>

Life Review Therapy (Gerontological counseling)

- “Reminiscence therapy is designed specifically for older adults with mild to moderate depression.”
- “This therapy aims to prevent or reduce depression, increase life satisfaction, improve self-care, improve self-esteem, and help older adults cope with crises, losses, and life transitions. During reminiscence therapy, patients reconstruct their life story and examine both positive and negative experiences, with the therapist as a coach.”
- “The overall purpose of reminiscence therapies is to provide perspective and acceptance of one’s life, including the resolution of past conflicts.”

<https://div12.org/treatment/remembrance-life-review-therapy-for-depression/>



Evidence for Life Review Therapy

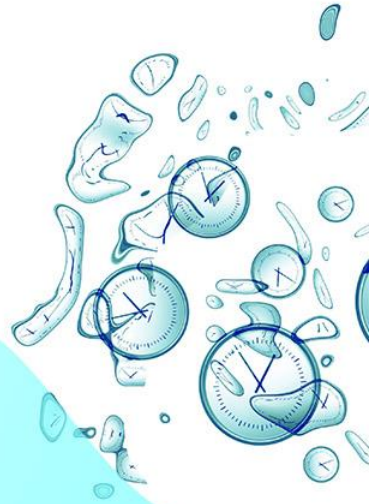
“Nine out of eleven studies found a significant effect in decreasing depressive symptoms at posttreatment.”

(Westerhof & Slatman, 2019, p. 6)

“A therapy using a systematic life review can support them in attributing new meanings and discovering their past to be a source of insight and inspiration rather than of rumination and remorse.”

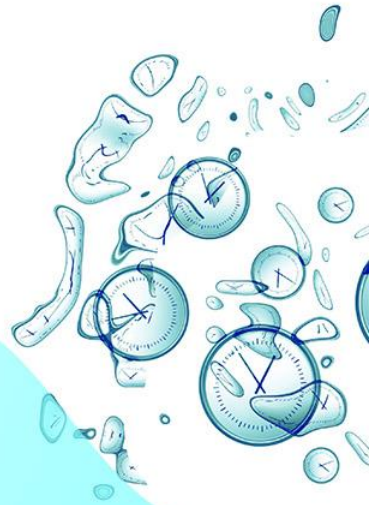
(Westerhof & Slatman, 2019, p. 10)

See also (Molinary, 2019) commentary on this meta-analysis study, and (Korte et al., 2012)



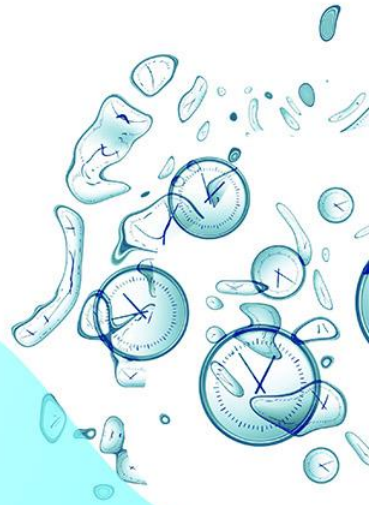
Empty Chair Technique

- Older wiser self
- Future self
- To deal with unfinished business
 - Addressing the past in the present
(here and now)



Goal-Setting (Future-Focused)

- Using The Miracle Question (SFBT)
- Creating a Vision statement
- Setting goals based on the Quality World (Reality Therapy)
- Writing the next chapter (Narrative Therapy)



Questions for self-reflection

- What is my temporal focus/time perspective?
 - ZTPI
- How balanced is my counseling approach?
 - Past, present, or future?
- How effectively do I help clients address the past, present, and future?

References

American Psychological Association (2016). *Reminiscence/life review therapy for*

depression. <https://div12.org/treatment/remembrance-life-review-therapy-for-depression/>

Bradburn, L. (2021). *Explore the past, present and future in psychotherapy and coaching*.

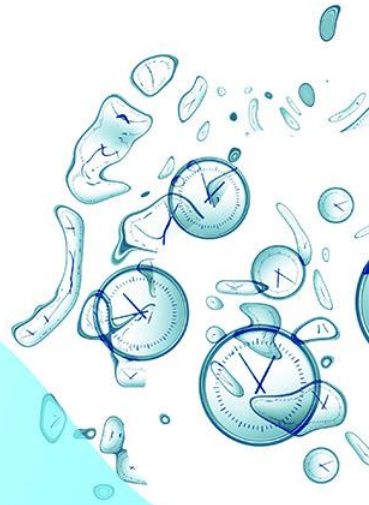
<https://medium.com/beingwell/explore-the-past-present-future-in-psychotherapy-and-coaching-tk-4404e4a90dfc>

Callizo-Romero, C., Tutnjević, S., Pandza, M., Ouellet, M., Kranjec, A., Ilić, S., Gu, Y., Göksun,

T., Chahboun, S., Casasanto, D., & Santiago, J. (2020). Temporal focus and time spatialization across cultures. *Psychonomic Bulletin Review*, 27(6):1247-1258.

<https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-020-01760-5>

Corey, G. (2021). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

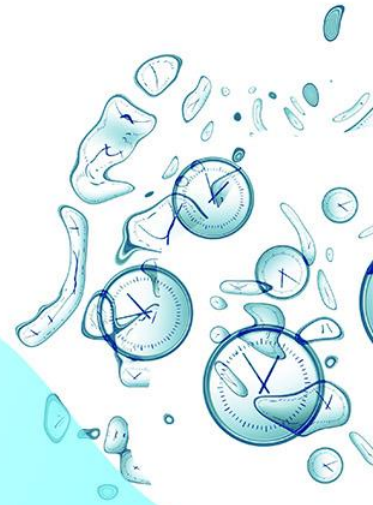


Curry, J. R. (2009). Examining client spiritual history and the construction of meaning: The use of spiritual timelines in counseling, *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 4(2), 113-123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401380902945178>

EMDR Institute. (2022). *What is EMDR?* <https://www.emdr.com/what-is-emdr/>

Hershfield, H. E. (2019). The self over time. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 26, 72-75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.06.004>.

Hodge, D. R. (2005). Developing a spiritual assessment toolbox: A discussion of the strengths and limitations of five different assessment methods. *Health & Social Work*, 30 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/30.4.314>

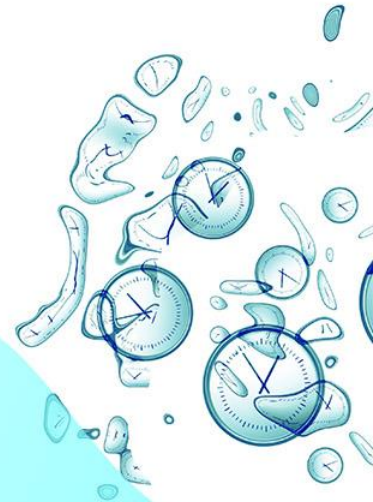


Korte J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., Cappeliez P., Smit, F., Westerhof, G. J. (2012). Life review therapy for older adults with moderate depressive symptomatology: a pragmatic randomized controlled trial. *Psychological Medicine*, 42(6):1163-73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291711002042>.

Levasseur, L. (2020). New perspectives on time perspective and temporal focus. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 41, 235-243. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2435>

Lucey, C. F., & Staton, A. R. (2003). Constructing a solutions timeline: Creating possibilities in counseling. *The Family Journal*, 11(4), 409–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480703254803>

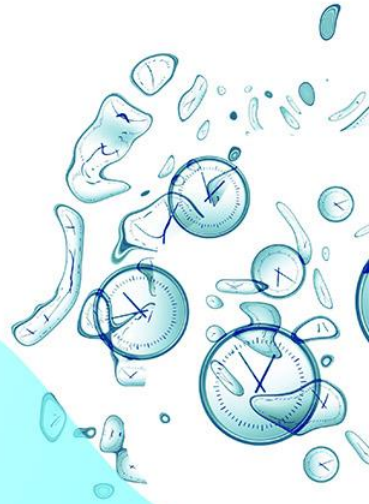
McCormack, T., Burns, P., Patrick O'Connor, Jaroslawska, A., & Caruso, E. M. (2019). Do children and adolescents have a future-oriented bias? A developmental study of spontaneous and cued past and future thinking. *Psychological Research*, 83(4), 774-787. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00426-018-1077-5>



Molinari, V. (2019), Commentary on “In search of the best evidence for life review therapy to reduce depressive symptoms in older adults: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials”: Some thoughts on how life review reminiscence therapy can inform clinical theory and practice for both younger and older adults. *Clinical Psychology Science & Practice*, 26(4), e12304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12304>

Mooney, A., Earl, J. K., Mooney, C. H., & Bateman, H. (2017). Using balanced time perspective to explain well-being and planning in retirement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8,1781. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01781>

Murdock, N. L. (2017). *Theories of counseling and psychotherapy: A case approach* (4th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.



Park, G., Schwartz, H. A., Sap, M., Kern, M. L., Schwartz, H. A., Weingarten, E., Eichstaedt, J.

C., Berger, J., Stillwell, D. J., Kosinski, M., Ungar, L. H., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2017).

Living in the past, present, and future: Measuring temporal orientation with language.

Journal of personality, 85(2), 270-280. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12239>

Shipp, A. J. & Aeon, B. (2019). Temporal focus: Thinking about the past, present, and future.

Current Opinion in Psychology, 26, 37-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.04.005>

Shipp, A. J., Edwards, J. R., & Lambert, L. S. (2009). Conceptualization and measurement of

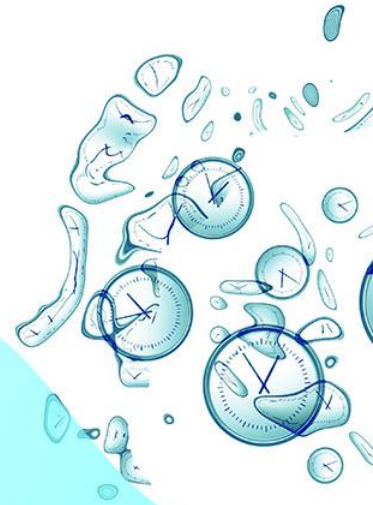
temporal focus: The subjective experience of the past, present, and future. *Organizational*

Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 110(1), 1-22.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2009.05.001>

Suddaby, K. & Landay, J. (1998). Positive and negative timelines: A technique for restorying.

Family Process, 37(3), 287-98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1998.00287.x>.



Sword, R. K. M. & Zimbardo, P. (2016). *The importance of our time perspective. The genesis of Zimbardo's time perspective theory and therapy*. Psychology Today.

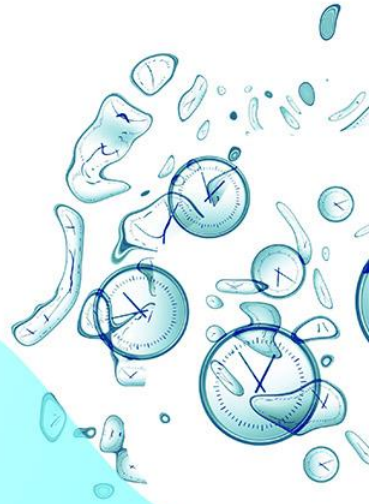
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-time-cure/201607/the-importance-our-time-perspective>

Sword, R. M., Sword, R. M. K., Brunskill, S. R., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2014). Time perspective therapy: A new time-based metaphor therapy for PTSD. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 19(3), 197-201, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2013.763632>

Tan, S-Y. (2022). *Counseling and psychotherapy: A Christian perspective* (2d ed.). Baker Academic.

Glasser Institute for Choice theory. (n.d.). *The ten axioms of choice theory*.

<https://wglasser.com/quickstart-guide-to-choice-theory/#axioms>



Weiss, J. A. & Harris, D. M. (2018). Making plans for future success: A timeline tool feasibility Study. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46(2), 255-266.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2018.1434129>

Westerhof, G. J., & Slatman, S. (2019). In search of the best evidence for life review therapy to reduce depressive symptoms in older adults: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Clinical Psychology Science and Practice*, 26(4), e12301.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12301>

Zimbardo, P., Sword, R., & Sword, R. (2012). *Time cure: Overcoming PTSD with the new psychology of time perspective therapy*. Jossey-Bass.

Zubernis, L., Snyder, M., & Neale-McFall, C. (2017). Case conceptualization: Improving understanding and treatment with the temporal/contextual model. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 39(3), 181-194. [https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/](https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.17744/mehc.39.3.01)

[10.17744/mehc.39.3.01](https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.17744/mehc.39.3.01)

