

Two Voice Therapy Review

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What is fundamental in the therapeutic encounter? The ideas that underpin our work or being present for a person who suffers? The book by prominent existential psychiatrist Irving Yalom attempts to shed light on these questions. Psychotherapy for both patients and therapists has become a theoretical manual on how to proceed, seeking to transform it into an efficient process framed in research on effectiveness. Is that search something bad? It is not, but many times it has been at the cost of removing the relevance of the fundamental factor of psychotherapy: the human encounter between two people.

The book arises from a therapeutic process where the patient could not pay for the sessions, but she wanted at all costs to continue with her therapist. At that moment, Irving Yalom came up with a proposal where both would benefit, proposing that each of them, after each session, write their impression privately and at the end of the therapeutic process they would join those impressions in a book, to which the patient agreed.

Twice Therapy is a book that emphasizes the importance of phenomenology and existential analysis in meeting people, seeking through phenomenology to be present with the other person not from our preconceived ideas or theories, but to let the person appear from its being-there and allowing a more genuine encounter. Existential Analysis has four motivations; to be able to be, to like living, to allow oneself to be oneself and to find meaning. In each motivation there are conditions that make its realization possible, which allow a fruitful therapeutic encounter to live a fuller life.

In the first motivation to be able to be, we find in one of the conditions support as the key to not succumbing to anguish. The book shows that what Ginny valued most was not great interpretations or associations but rather feeling her therapist present, which shows us how fundamental it is to support another with our simple real presence. Another important condition in the second motivation is closeness, which Ginny also valued in small close details that we would feel from a grandparent, such as carefully arranging the chair or offering a cup of coffee as a courtesy. Isn't that what we expect from a therapeutic process to feel human warmth to put ourselves back together?

As for the third motivation, allowing yourself to be and the fourth, finding meaning in the world, we also find important conditions for the encounter in psychotherapy. As it appears in the book, Ginny valued not entering into psychopathological categories or pictures, the more this was attempted, the more distance was generated in the therapeutic process. On the other hand, when she was considered and allowed to be herself, psychotherapy advanced very clearly, this shows us that considering the other is essential to allow her space to develop. As for the fourth motivation, one of the conditions is a value in the future and that was able to be provided by Irving Yalom by challenging her to build a life worth living going forward.

A beautiful book that enhances the beauty of the encounter between two people, in the specific case of the book two people in a therapeutic context. On a personal note, the book was very enriching in my role as a therapist, especially to understand how wrong I could be by only sticking with my ideas or assumptions about how the patient felt about their therapeutic process. The book shows that what is valued by the patient are human characteristics and warmth, over the ideas or theories that support psychotherapy.

An opportunity to recover what makes psychotherapy special, which is the human encounter. Giving the patient a voice about how they experience a therapeutic process and their closest sensations. Isn't the patient's perception central when evaluating the effectiveness of a therapy? The book invites us to reflect on how we are approaching therapy in the current technical era and not lose the human focus of the encounter. In the words of the same author (...) "what did I give him more of? interpretations? clarification? support? guide? No, something that is on the other side of technique, I gave my heart to it. She moved me, she moved me. Her life was precious to me. I looked forward to each session to see her. She was hungry, but she was rich. She gave me a lot." A beautiful book for all audiences that invites us not to lose the most genuine origin of psychotherapy, to be there for others and allow ourselves to explore the best of ourselves.