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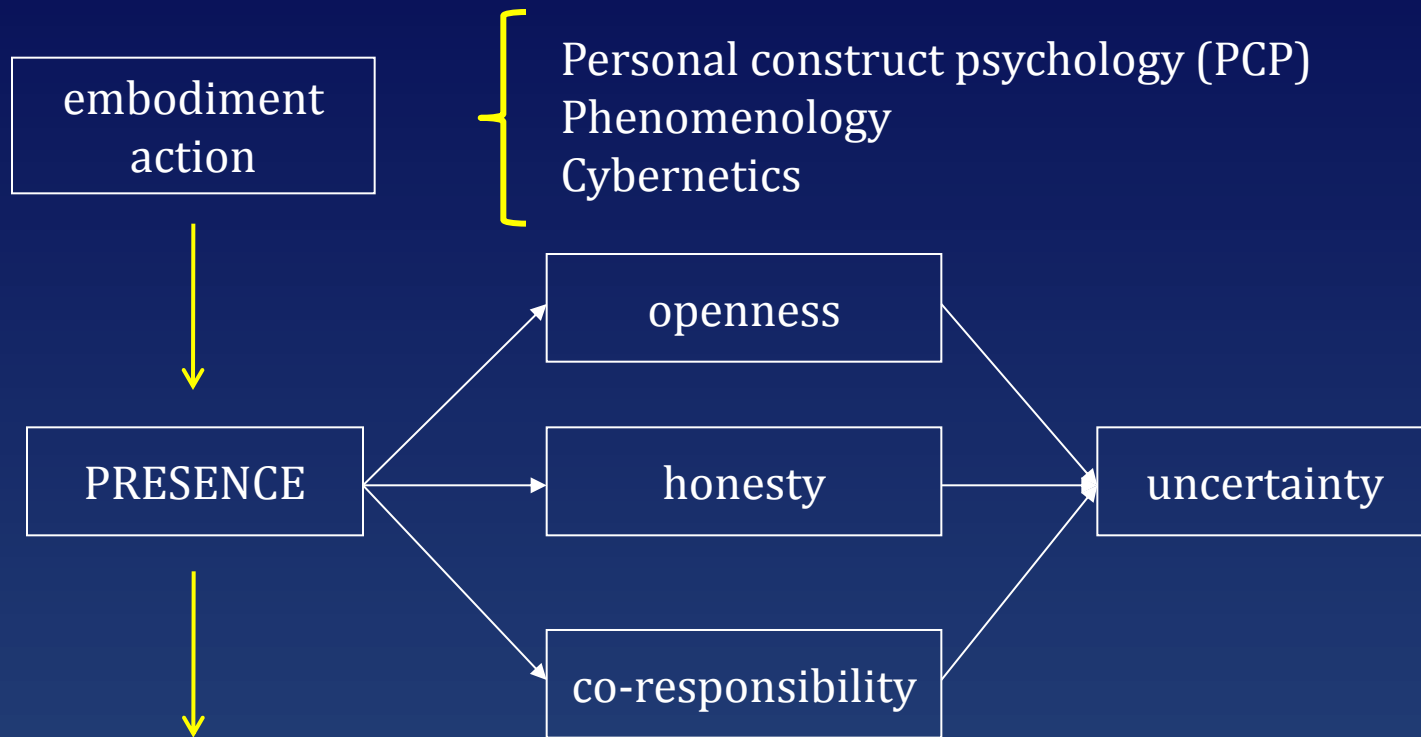
# Experiencing embodiment in the therapeutic relationship

Riga

16th April 2016



# Outline of the workshop



Experiencing presence: breathing and getting in touch  
Sharing our personal/professional experiences

## PCP

Anticipation as a  
“questioning act” (Kelly, 1979)  
Integrating mindfulness  
(McWilliams, 2009)  
and theory, technique and  
person in EPCP (Leitner, 2007)

Impermanence  
vacuity  
presence vs. absence

## PHENOMENOLOGY

*Desein* =being-in-the-world  
practically (Heidegger, 1927).  
‘I can’ instead of ‘I think’  
(Merlau-Ponty, 1945)  
‘ready-to-hand’ and ‘present-  
at-hand’ (Heidegger, 1927)

To the extent that my ‘techniques’  
do not spontaneously arise from  
within me as genuine reactions to  
the encounter in the therapy  
room, therapy is shifted from a  
‘being with’ to a ‘doing to’

## CYBERNETICS

Knowledge is action (Maturana  
& Varela, 1980).  
“Enaction” (Varela, 1999)  
Ecology of mind (Bateson,  
1972)

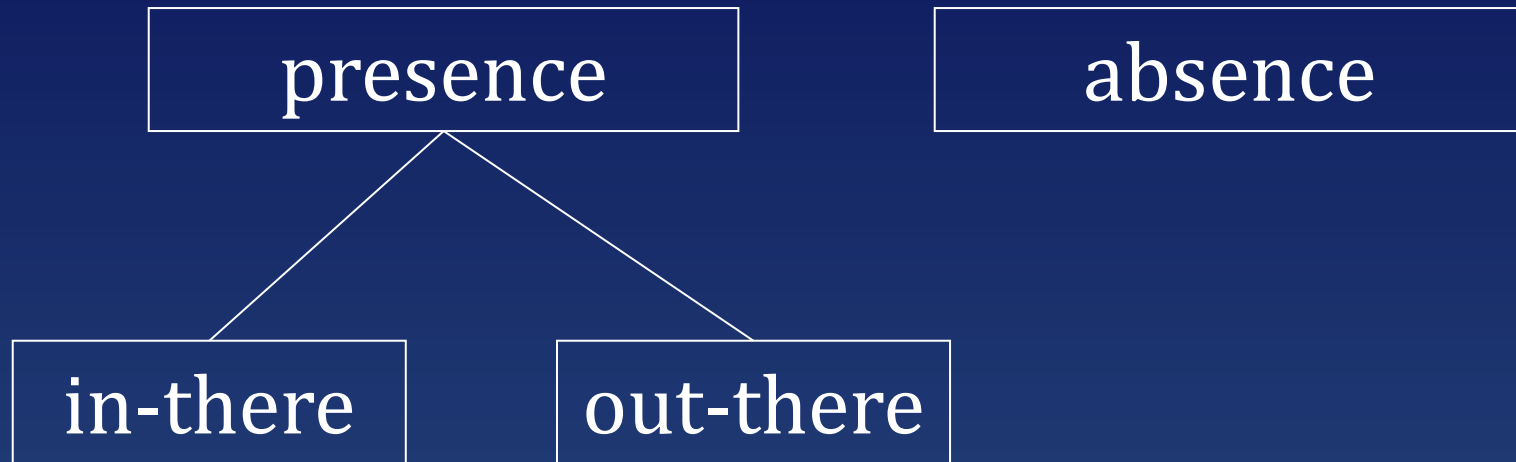
# PRESENCE

## HCI

Within a situated action based  
approach (Suchman, 1987)  
presence is the ongoing result  
of the action performed in an  
environment (Spagnolli *et al.*,  
2003, Dourish 2004)

# Which is the opposite of presence?

Mindfulness? “When an individual refuses to acknowledge or attend to a thought, emotion, motive, or object of perception” (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p.823)



Observe the shift from being-in to being-out in one of the two pieces from the TV series “In-treatment”

# Experiences in psychotherapy



"Our lights were on" but "we were not home"

We may have been looking directly into the other person's eye, but probably staring at them rather than nodding our head in apparent understanding (Mahoney 2003)

People who know us or are attuned to the subtitles of our presence may call us on such lapses: 'Are you with me?', 'Where are you?', 'Hello, in there...?' More often they are polite and say nothing

"The present moment" (Stern, 2004) is a moment of encounter, which goes further than technique

How to be present?

Attuning to what patients are seeking and to their level of comfort in being with us: they are more comfortable with us when we are comfortable with ourselves



relaxation and mindfulness to facilitate openness

# Implications

- Openness: accepting in one's own horizon the other's horizon (Gadamer, 1960)  
care instead of cure (narrative medicine)  
maternal reverie (Bion, 1961)  
standing under (Miller, 1989)  
being part of an integral world (Bateson, 1972; Leitner, 2010)
- Honesty: being present as thrown into the world (Heidegger, 1927)  
non-judgement, emptiness and irrelevance  
fault, "injured therapist" (Jaspers, 1986)  
ceasing to be "the subject supposed to know" (Lacan, 1964)
- Co-responsibility: psychotherapy as a cooperative enterprise  
reciprocity, i.e. "what is preventing us from going further?" instead of resistance  
courage to go further

# Uncertainty

Accepting the bet of entering unknown territories,  
two examples of the “now-moment” (Stern, 2004)

Naked as you were in your mother’s arms

Embodied understanding as a tool to go back to the  
top of the well where the patient has taken you

Looking at alternative possibilities and considering  
them as impermanent

Construing change not as a goal but as an  
inevitable aspect of life

Feeling rooted as never before

# A step back to the foundations of presence

Life as breathing

Experiencing focusing (Gendlin, 1978) to get  
in touch with ourselves and to help the  
patients get in touch with themselves,  
i.e. in a case of hostility

How do we get in touch with each other?

Let's experience





# Towards new ventures...

"it is not so much what man is that counts as it is what he ventures to make of himself. To make the leap he must do more than disclose himself; he must risk a certain amount of confusion. Then, as soon as he does catch a glimpse of a different kind of life, he needs to find some way of overcoming the paralyzing moment of threat, for this is the instant when he wonders what he really is - whether he is what he just was or is what he is about to be"

(Kelly, 1964)



# Thank you for your participation



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