

The Structure of Neurosis  
Implications for Psychotherapy

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I. Summary of the point of view:

A. Neurosis is an interruption in emotional growing up.

B. Since growing up involves self-support (giving up dependency), we are all ambivalent about it: we want to do it and we ~~don't~~ are afraid to do it.

C. Life asks us to be complete human beings. But societal norms and the wounds of childhood make it dangerous to be complete. For survival we try to "fit in". (The words anxiety, angst, angle are related: we narrow or constrict ourselves.)

D. The paradox: we acquire a motive to repeat old pains and self-petuate the neurosis (the narrowing).

E. At some level, conscious or unconscious, we sense that we do this to ourselves and feel guilty. I call this actualization guilt and claim that that this is essentially "good" guilt. The goal becomes to convert it into a motivator rather than a source of punishment, i.e., to attain a mature superego as well as a mature ego.

## II. In a nutshell:

Essentially client says: Life (parents, family, teachers) has been bad to me.

Therapist (essentially) says: That is a true misfortune. Now let's see how you are bad to you and the how and why of ~~your~~ your resistance to being good to you.

III. Some ways of accomplishing this. In general we try to view all behaviors from perspective of..... do they promote self-growth or self-defeat?

- A. The inner unity of attitudes towards self and towards others. e.g., if you are withholding towards others, you're probably withholding towards self.
- B. Offering self as a model of not-knowing; and as a model of all kinds of finiteness.
- C. Showing the difference between a life problem and a neurotic problem. Disappointment is!
- D. Showing client the subtle forms of self-rejection:
  - 1. Intellectualized knowledge.
  - 2. Imitative behavior versus unique self-expression.
- E. Showing that when he is real he is inherently self-rewarding.

(NOTE: the non-verbal aspects of all of these)

- F. Truth as a heroic challenge: the truth of self, of moment-to-moment reactions; of feelings towards therapist and the world. The many ways in which we have learned to fear truth.
- G. The universality of certain fears: of growing up, of self-love; of love and intimacy; of aloneness.
- H. Therapist recognizes that he can't teach what he doesn't know, and he doesn't know what he can't live.