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2007

Quotations Relevant to Psychotherapy

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Quotations Relevant to Psychotherapy

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Abstract

This paper collects my favorite quotations by psychologists, theorists, philosophers, and others who had wise things to say about psychotherapy, life, and healthy living.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Proverbs 23:7

Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.

Proverbs 4:23

We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world.

Carpenters fashion wood; fletchers fashion arrows; the wise fashion themselves.

Renounce the craving for the past, renounce the craving for the future, renounce the craving of what is in between, and cross to the opposite shore.

Buddha

Control your emotion or it will control you.

Chinese proverb

All that we are is a result of what we have thought.

Mind is forerunner of action. Everything is made up of mind. If your mind is polluted, sorrow will follow. If your mind is pure, happiness will ensue.

Dhammapada

Man is made by his belief. As he believes, so is he.

Bhagavad Gita

One's own thought is one's world. What a person thinks is what he becomes.

Maitri Upanishad

Realization of one's true nature is happiness.

Lao Tzu

He who knows others is wise; he who knows himself is enlightened.

Lao Tzu

Perfect happiness is the absence of happiness.

Chuang Tzu

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences.

Seng-t'san

The Way is not difficult; only there must be no wanting or not wanting.

Chou-chou

Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of things. Thus death is nothing terrible. But the terror consists in our notion of death, that it is terrible.

Demand not that events should happen as you wish; but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will go on well.

When you see anyone weeping for grief, either that his son has gone abroad or that he has suffered in his affairs, take care not to be overcome by the apparent evil, but discriminate and be ready to say, "What hurts this man is not this occurrence itself - for another man might not be hurt by it - but the view he chooses to take of it."

Epictetus

To make anything a habit, do it; to not make it a habit, do not do it; to unmake a habit, do something else in place of it.

Epictetus

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

Aristotle

The soul is cured by certain incantations, and these incantations are beautiful reasons.

Plato

Take the things you think you know. You can suppose them to be other things which you both know and perceive, or to be things you do not know, but do perceive, or you can confuse the two things, and herein lies the root of most mental problems.

Plato

Socrates was asked, "Why do you never sorrow?"

He replied "Because I never acquire anything whose loss would sadden me."

Plato

Love is a severe mental disorder.

Plato

Those who want the fewest things are nearest to the gods.

Socrates

The unexamined life is not worth living.

Socrates

I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance.

Socrates

It is reason alone which makes life happy and pleasant, by expelling all false conceptions or opinions, as may in any way occasion perturbation of mind.

As for diseases of the mind, against them philosophy is provided of remedies; being, in that respect, justly accounted the medicine of the mind.

Empty is the argument of the philosopher which does not relieve any human suffering.

Epicurus

Wisdom is the medicine of souls.

Pythagoras

No man is free who cannot command himself.

Pythagoras

The greatest strength and wealth is self-control.

Pythagoras

If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself but to your own estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.

Marcus Aurelius

The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it.

Marcus Aurelius

Discard everything except these few truths: we can live only in the present moment, in this brief now; all the rest of our life is dead and buried or shrouded in uncertainty. Short is the life we lead, and small our patch of earth.

Marcus Aurelius

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.

Marcus Antonius

A man who suffers before it is necessary, suffers more than is necessary.

Seneca

There is no happiness where there is no wisdom.

Sophocles

Nothing endures but change.

Heraclitus

Where there is no solution, there is no problem.

Plutarch

A problem well stated is half solved.

Anonymous

The world is so constructed, that if you wish to enjoy its pleasures, you also must endure its pains.

Swami Brahmananda

No snowflake ever falls in the wrong place.

Zen saying

The whole world is a fire pit. With what state of mind can you avoid being burned?

Kao Feng

Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old: seek what they sought.

Basho

Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said "The flag moves." The other said "The wind moves." They argued back and forth but could not agree. Hui-neng said "Gentlemen! It is not the flag that moves. It is not the wind that moves. It is your mind that moves."

Zen koan

To set up what you like against what you dislike - this is the disease of the mind.

Seng-t'san

If you bring forth what is within you
 What you bring forth will save you.
 If you do not bring forth what is within you,
 What you do not bring forth will destroy you.

Gospel of Thomas

Should this my firm persuasion of the soul's immortality prove to be a mere delusion, it is at least a pleasing delusion, and I will cherish it to my last breath.

Cicero

It is not enough to have a good mind. The main thing is to use it well.

Descartes

Unless we agree to suffer we cannot be free from suffering.

D. T. Suzuki

Our own life is the instrument with which we experiment with truth.

Thich Nhat Hanh

I always get what I want, but I know what to want.

Anonymous

A man is but the product of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes.

Gandhi

Even a thought, even a possibility, can shatter and transform us.

There are no facts, only interpretations.

Be careful, lest in casting out your devil you cast out the best that is in you.

Nietzsche

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

John Milton

Experience is not what happens to us, but how we interpret what happens to us.

Thomas Huxley

There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

Shakespeare

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! . . . In apprehension, how like a god!

Shakespeare

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,

Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,

Raze out the written troubles of the brain,

And with some sweet oblivious antidote

Cleanse the stuffed blossom of that perilous stuff

Which weighs upon the heart?

Shakespeare

If you have been able to examine and manage your own life, you have achieved the greatest task of all.

Montaigne

Life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced.

Kierkegaard

It may be urged that the pursuit of truth in some directions is injurious to happiness, because it compels us to take leave of delusions which were pleasant while they lasted.

A. E. Housman

It is the mind that maketh good or ill, that maketh wretch or happy, rich or poor.

Edmund Spenser

No mind is much employed upon the present; recollection and anticipation fill up almost all our moments.

Samuel Johnson

Things do not change; we change.

H. D. Thoreau

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school . . . It is to solve some of the problems of life, not theoretically, but practically.

H. D. Thoreau

Pain is inevitable - misery is a choice.

Anonymous

Be happy. It's one way of being wise.

Colette

We do not see things as they are, but as we are.

Anonymous

We think in generalities, but we live in detail.

A. N. Whitehead

Advice is like snow; the softer it falls the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind.

Samuel Coleridge

I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

Harry S. Truman

The most amazing thought is that we can change how we think.

William Fames

The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude.

William James

Experience is not what happens to us, but rather what we do with what happens to us.

Aldous Huxley

The most that we can hope to do is to train every individual to realize all his potentialities and become completely himself.

Aldous Huxley

Humans respond not to events but to their meanings, and can read into any event an endless variety of meanings.

Jerome Frank

Man must strive with all his might to become what he really is.

Meister Eckhart

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the mind to correlate all its contents.

H. P. Lovecraft

Only one kind of worry is correct: to worry that you worry too much.

Proverb

We don't need to learn how to let things go; we just need to learn to recognize when they've already gone.

Suzuki Roshi

Everyone should carefully observe which way his heart draws him, and then choose that way with all his strength.

Hasidic saying

Life does not consist mainly, or even largely, of facts or happenings. It consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that are forever blowing through one's mind.

Mark Twain

The past is never dead. It's not even past.

William Faulkner

Life breaks everyone, but some are strong in the broken places.

Ernest Hemingway

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Man is what he believes.

Anton Chekov

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

Rudyard Kipling

Always look for the good in yourself. Focus on that good, highlight it, and turn even depression into joy.

Work on having only positive thoughts. It will do wonders for your mind.

Never insist that everything go exactly your way, even in matters spiritual.

Develop a good eye. Always looking for good will bring you to truth.

If you don't feel happy, pretend to be. Even if you are depressed, put on a smile. Act happy. Genuine joy will follow.

Being happy is so important that you should even force yourself to be happy, if that's what it takes.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

You can hold back from the suffering of the world, you have free permission to do so, and it is in accordance with your nature, but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could have avoided.

Franz Kafka

We need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.

Franz Kafka

Most people are about as happy as they make up their mind to be.

Abraham Lincoln

The philosophical problem is an awareness of disorder in our concepts, and can be solved by ordering them.

Wittgenstein

There are two kinds of people: those who divide everything into two groups, and those who don't.

Kenneth Boulding

The mind is a whole world, with both positive and negative states of mind. So with the rational part of the mind, we analyze which mind-states are useful for health, for mental peace, for a happy life. Then we deliberately try to familiarize ourselves with these positive mind-states or thoughts and learn how to strengthen them.

The Dalai Lama

We should try never to let our happy frame of mind be disturbed. Whether we are suffering at present or have suffered in the past, there is no reason to be unhappy. If we can remedy it, why be unhappy? And if we cannot, what use is there in being depressed about it? That just adds more unhappiness and does no good at all.

The Dalai Lama

Strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live.

Joseph Conrad

Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it. Andre Gide

It takes faith to believe, and it takes courage not to, and who is to say which is the deeper and more truthful.

Herbert Weisinger

It is surely a great calamity for a human being to have no obsessions.

Robert Bly

Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you.
Everything has been figured out except how to live.

Sartre

There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

Albert Einstein

When Isaac Bashevis Singer was asked if he believed in free will, he said "Of course I do. I have no choice!"

Love is the extremely difficult realization that someone other than oneself is real.

Iris Murdoch

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

I love her and she loves me and together we hate each other with a wild hatred born of love.

August Strindberg

There is no psychology; there is only biography and autobiography.

Thomas Szasz

I know of nothing more difficult than knowing who you are, and having the courage to share the reasons for the catastrophe of your character with the world.

William Gass

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

Franz Kafka

Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism.

Sartre

What is to give light must endure burning.

Viktor Frankl

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitudes in any given set of circumstances.

Viktor Frankl

The true value of a human being can be found in the degree to which he has attained liberation from the self.

Albert Einstein

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

Albert Einstein

I don't develop; I am.

Picasso

The thought manifests as the word, the word manifests as the deed. The deed develops into habit, and the habit hardens into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care.

Anonymous

The patient is not cured by free-associating, he is cured when he can free-associate.

Ferenczi

Anyone who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined.

Sam Goldwyn

Let the credulous and the vulgar continue to believe that all mental woes can be cured by a daily application of old Greek myths to their private parts.

Vladimir Nabokov

Psychiatry is the care of the id by the odd.

Anonymous

Psychoanalysis is that mental illness for which it regards itself as therapy.

Karl Kraus

Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It has no mother.

Germaine Greer

Psychoanalysis is like going to school about yourself.

C. Ludwig

It is more important to know what kind of person has the disease than what disease the person has.

Abraham Maslow

A problem well stated is a problem half solved.

Charles Kettering

It is easier to behave your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of behaving.

Kegley

What we think is what we create. The outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to reflect their inner beliefs.

R. W. Emerson

If you think you can, you can; if you think you can't, you can't. Henry Ford

One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

Eleanor Roosevelt

You mainly feel the way you think.

Albert Ellis

Virtually all “emotionally disturbed” individuals at times think crookedly, magically, dogmatically, and unrealistically. They do not only want, wish, or prefer; they demand. They want to prove themselves rather than be themselves. People have a hard time giving up their magical assumptions, accepting the often harsh facts of reality, and working to change their basic philosophic premises.

Albert Ellis

Psychological disorders are characterized by dysfunctional thinking derived from dysfunctional beliefs.

Cognitive therapy suggests that the individual's problems are derived largely from certain distortions of reality based on erroneous premises and assumptions.

Psychological problems can be mastered by sharpening discriminations, correcting misconceptions, and learning more adaptive attitudes.

Aaron Beck

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.

Carl Rogers

If you don't think too good, then don't think too much.

Ted Williams

Work like you don't need the money. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like nobody's watching.

Satchel Paige

If you are not happy here and now, you never will be.

Taisen Deshimaru

Biography puts flesh on the bones of theory.

Anonymous

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's.

William Blake

If I try to be like him, who will be like me?

Yiddish proverb

We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.

Anonymous

Any theoretically-based psychotherapy is mistaken because each person is different.

Milton Erickson

A man with a watch knows what time it is; a man with two watches isn't so sure.

Anonymous

Only small fish swim in schools.

I. B. Singer

There is nothing so practical as a good theory.

Kurt Lewin

It's OK to fall in love with a theory, but never marry it!

Harry Goolishian

No theory is good except on condition that one uses it to go beyond.

Andre Gide

Truth is that which works.

Buddha

I admire those who search for the truth. I avoid those who find it.

French motto

Theory is useful. But without warmth of heart and without love it bruises the very ones it claims to save.

Andre Gide

Sigmund Freud: Quotations

The first human being who hurled an insult instead of a stone was the founder of civilization.

Thought is behavior in rehearsal.

Psychoanalysis is in essence a cure through love.

When one asks the meaning of life one is already sick.

Nothing takes place in a psychoanalytic treatment but an exchange of words. . . .
Words were originally magic and to this day words have retained much of their magical
power. By words one person can make another blissfully happy or drive him to despair.

I am not a Freudian.

Carl Jung: Quotations

The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely.

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face.

Every psychology - my own included - has the character of a subjective confession.

Neurosis is the avoidance of legitimate suffering.

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you.

The sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

Follow that will and that way which experience confirms to be your own.

It all depends on how we look at things, and not on how they are in themselves.

Man needs difficulties, they are necessary for health.

People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own souls.

There is no coming to consciousness without pain.

In therapy the problem is always the whole person, never the symptom alone.

Knowledge of the unconscious is indispensable for every true self investigation.

Dream analysis demands personal knowledge of the patient's own mythology.

If one does not understand a person, one tends to regard him as a fool.

Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering.

In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order.

We cannot change anything until we accept it.

Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

The word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness.

I treat every patient as individually as possible, because the solution of the problem is always an individual one. Universal rules can be postulated only with a grain of salt.

The main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis but rather with the approach to the numinous, which is the real therapy.

Man's task is to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious.

Failure to understand the images of the unconscious deprives a man of his wholeness and imposes a painful fragmentation on his life.

Through study of folklore, alchemical studies, and symbols, one encounters hidden themes emerging in the person's own history. Additional knowledge comes through the study of primitive people and comparative religion.

Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkneses of other people.

The greatest and most important problems of life are all fundamentally insoluble. They can never be solved but only outgrown.

Learn your theories as well as you can, then put them aside when you touch the living miracle of the human soul

I do not want anyone to be a Jungian. I want people above all to be themselves. Should I be found one day only to have created another "Ism" then I will have failed in all I tried to do.