

PSYCHOPHARMACOTHERAPY AND THE HERO'S JOURNEY: MENTAL HEALTH MEDICINES AND SCRIPT CHANGE

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SUMMARY

The concept of a script in Transactional Analysis (TA) can be considered as the basis for the occurrence and duration of mental disorders. As such, a script change can be the solution leading to improved mental health and well-being. In addition to redecision therapy, offered by TA, there are other techniques for changing the script. One of them is the psychotherapeutic technique, *The Hero's Journey*, by Robert Dilts, developed from Joseph Campbell's idea of a single myth; i.e. a monomyth, which is in fact the narrative of all narratives. It is this model of all myths that is actually a story about the meaning of life, which is exactly what gives the patient the power to achieve the goal. This goal is also the cornerstone of all existential psychotherapeutic modalities. Life can be viewed as a journey in which each chooses their own path by choosing their own goals, in any sphere of life; private, professional, or other. Misalignment of goals or failure to achieve them can cause mental disorders, leading to a loss of the meaning of life and with this loss, one's goals. When illness appears on the journey, the treatment itself becomes the journey. By applying personalized psychopharmacotherapy and removing the symptoms of the disease, further treatment aims to help the patient enter stabilization and socialization. In this phase of treatment, the hero's journey becomes a therapeutic journey. Through setting new goals and thus changing the meaning of life, the patient is introduced to the last phase of disease prevention, where health becomes a life goal through metaphors of achieving various personal goals. The synergy of both approaches can bring the patient into a state of remission that becomes a permanent state as the patient has established their own goals, felt fulfilled and found their own meaning and purpose in life using motivation, creativity and their forgotten or neglected resources and potentials.

Key words: hero's journey - TA script - personalized medicine - generative mind - generative self - psychopharmacotherapy

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INTRODUCTION

Transactional Analysis offers the concept of a life script as an unconscious pattern of behavior that determines our life, creating a winning, banal or losing story (Berne 1966, 1972), and thus can influence the outcome of psychopharmacotherapy. People who suffer from a mental disorder usually carry a script that explains the origin and causes of such behaviors that a person has adopted or the life decisions they make and live by. Once a script is established, a person should first make the decision that they want to change it. The script can be modified in several ways; by making a new decision (redcision therapy) or through some form of integrative psychotherapy (Stewart & Joines 1987). The goal of the psychotherapeutic process is not to actually change the script from a losing one to a winning one, because each script remains a script-even a winning one. All scripts are composed of forced patterns and negative motivations (personal communication - Z. Milivojević - TA education) The patient, with the help of the therapist, aims to reshape their life *scenario*, that is, to get out of one's own script, whatever it may be. The goal is to create a real winning story, and the Hero's Journey technique is ideal for that. This

technique expands awareness, breaks down old patterns and social norms, pushes us out of the comfort zone and opens new horizons for realizing authentic potentials for health. Because the person has found new and higher goals, a new meaning of life is formed as opposed to taking on a different path out of incoherence or rebellion. The patient usually comes with some kind of losing story involving the onset of a mental disorder or illness, or a story which is contributing to it. In the acute phase of treatment, when symptoms are present, the patient is not ready for this technique. However, with the help of psychopharmacotherapy and after some time when the symptoms subside, the patient is able to become aware of some of their resources prior to the disease. During this phase of maintenance and prevention of a new disease episode, the patient begins to strive to control their life in a meaningful and creative way, that is, through thoughts and behaviors. During treatment, it is important for the therapist to introduce the Hero's Journey at the right time. With personalized medicine, along with appropriate psychopharmacotherapy and a partnership with the patient, not only do symptoms cease, but the patient's quality of life also improves, enabling personal growth, welfare, wellness, well-being, i.e., personal recovery (Jakovljević 2016).

SCRIPT AND MENTAL HEALTH

The script is "...a life plan made in childhood, reinforced by parents, justified by subsequent events, and culminating in a chosen life choice" (Berne 1966). It is important to emphasize that a script or life scenario is an unconscious life plan that consists of repeating compulsive patterns of behavior (most commonly games and drivers) that lead one to a script *payoff* or *catastrophe*. It arises from a childhood decision based on scriptural injunctions and counter-injunctions, by which children managed to obtain the conditioned love of parents or important figures. The problem is in the present moment and in adulthood, since such patterns are no longer effective and lead the patient in the opposite direction from health, happiness and the meaning of life and satisfying one's authentic needs. As a way out of the script "...Berne used the metaphor of "the frog and the prince" to emphasize his concept of healing. He believes that the client's healing means rejecting the frog's skin and re-establishing the development of the prince and princess." (Stewart & Joines 1987). To arrive at this fairy-tale outcome, one needs to bring the script to a conscious level by analyzing the script injunctions/counter-injunctions and the decisions on the basis of which the script was made and of which it is composed (Stewart & Joines 1987). Only when the patient has become aware of their script or life scenario can they make a decision that they want to change it. A very important role in this process is played by a personalized narrative approach to psychopharmacotherapy which, along with the elimination of symptoms, contributes to the creation of a new alternative coherent life story; a story about the authentic meaning of life. One of the powerful psychotherapeutic techniques that basically carries a new meaning through a completely new narrative is the Hero's Journey.

HOW A HERO'S JOURNEY CHANGES THE SCRIPT METAPHOR INTO A METAPHOR OF STRENGTH TO MEET LIFE'S CHALLENGES

The Hero's Journey is a psychotherapeutic technique by Robert Dilts, created based on the template of the book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1949). According to Campbell's study of mythology and comparative religion in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, all myths, legends and fairy tales can be reduced to the term "*monomyth*", the weft that is a hero's journey. It also gives us insight into the comprehensiveness of the importance of myth in which the hero's journey within a myth impacts the whole nation or a wider circle of civilization, while the importance of the same journey in a fairy tale is reduced to the life of

an individual (Campbell 1949). It is the life of the individual that is the part to which every psychotherapeutic work with the patient is centered around. When performing the technique, the patient, having decided to accept the calling for a hero's journey, crosses the threshold and thus leaves the comfort zone. This means accepting the existence of a broader perspective of consciousness, and thus accepting more potential and creativity that they are not even aware they possess. In this way, during the journey, the *Generative Self* is being created, which is needed so that one can reach the gift, that is, achieve the goal of one's calling. With the help of guardians and empowered by their roles and messages, as in a psychodrama (variant M. Fraisman Čobanov, 2012, NLP education), the patient is liberated by the demon (an obstacle on the way to the goal). A demon or demons can be introjects, adopted script messages from surrounding people; those that are currently in existence or ancestors (Stewart & Joines 1987), various shadows of negative signs, any beings of bad intentions from myths or fairy tales or simply a part of the patient that they themselves don't like, the part they would like to get rid of. Unfortunately, the classic way of *resolving* this does not really work because one's unconscious reacts to negative messages in an automatic and stubborn way, much like a two-year-old child, which further embeds them in previous identical, repetitive action.

Gilligan and Dilts (1988) offer us a solution in centering, sponsoring, and integrating the resistance or energy of which it constitutes. In doing so, they quote Campbell, who claims that every type of energy is just *energy*, that is, that every negative energy can be turned into positive energy. The first step is centering, where one becomes aware of themselves, the moment, the call, but also one's potential. What comes next is sponsorship, which can be achieved with a coach or therapist who will help the patient to realize a positive intention within negative energy, thus transforming it into a positive message. In this step, the integration becomes a part of the patient and increases their will and strength on the journey instead of exhausting them in fighting the negative experience of its intentions. Sponsors can be angels, teachers and guardians who give resources that are necessary for the patient to be able to reach the *gift* on their own. The gift must be received in order to continue on and complete the journey and it is crucial for the future. There are life stories where it appears extremely difficult to find a good intention of resistance, but the skill lies in the ability of the therapist to fully connect with the person they are working with and look at things flexibly, from the perspective of their life, completely unencumbered by education and beliefs. *Resistance* in a person and their negative energy must not be condemned in any way, but must be considered, using the logic of its origin and its existence. In the technique itself, the patient can kill a demon in the

scene, or push it out of the room. By killing it or defeating it, the energy is not destroyed, it is only transformed through the empowerment of the hero and the hero's guardians. Once the threshold that must be crossed is identified, the hero has to overcome resistance in the form of demons. Each of the guardians supports the necessary resources needed to cross the threshold and continue on the journey. When performing the technique itself, the floor is physically marked with the patient's timeline with past, present and future and with positioning the threshold on the line. The hero then crosses the physical threshold and enters the zone of the unknown. Stepping along the timeline determines the steps that are necessary to reach the goal. In doing so, they give themselves a message that offers strength and motivation. When the goal is reached, standing in that position the path is observed, and reviewed. The patient then physically returns to the beginning and once again follows the same journey, but without the demons. As in other NLP exercises, it is advisable to do the exercise in the present or future from the perspectives of 'what if, and what would happen when?' Like every hero in a myth, legend or fairy tale on a journey, the patient comes into possession of some gift. A gift is related to skills or powers that can help oneself but also do something for the common good of a larger community. The patient reaches the goal by overcoming the steps they have set for themselves, and receives a possible gift with which they return home and which gives them power for their new life or mission, empowering them to take action. And thus, it changes the script which he can change from a loser to a winner so that illness with appropriate creative person-centered psychopharmacotherapy can be the path to a better life. The gift with which they return is a metaphor for the strength to face the challenges of life and by which they break down the metaphor of the script and build the personal power of free choice.

PSYCHOPHARMACOTHERAPY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY AS A WAY TO MENTAL HEALTH

Every patient, when met with a mental illness, is also likely to encounter socially unacceptable myths about that same illness and the eventual stigma that follows. The myth is something that has to do with the otherworldly and magic. There are patients who are pharmacophiles and those who are pharmacophobes (Jakovljević 2016). Pharmacophiles believe in magic and the existence of a magic pill that will completely cure the illness and return them to a healthy view of the world. Pharmacophobes are terrified of the myth of medicinal treatment, and think that if they do not take medicine as prescribed, they prove to society that they are healthy and thus socially accepted. By not taking

medicine and denying the myth, they will destroy the myth itself. Both extremes are wrong. This is why narrative psychopharmacotherapy is extremely important in the treatment process (Hamkins 2013), freeing both views from the myths about treatment and illness. Through narrative psychopharmacotherapy, the patient can dismiss the notion that a drug without psychotherapy cannot have a miracle cure, and vice versa, that psychotherapy alone without prescribed mental health medicines rarely leads to improvements in so-called major mental disorders. Both psychotherapy and prescribed mental health medicines are the basis for the patient to come to a state in which the psychotherapeutic modality or modalities give the maximum effect of the treatment. If illness is a myth, if fairy tales are often a weft script then the Hero's Journey is like a monomyth; the perfect counterbalance to illness as a positive narrative, of course with creative, person-centered narrative psychopharmacotherapy (Jakovljević 2010).

CONCLUSION

All are born with much greater potential and creativity, which during development and the process of growing up is reduced to some consciousness that suddenly sees much less opportunity to act in given situations. The greater the stress, the greater the realization of these "inaccessible" resources come to the fore. In these situations, there is a greater possibility of various mental disorders, some which recede, and some that turn into chronic diseases and become patterns of reaction in everyday life. Innate resources do not disappear, but are only forgotten, suppressed and stored somewhere in the unconscious. They are actually the weft of the new story. During the preparation for the Hero's Journey and during the technique itself, these resources are activated with the help of psychotherapy and as such become the basis for working with the Hero's Journey technique. The technique itself thus becomes one of the possible modalities in creative, person-centered narrative psychopharmacotherapy. With the action of psychopharmacotherapy, the patient becomes more functional both in therapy and in real life. The combined action of both types of therapy leads not only to improvement or remission of the disease itself, but to personal recovery. During the technique, there is a change in thoughts, emotional experiences, followed by behavior, as there is a change in self-belief and in some way the re-construction of the previously incomplete or split self. The encounter with the Generative Self provides an entirely new perspective on life and a view of oneself as the main actor (protagonist) of the journey. If mental illness in our world is still a dark myth, we can always oppose it to a fairy tale full of light.

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Nada Hančević Horvat conceived and wrote the major part of the first draft and approved the final version of this paper.

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Miro Jakovljević developed the idea of this paper, mentored and supervised counseling work and work on this paper, suggested the literature, reviewed the paper and approved the final version of this paper.

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