

AWARENESS INTEGRATION THEORY: AN EVIDENCE-BASED MULTI-MODALITY APPROACH WORKSHOP

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Abstract

Awareness Integration Theory (AIT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy and psyche-education approach combining ideas from cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and body-mind theories. AIT promotes self-awareness, increases self-esteem, releases past traumas, reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, and promotes a positive attitude toward implementing new skills for an effective and fulfilling life. The interventions promote the release, followed by integration through interventions that connect core beliefs, emotions, and the body. AIT enhances present-time mindfulness, clears the past, and envisions and creates a healthy future. Studies indicated a 60-76% decrease in depression, a 50- 60% decrease in anxiety, a 43% increase in self-esteem, and a 20% increase in self-efficacy after taking part in AIT approach. In this workshop, the nine principles and six intervention phases of AIT will be discussed in the lecture with combined experiential exercises. This workshop will benefit mental health professionals, coaches, and educators and offer tools for implementing the AIT in psychotherapy, counseling, research, and education. (50 + Participants)

Keywords: *Awareness Integration Theory, anxiety, evidence-based treatment, depression, psychological integration.*

1. Introduction

Awareness Integration Therapy AIT is a multi-modality psychotherapy approach that promotes clarity and positive attitudes by increasing self-awareness, releasing past traumas, unblocking psychological barriers, and envisioning a desired future. AIT encompasses interventions from prior models such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT), Humanistic and Existential psychotherapy, Solution Focused Therapy, Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT), Mindfulness, and Trauma-informed approaches. AIT combines these well-established interventions into a single efficient, open-structured model that embraces all aspects of the human experience to maximize efficiency and produce long-term outcomes. Studies indicated a 60-76% decrease in depression, a 50- 60% decrease in anxiety, a 43% increase in self-esteem, and a 20% increase in self-efficacy after taking part in AIT approach (Zeine, 2016).

AIT has an advantage over other psychotherapy approaches since it is a comprehensive model. It incorporates cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral factors as they develop a trajectory leading to their construction of future fulfillment in life, in addition to helping the client deal with the past and the present. AIT differs from previous models in that it focuses on dismantling false core ideas a person has allocated to herself or others. The person's identity, previously concentrated on trauma, is shifted. Every area of the client's life is infused with neutral or constructive functional concepts and attitudes. Instead of just disputing beliefs, AIT dismantles the selected and assigned core beliefs to prevent the trigger from being activated by challenging or replacing them with adaptive surface ideas, emotions, and actions. As a result, the client adopts a healthy persona and enjoys long-term changes (Zeine, 2023).

2. 9 Principles of the Awareness Integration Therapy

1) Reality is the observer's or perceiver's experience. Every human observes/perceives/creates reality based on their current state of being beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. Human beings are thus co-creators of their universe.

2) Every human being has the capacity and potential to gain the skills required for a fulfilling, joyful, functional, and successful life.

3) Physical and psychological development, personal experiences, and imitation of parents, teachers, peers, media, and society all contribute to skills acquisition.

4) The human mind interprets and produces meaning for all external inputs internally, resulting in a subjective reality that may differ from actual occurrences and other people's realities. One builds formulas, beliefs, and personal identities that relate to oneself, others, and the cosmos through the imagined reality.

5) Humans preserve their experiences cognitively, emotionally, and physically. The unintegrated experiences are waiting to be integrated. Negative core beliefs, both the feelings they cause and the location of the body experiencing the emotions at the time of the original incident, reappear in automatic thought patterns regularly. These negative fundamental beliefs foster a survival-oriented attitude. This attitude is prompted by an occurrence and results in an outcome that prevents the individual from obtaining optimal performance.

6) Neutral and positive attitudes, beliefs, and emotions can be experienced as the unintegrated belief-emotion-body state is attended to, released, and integrated into the system. The human organism has a self-organizing and self-management mechanism that keeps the system balanced and maintains a homeostatic condition. If this process is overburdened, compartmentalization temporarily restores the system to balance. If these compartmentalized states are merged back into the overall system, the system will be in balance in the long run. As a result, when a traumatic memory is accessible and the system is activated, the information is sent to an adaptive resolution and then integrated.

7) Through self-awareness, integration of one's experiences, and the formation of conscious choices about beliefs, emotions, and behaviors, one can choose a positive attitude to develop a new, positive reality and, as a result, achieve the desired results.

8) In a neutral and positive environment, new skills can be learned and practiced, improving life's capacities, experiences, outcomes, and relationships.

9) Conscious intentionality and picturing a desired result, together with excellent planning and timed action plans, increase the likelihood of achieving the intended results in all areas of life (Zarbakhsh & Zeine, 2023).

3. Six-phase AIT intervention

Phase I - this intervention phase aims to raise client awareness of how their perceptions, mental processes, emotions, and behaviors relate to their external surroundings and how those attitudes affect their day-to-day existence. Among the questions being asked at this level are: What comes to mind when you think about (someone or a particular life idea)? How do you feel about (people or ideas in a specific area of life)? How do you interact with (individuals or concepts in a specific area of life)? How does your attitude toward (individuals or ideas in a specific area of life) impact your life and the lives of others?

Phase II's three goals are as follows: To A) Increase the client's awareness of how they project other people's thoughts and feelings toward them; B) Improve the client's capacity to observe how other people behave toward them and the meanings they attribute to that behavior; and C) Identify how these constructs affect the client's life. The following queries are included in this phase: What do other people think of you? What do you think people think of you? What activities do you see from others, and what meaning do you attribute to these actions? How do your assumptions affect your life and the lives of others?

Phase III aims to raise client awareness of their ideas, feelings, and behaviors regarding their identity in each area and how their identity interacts with and reacts to these many areas. The following questions are posed: What are your feelings about yourself in this area? How do you see yourself in this situation? What is your attitude toward yourself? And what about your attitude toward yourself?

Phase IV directs the experience of connecting thoughts, formulae, and schemas with emotions and the physical parts that preserve and reflect powerful emotions. This procedure is required when the client discovers a negative core belief about themselves or the world with a strong emotional charge. In this phase, the core belief is linked to the emotion held in the body and the associated memory that initiated the belief, releasing negative core beliefs, hidden intentions, shadows, and emotions locked in

the body. This technique also makes one aware of one's ability to be with, tolerate, and manage emotions successfully.

Phase V intends to commit to living a desired life by thinking, feeling, acting on new and selected values and developing a healthy, workable attitude and identity. As a result of this new commitment, short- and long-term goals are set, dates are set, and detailed action plans are developed to accomplish the desired result. At this point, the therapist will identify which abilities the client has mastered and which still need to be developed.

Phase VI attempts to develop a long-term framework that will serve as a feedback loop to ensure the continuation of the action plans and the desired and actualized results. Visual collages, audio recordings, and symbolic rituals are all examples of form (Zarbaksh & Zeine, 2023).

AIT seeks to uncover and integrate the fragmented components of the "Self" caused by upbringing or psychological traumas, heal the past, envision the future, and consciously live in the present time. This complex process involves becoming conscious of negative thoughts and damaging mental and emotional coping mechanisms established in one's fundamental beliefs and replacing them with constructive, functional, and positive conceptions (Zeine, 2021).

References

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