

Transition Domain: Psychological Well-being



Explanation of Psychological Well-Being

Transition Domain

We have learned, mostly from Alfred Adler, that what we need most is to feel secure in our self-esteem.
(Ernest Becker)

Welcome to the third transition domain! The first domain was Physical Well-Being and the second was Emotional and Social Well-Being. Both were presented as related to Maslow's basic needs to survive and to belong (e.g., bonding, connecting). With the Psychological Well-Being domain, we move up to the **psychological need** to achieve and be recognized for that achievement (e.g., esteem and worth).¹ This area of need becomes intense during the transition period because it involves the **quest to be held in high esteem by others and oneself**. Also, the drive to satisfy this need and to deal with the many complex challenges to doing so account for some perplexing psychological difficulties or disturbances.² Not least among these challenges is knowledge of self and a firm sense of identity. Young people who feel that they are stuck on a "road to nowhere" and won't "amount to much" in terms of being a productive, successful person become deeply insecure in their self-esteem. They also become vulnerable to mental health difficulties.³

Psychological Needs

Psychological needs are higher kinds of needs and more difficult to understand. For example, the need to achieve may seem simple on its face. But upon closer examination, research tells us that if one's achievements are not connected to one's interests and passions (e.g., identity), one's success will "feel empty" (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Drug use is one way of dealing with this "emptiness." In this vein, this section presents three challenges that are interrelated: identity, productivity (e.g., achievement), and substance use (which can be related to difficulties in identity,⁴ especially among young people).



Much of what you will deal with regarding this domain is the young person's experience of their psychological needs and motivations being blocked or thwarted, an experience called

¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, see "Part III: The Struggle for Recognition," Harper Collins, 2002; Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, see Introduction: Human Nature the Heroic, Simon & Schuster, 1973

² R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, Penguin Books, 1965; C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, Mentor Books, 1957

³ Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, Basic Books, 1980

⁴ Luigi Zoja, *Drugs, Addiction and Initiation: The Modern Search for Ritual*, Sigo Press, 1989

“psychological need frustration.”⁵ At times this can look like a spoiled young person that needs to quit being so picky and needs to learn to be happy with what they’ve done. But at a deeper level, frustrated psychological needs and motivations contribute to psychological disturbances or disorders.⁶ It is important to not only address symptoms of these disturbances, but also find ways to help the young person live their best lives in truth to who they are or feel themselves to be.

Logical-Rational Intelligence:

Our Practices Bolster It and Helps It Synchronize with Other Intelligences

The intelligence most directly associated with psychological well-being needs is logical-rational intelligence. This intelligence is about getting things done, figuring things out, setting goals and achieving them. One of the most difficult achievements for young people is figuring out who they are, which is called “identity achievement.” This takes us to our first challenge.

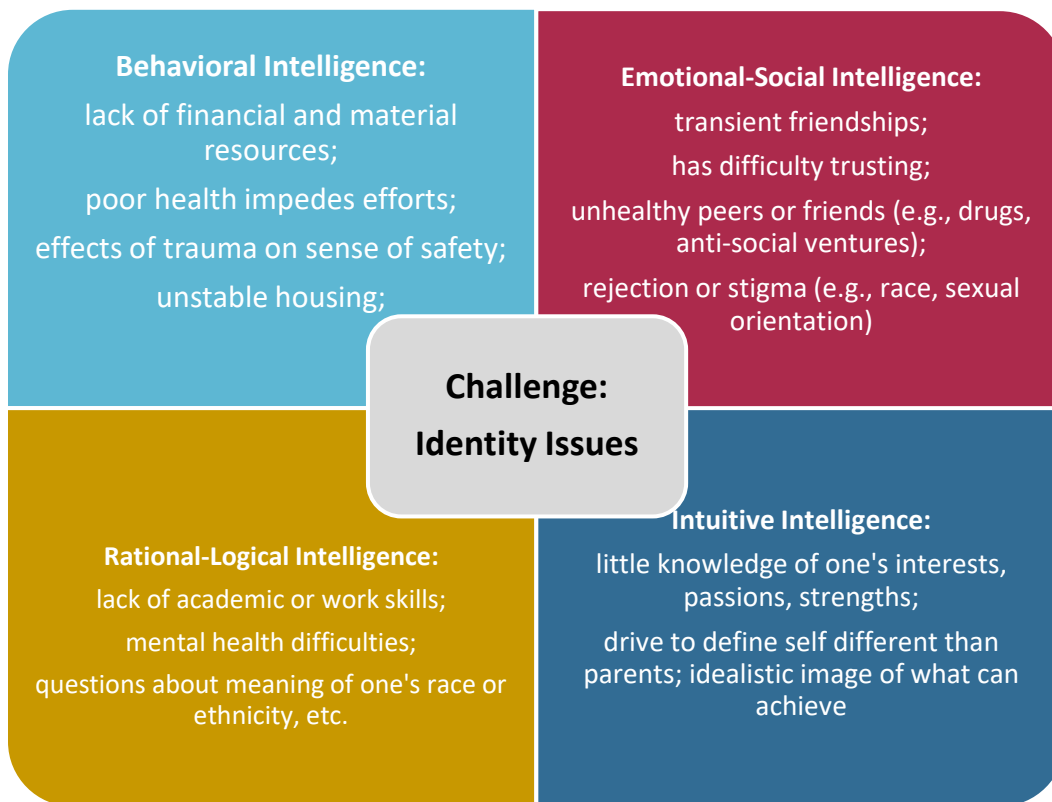
⁵ Vansteenkiste and Ryan, “On Psychological Growth and Vulnerability: Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Need Frustration as a Unifying Principle,” *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 2013, Vol. 23, No. 3

⁶ Marshall L. Silverstein, *Disorders of the Self: A Personality-Guided Approach*, United Book Press, 2007; Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, “A Theory of Metamotivation,” Viking Press, 1971; Roberto Assagioli, *Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances*, 1961; Kazimierz Dabrowski, *Positive Disintegration*, 1964, 2016

Transition Challenge: Identity Issues

What Transition Difficulties May Look Like; Behaviors and Situations You May See

Multiple intelligences come into play with every challenge in every transition domain. Although intelligences may often be presented in a sequential fashion, in actual life they optimally synchronize. Various ways in which behavioral and situational difficulties with the supportive relationships challenge manifest themselves are shown below in relation the intelligence most closely associated with the behaviors or most likely needed to address the situations.



Some Things You Can Do to Engage Young People to Support Their Response to Supportive Relationships Challenge

- Partner with young person; elicit concerns and aspirations; focus on transition domain-specific needs; promote support from family, peers, etc.
- Supports developmental meta-tasks of self-exploration and self-discovery.

Some Engaging Practices (Formative Experiences)	Effects on Executive Function	Mental Health Services and Other Practices to Consider for Supporting the Engaging Practices	Outcomes/Results (Functioning)
1. Build relationship with young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports attentional control meta-skill. ▪ Involves using/developing executive skills of self-awareness and selective attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for exploring interests while providing a “safety net” for their experiences (Link to resource on “scaffolding theory and practices”) ▪ Motivational Interviewing (Link to Motivational Interviewing Resource) ▪ Framework for Effectively Partnering With Young People (Annie E. Casey Foundation) (Link to this 8-Page Resource) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced feelings of hopelessness (Link to Trait Hope Scale Instrument)
2. Support explorations to discover what they like, interested in, passionate about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involves using/developing executive skills of prioritizing and meta-cognition (ability to stand back and look at oneself in a situation; ability to think about one’s thinking) 		
3. If indicated, engage young person in open conversations about race, culture, gender, and sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports planning meta-skill ▪ Involves using/developing executive skills concentration (ability to maintain focus on what’s important) and goal-setting 		

Some Things You Can Do to Equip Young People to Support Their Response to Supportive Relationships Challenge

- Build skills for developmental tasks and recovery; collaborate with developmentally appropriate services for support of individualized plan of care.
- Supports developmental meta-task of self-efficacy (i.e., belief in ability to succeed and initiating action to do so).

Some Equipping Practices (Formative Experiences)	Effects on Executive Function	Mental Health Services and Other Practices to Consider for Supporting the Equipping Practices	Outcomes/Results (Functioning)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Assist young person in identifying their Sparks (e.g., interests, talents, qualities) 5. Expose young person to different ideas and identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports behavior activation meta-skill. ▪ Involves using/developing executive skills of decision making, problem-solving, and self-initiation (ability to start or begin by oneself) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (Link to resource on Sparks or identifying one’s interests, talents qualities) ▪ (Link to resource on effective trauma therapy approach) ▪ For self-care managing effects of trauma: Link to CBT Self-Help Strategies resource ▪ Peer Support or Mentor (Link to Peer Support Specialist resource) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased knowledge of self ▪ Increased acceptance of self
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Trauma Therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involves using/developing executive skills above as well as self-initiation (ability to act independently when it’s time to do something) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Educate regarding mental health and successful people living with mental health concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports behavior control meta-skill. ▪ Involves using/developing executive skill of emotion regulation (ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses) 		

Some Things You Can Do to Empower Young People to Support Their Response to Supportive Relationships Challenge

- Establish conditions for self-determined goal-attainment, and well-being; advocate as needed to reduce barriers to resources and opportunities.
- Supports developmental meta-task of self-realization (i.e., steady progress toward becoming one’s ideal self).

Some Empowering Practices (Formative Experiences)	Effects on Executive Function	Mental Health Services and Other Practices to Consider for Supporting the Empowering Practices	Outcomes/Results (Functioning)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Facilitate young person identifying genuine interests 9. Assist young person with describing an ideal future self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports behavior control meta-skill. ▪ Involves using/developing executive skill of self-directedness (ability to regulate and adapt behavior to demands of a situation in order to achieve goals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structured approach to assisting young person with forming an ideal self (Link to resources on Vision Boards and Possible Selves) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased self-determination (Link to SDT Website) (Link to Self-Determination Scale)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Recognize specific gains or successes; monitor and note progress 11. Provide support when there are setbacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports behavior maintenance meta-skill. ▪ Involves using/developing executive skill of goal-directed persistence (ability to follow through to completing goal attainment) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved positive sense of identity (Link to Modified Marcia Identity Questionnaire)