

# Spontaneous Awakening in Transpersonal Psychotherapy

Irene R. Siegel, Ph.D.  
*Huntington, New York*

**ABSTRACT:** After laying a conceptual foundation from the literature, the author explores the integration of spiritual awakening within transpersonal psychotherapy through a single case study as a client reports the internal perception of becoming luminous purple light. Although reported in psychotherapeutic practice, limited literature seems to have been devoted to this phenomenon. In this case study, psychological healing blends with spiritual awakening in a clinical setting. The consciousness of the awakened therapist is explored as an essential element to client awakening as the therapist becomes a vibrational tool of change within sacred space. Transpersonal clinical elements and intuitive therapeutic skills are described to enhance the range of tools of the therapist. Client moves from trauma (using an integrative EMDR model) to healing beyond adaptive functioning, leading to full potential and awakening of soul consciousness. Potential for further transpersonal psychotherapy research and training is presented as a multidimensional model.

**KEYWORDS:** spiritual awakening, transpersonal psychology, consciousness, transpersonal psychotherapy, mindfulness, spiritual resonance

The term *awakening* has been associated in the past with spiritual awakening as an initiate works with a trained teacher within the context of a spiritual tradition (Meher Baba, 2000; Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002). This article explores the relationship between client awakening and the consciousness of the therapist within transpersonal psychotherapy. Much has been written about the elements of transpersonal psychotherapy in which hierarchy between therapist and client is diffused, and the client is encouraged to observe and dis-identify with negative thoughts within quiet spaces of mindfulness and nonattachment as modeled by the therapist (Assagioli, 2000, 2007; Blackstone, 2006; Rodrigues & Friedman, 2013; Walsh & Vaughan, 1996), enhancing the potential for the client to engage in a transpersonal process. The experience of spontaneous awakening of the client within the context of a transpersonal psychotherapy session has not been the topic of as much attention in the transpersonal literature as has been the theoretical understanding of transpersonal psychology, or the experience of spontaneous awakening outside of the psychotherapy session.

There have been articles written about spontaneous awakening as it relates to trauma and psychological distress. Research has shown that psychological distress is one of the primary precipitators of spontaneous awakening (Morrison, 2012; Taylor, 2012). However, there has been limited literature written about spontaneous awakening that is activated within a protocol in a transpersonal psychotherapy

---

irenesiegel@me.com

Acknowledgement: This article includes content derived from the author's 2017 book, *The Sacred Path of the Therapist: Modern Healing, Ancient Wisdom, and Client Transformation*, published by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. (with permission)

Copyright © 2019 Transpersonal Institute

session (I. Siegel, 2017, 2018; White, 1994). Yet, it has been a continuous experience over many years for this author to have clients report their experience of becoming light during the silent processing of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy while they are healing their trauma. This client experience is happening simultaneously as the therapist also experiences expanded awareness. The phenomenon of clients reporting that they perceive themselves as purple light has been most common. This perception usually precipitates swift reprocessing of traumatic memory incorporated with awakening consciousness and Divine connection, giving the traumatic experience greater meaning and purpose within a spiritual context. This takes the concept of posttraumatic health, as described by Collier (2016), to a new level as the client reaches full potential beyond the healing of trauma as consciousness awakens. It is this repetitive experience of clients reporting that they perceive themselves as light within a collective field of higher awareness that has inspired this case study.

This article focuses on a therapist and client experience in therapy, during which the client reports the spontaneous experience of internally perceiving herself as becoming purple light. Accordingly, the article addresses awakening consciousness in a psychotherapy session and the subsequent change in the content and context of treatment. The experience of becoming purple light has been reported by clients to this author and other therapists who have worked within a field of expanded awareness with their clients. Under these circumstances, the client experience may be a peak experience or state of being that alters attitudes and perceptions regarding their trauma. It may (or may not) be religious, mystical, or transcendent in nature.

The client depicted in this case example was not religious or on a particular spiritual path. She did not perceive herself as interconnected with a greater cosmic whole prior to treatment and felt alone and isolated in her life. Yet, as will be described, she had a mystical and transcendent experience of internally perceiving herself as becoming purple light and connecting to a larger cosmic whole within her therapy session. This client was chosen as a case example because of her strong and ongoing response of awakening within the clinical protocol, and her willingness to have her experience shared. She uses words to try to explain her experience. These words may or may not reflect the depth of meaning of God realization based in spiritual traditions (Meher Baba, 2000), but have deep meaning for her based in her level of development. Wilber (2007) states that this type of peak experience can happen at any stage of development, but will be interpreted through the perceptions of the level of development of the individual.

The therapist has been on a spiritual path for many years, integrating spiritual practice into her life on her path of awakening. This element is important to keep in mind as it may be an important factor in the spontaneous awakening of the client, and the therapist's experience within the session as reported.

### **What is Awakening?**

The term *awakening* implies a continuum of experience where consciousness evolves from ordinary everyday perception of egoic identification based in

separation and human biological, mental and emotional functioning, to an expanded perception that can be experienced as spiritual in nature, described as mystical, or perceived as the unification with a divine presence. Buddhism refers to this range of awakening as a continuum of nondual awareness, where the illusion of separation held in the ordinary mind dissolves, leading to the experience of complete unity with the Divine and the true nature of Being is realized. Through a spiritual practice of meditation and mindful awareness one is present in each moment, nonattached to expectations or outcomes, without the differentiation of object and subject that is at the core of a sense of separation from source (Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002).

Usually an initiate seeks spiritual enlightenment leading to a process of awakening while working with a teacher of a spiritual tradition. In Wright's (2016) exploration of enlightenment from a Buddhist perspective, he reported that once an individual has the aspiration for enlightenment, it has already been attained. Enlightenment is often spoken of in terms of attributes and virtues of love and compassion that are attained through spiritual practice and the awakening of nondual awareness where the nature of the true self emerges and separation between self and object diffuses. Within a nondual state, an experience of no self or emptiness emerges and one can be filled with the essence of love (Loy, 2018).

In Tibetan Buddhism, there are historical stories about spiritual masters in the practice of Dzogchen turning into a body of light as the physical body dissolves at the end of their lives and is reabsorbed back into the light essence from which their form was created (Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002). This describes one possible evolution of the path of enlightenment. The experience of spontaneously perceiving oneself as light at lower levels of development, however, is not considered the goal of the spiritual teaching, but may still occur along the path of enlightenment.

Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan (1994) wrote about the practice of Sufism in which the initiate can consciously absorb light, and radiate light, which leads to the identification of the pulsating aura. In the next stage of practice, an all-pervading universal light converges in the heart, and the initiate experiences being light rather than identifying with the aura. This experience is an outcome of spiritual practice and internal focusing.

Transpersonal psychotherapy is not a spiritual practice. However, the benefits of using transpersonal interventions in psychotherapy that bring the client to an internal focus have been written about throughout the history of transpersonal psychology by authors such as Jung (1983), Assagioli (2007), Grof (1993), and Rodrigues and Friedman (2013). The client can develop a sense of inner peace and expanded awareness. This may motivate the client to follow a path towards greater awakening. However, a client reporting the spontaneous experience of becoming light and merging with a divine consciousness within a psychotherapy session has not been present in the psychological literature with regard to healing trauma.

In shamanism, turning within during meditation, ceremony, and ritual initiates the journey into the nonordinary reality where one may experience the connection to the forces of nature, inner teachers, and a divine cosmic source. The shaman is

considered the caretaker of the earth, and the formless nonordinary reality accessed through meditation is just as real to the shaman as the ordinary world of form (Harner, 1980; Krippner, 2005; Villoldo, 2010, 2015). A process of awakening is activated as initiates continue to work on themselves shifting awareness between the ordinary and nonordinary realities and integrating them both into everyday life. This is referred to in shamanism as *walking between the worlds*. This is different than the Tibetan Buddhist term for enlightenment - *Rigpa*, "...a premordial, pure, pristine awareness that is at once intelligent, cognizant, radiant, and always awake" (Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002, p. 48). However, there are stages along the path of awakening within which the soul can be known and the reality of a divine cosmic source can be realized beyond a hypothetical existence (Rowan, 2005). It is not learning something new, but the gradual realization of what has been dwelling within all along. The experience of trauma is known to activate the beginning of awakening as the individual is desperately seeking meaning and relief from the pain and turns within (Taylor & Egeto – Szabo, 2017). Meher Baba (2000) referred to this process as *divine desperateness*. He stated:

Divine desperateness is the beginning of spiritual awakening because it gives rise to the aspiration for God-realization. In the moment of divine desperateness, when everything seems to give way, the person decides to take any risk to ascertain what of significance to his life lies *behind* the veil. (p. 126)

This process of seeking meaning and truth following trauma may unfold with shamanic practice as well as within the practices of eastern traditions.

The shaman, as with teachers of eastern traditions, believes that we have a luminous energy field composed of light that exists and is perceivable outside of ordinary time and space. It is our life force that fuels our existence creating the multiple levels of subtle bodies that make up who we are from lifetime to lifetime and beyond. All that exists is made up of frequency and light (Villoldo, 2000). The Mother (Aurobindo & the Mother, 1990) offered the perspective of the mystic and stated:

For my consciousness the whole life upon Earth, including the human life and all its mentality, is a mass of vibrations, mostly vibrations of falsehood, ignorance and disorder, in which are more and more at work vibrations of Truth and Harmony coming from the higher regions and pushing their way through the resistance. (p. 177)

According to Sri Aurobindo (2003), the first approach to the attainment of truth and harmony is for the initiate to transform the mind into the principles of light. This requires a mastery of the nature of the soul. However, complete transformation comes as a result of radical change as one chooses to live a divine life upon Earth.

It is possible to transcend the perception of ordinary awareness during any point of development and experience a peak experience of interconnection to all living things. This is not uncommon when one is on a spiritual path of initiation where meditation, mindfulness, and ritual are part of the practice towards mastery.

In our western culture, many spiritual healing practices have been utilized in a way that is disconnected from the spiritual origin. A Buddhist perspective of mindful awareness has proven to be a successful tool in treating emotional and physical pain in a western therapeutic setting (Shonin, Gordon, & Griffiths, 2014; Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, & Potter, 2013). However, this is integrated in western medicine as a therapeutic intervention, and not as an opening to a spiritual path of awakening. Tools of shamanic healing have also been utilized with success in western culture, without the client or the practitioner being initiated into the spiritual tradition by an authentic master teacher. The case presented in this paper is an example of work with a therapist who has been initiated into the shamanic tradition for many years, and not just applying healing tools from a mundane egoic state of mind. The client discussed was not on a particular spiritual path of initiation or engaging in spiritual practice when she began treatment, but had evolved to incorporate spiritual practice as she was awakening in treatment. It raises the question of whether there is a relationship between a spontaneous awakening on the part of the client and being in therapy with a therapist who is spiritually awakened, as defined by this author below.

### **Experience of Awakening**

Although taught and written about for centuries by spiritual masters, the experience of awakening is subjective and not quantifiable beyond the expression of qualitative experience since the quality of the experience is personal and transcendent in nature. Even this verbal expression cannot adequately define the experience, as we do not have a language or reference point for that experience from an egoic perspective in our ordinary world, where subject and object are separate and distinct. Great spiritual masters such as Sri Aurobindo (2003), Sogyal Rinpoche (2002), and Meher Baba (2000) have indicated in their writing that the spoken word could not capture the essence of the transcendent experience of awakening since it is a concept far too great for the egoic mind to grasp. Each, within their own spiritual tradition, describes stages of emptying, letting go, focusing internally, and becoming one with the larger source of consciousness beyond time and space in our linear world. The next stage of awakening cannot be known until it is known.

Friedman (2015) differentiated between transcendent and nontranscendent transpersonal experiences, indicating that quantitative research offering objective proof of the concept of transcendent experience is not attainable. However valid this may be, the subjective experience of awakening to soul awareness through transcendent experiences of unity with the Divine is embedded in the belief systems of ancient spiritual and wisdom traditions, offering a level of validity to the principles of spiritual awakening.

The concept of soul awareness is used in this article to refer to an aspect of self that experiences a sense of unity with a Divine or cosmic force within expanded awareness beyond the limitations of the egoic mind. Soul awareness reflects authentic identity beyond the constructs of the personality. However, it is important to recognize that the use of the phrase may have different meaning depending upon the level of consciousness of the person using it. Wilber (2007) offers the example

of someone who has an intense inner experience of universal love and interior luminosity with a western religious connotation. He describes that “subtle realm religious experience *can occur at virtually any stage* - the magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, or integral – but, in each case, it will be *interpreted* according to the limiting principles of that stage” (Wilber, 2007, p. 91). It may commonly be referred to as higher consciousness or higher self, which is interpreted through the ego. This may be considered as a false sense of self, but may still be the beginning of awakening. The potential exists for the process of awakening to unfold in psychotherapy as transcendent or mystical experiences integrate into the process, bringing about greater consciousness within stages of development as depicted in eastern spiritual teachings. For some, this may be a path towards enlightenment and the recognition of the authentic self. Meher Baba (2000) stated that when a path of spiritual awakening unfolds, and true enlightenment is achieved, then the soul is just the soul, interconnected to all within a divine cosmic consciousness.

The term spiritual awakening, as addressed in this article, is not linked to the teachings or tenets of a particular religion, lineage, or spiritual tradition. This does not preclude the fact that those who worship through religion may have mystical experiences within a religious context. The term spiritual awakening is being used to reflect the experience of the transcendent in the development of soul awareness and authentic identity. MacDonald (2009) stated, “insofar as spirituality relates to the ‘transcendent,’ then spiritual identity involves how one experiences and integrates their sense of relationship to the transcendent into their egoic self-sense” (p. 90). This philosophy has its place within transpersonal psychology.

### **Awakening Within Transpersonal Psychology**

Transpersonal psychology is acknowledged as a full spectrum model that takes the individual from dysfunctional maladaptive patterns to a range of normal functioning, as within conventional psychology, but then goes beyond to help the client achieve their fullest potential (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 2011). Spirituality is a central component, and not just an element of what makes up the whole person. An important implication for transpersonal psychotherapy is to expand on current psychotherapy modalities by adding a multidimensional transpersonal protocol engaging both therapist and client in potential transcendent experiences of awakening to meet that goal.

The awakening process can be woven into psychotherapy itself, expanding consciousness and changing the context and content of treatment (Vaughan, 1993). It is important to explore how spiritual awakening plays a role in the psychotherapy process for both therapist and client, resulting in swiftly healing trauma and awakening consciousness.

White (1994) introduced the concept of Exceptional Human Experiences (EHEs) that may be mystical or unifying within the psychotherapy process. The term EHEs defines a range of spontaneous unusual experiences, often beyond ordinary human consciousness. These experiences fall within the five major classes of mystical/unitive, psychic, encounter, unusual death-related, and exceptional normal

experiences. According to White, working with EHEs as they emerge in psychotherapy can be transformative, and is a foundation of transpersonal psychotherapy.

Within the transpersonal psychotherapy session, the category of mystical/unitive EHEs are most often observed, as the client experiences unity with a divine force. Peak, nonordinary, transpersonal, and transcendent experiences would fall under this category. The recognition of EHEs takes us out of a model of psychology based in pathology and normal functioning, and into a full-spectrum psychology where immanent and transcendent dimensions of human experience are viewed as consciousness evolves, and the fulfillment of our highest potential as human beings is attained. This article focuses on the experience of spontaneous awakening to the internal luminous light associated with soul awareness within transpersonal psychotherapy, as the therapist remains focused inward and open to a connection to a divine source and the client reports turning into light during silent internal processing.

### Case Example

#### Therapist

The therapist is certified in EMDR therapy, with a strong background in shamanism. EMDR therapy is based on an adaptive information processing (AIP) model. The EMDR therapist explores emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and sensory experiences that theoretically identify memory networks related to unprocessed trauma. The 8 stage protocol of EMDR therapy incorporates the use of bilateral stimulation (BLS) to reprocess traumatic memory to an adaptive resolution by psychologically integrating the information emotionally, cognitively, and somatically (Hensley, 2016; Shapiro, 2012, 2018). Although therapists were originally taught to use eye movement for BLS, there are a variety of choices currently utilized in the creation of BLS.

The goals of EMDR therapy within the AIP model include putting the past in the past, achieving current adaptive functioning, and creating a future template in which the client is free to create adaptive resolutions to stressful situations. EMDR therapy incorporates silent spaces in the therapy session as the client processes.

The therapist teaches shamanic meditation and healing practices outside of psychotherapy, but includes shamanic healing practices within the silent spaces of psychotherapy sessions. The therapist is also a teacher of the program *Awakening Your Light Body*, as developed by Sanaya Roman and Duane Packer (2009). She has learned to find a resonance of frequency on a soul level with a Divine source, and to open the energy centers within her energy field. These energy centers are in a similar location as the chakras, as depicted in Hindu tradition, but resonate at a higher frequency closer to a soul level, which takes awareness beyond linear time and space, as taught within the program.

The therapist has learned to connect to the forces of nature, the earth, and the greater cosmic whole of a Divine nature. She uses her inner intuitive senses of vision, hearing, kinesthetic and sensory experiences, and deep intuitive knowing to track the energy in the shared energy field between herself, the client, earth, and the divine. Although therapeutic goals are agreed upon by both therapist and client, the therapist does not set an intention during silent processing to make anything happen or to change the client in any way. Through the imagination, the therapist's inner senses are used as intuitive feedback mechanisms to determine interventions in a nonlinear process of assessment and healing. This therapist sits quietly during client processing, aligning to her own spiritual connection and using her inner senses to track the energy flow in the shared field. Her energy field expands, as she flows with her connection to a Divine source, integrating a transpersonal approach into her EMDR practice. It is within the silent moments of internal focusing that the therapist is no longer *doing* therapy, but *becomes one* with the therapy within a flow of interconnection to all around her. She is aware of resonating with a higher frequency of energy that emanates into the shared energy field.

### **Client**

The client is a young woman in her early 30s. She believed she was not lovable, and experienced early emotional abuse and neglect by her father and mother. Although not on a spiritual path, she believed in the concept of the soul, and that soul awareness represented a world beyond the physical that she wished she could attain. She did not feel as if she belonged in her everyday world and felt deep despair and disconnection from those around her. This client had been in therapy with a previous therapist and was well prepared to go deeper into her trauma work. We began EMDR therapy immediately with phase one of history taking. The session below integrates preparation and resourcing (phase 2) with assessment (phase 3), reprocessing of traumatic memory (phase 4), installation of positive cognitions (phase 5), and body scan (phase 6). The following session took place approximately three months into treatment, during which time we had already begun to reprocess trauma.

### **Session**

Sound alternating from ear to ear, using headsets and an mp3 player with bilateral music was the BLS of choice, as part of the standard EMDR protocol. The client chose to close her eyes during processing of an early distressing memory and its accompanying beliefs, emotions, and body sensations. As a result of the trauma, the client believed she was unlovable. Her subjective units of distress (SUD) was measured on a continuum from zero with no distress, to ten, being the most stressful. Her SUD was 10. She identified a desire to learn to believe that she was lovable.

Inner senses were awakened as the client relaxed into a deep experience of expanded awareness. Deep breathing and imagery of a safe space permeated the experience. The client was guided to use her inner vision to scan her body, and



notice how her body held the negative cognition (NC) of “I’m not lovable.” She reported sensing a “hole in her heart.” As she brought her awareness into that sensory and visual experience, she felt a deep despair and loneliness that kept her feeling ungrounded and detached from her life, as if she was just “going through the motions.” The therapist asked her to identify the earliest memory of realizing that the hole was created. The client identified a time in her past when she learned, “I don’t exist.” This was an embodied experience with a high level of emotional disturbance. The client was guided to shift her awareness internally, follow her breath, and imagine a safe space to allow her to draw on an inner resource where she felt safe and could self-soothe for emotional regulation.

The therapist also maintained an inner focus and felt an expansion beyond the constraints of her physical body. She envisioned herself surrounded by earth energy and envisioned a spiritual light from above, maintaining her own connection to the Divine. The following transcription is an excerpt from an EMDR therapy session.

*The therapist perceives light filling the room, and her body tingles, which indicates to her that life force energy is running up her spine. Her own energy field feels expansive as she connects to a divine force. The therapist opens to her light body, her energy body that extends beyond the physical, emotional, and mental bodies, to multidimensional awareness, as she has been taught by her spiritual teachers. She silently journeys into the nonordinary reality to perceive her client through her inner intuitive senses, and to maintain a steady and centered flow of higher frequency of energy and light within the shared field.*

*The client is focused internally on the targeted memory of early trauma. She chooses to close her eyes during BLS, and the therapist does the same. The therapist senses the field expanding. She perceives brighter light filling the room with her inner vision. She is not doing anything to the client. She is holding her awareness on her centered position filled with interconnection to all around her. She begins to sense her client as expanding light, as the client is silently processing early trauma with BLS. The shared field of energy changes for the therapist from one that feels like a rocky sea that the therapist needs to navigate, to one that feels like a calm lake with gentle movement as she and the client are attuned to one another. The therapist is aware of her internal guidance and her connection to the earth and the forces of nature. These are major archetypes silently called upon in the Shamanic tradition.*

*Using her inner senses as intuitive feedback mechanisms, the therapist tracks the flow of the client’s energy field and senses the patterns and imbalances reflecting how the trauma is held there. As the energy in the field aligns between therapist and client, the therapist senses the shared resonance and balance and flow of the energy of the client. The therapist intervenes after the shift into resonance, and not before, allowing for the completion of client processing. The therapist asks the client to share her process once the therapist senses the calm and flowing resonance in the energy between them, steeped in the frequency of what she perceives as Divine connection. The therapist continues to hold awareness on her own resonance to a larger spiritual force, as she asks the client, “What is coming up for you?”*

*Both therapist and client open their eyes. The client shares that she had a revelation. “I perceived myself as radiant light, a purple light, expanding in all directions. I felt as one with all around me. There was a cord of energy that went from my heart, out into the universe. I felt as if I connected to a lost part of myself.” “Let’s go with that,” the therapist says.*

*Once again, the client goes into internal silent processing with BLS with her eyes closed. The therapist closes her eyes to track the flow of energy and light, flowing with the client within these higher ranges of awareness. The client opens her eyes and says, “I feel as if it is my soul.” The client was guided by the therapist to interact with this lost part of her soul. The therapist was a witness of the process, sharing in the field of interconnected coherent energy as a gentle guide. The client’s light became brighter to the therapist during the silent processing, and the therapist experiences her light expanding as well. She continues to hold her inner focus steady on her own soul connection, regardless of the direction that the client takes in her processing. As she senses the energy shift within the client, the therapist then asks the client once again to describe what was coming up for her during silent processing. The client opens her eyes wide and feels a strong visceral sense of an immediate shift and a healing of her heart. She feels part of universal connection and love. The client states, “I embraced this lost soul part and the lost soul part embedded herself into my heart. As a purple light, I expanded beyond my physical body and felt connected to my soul. I was connected to everything around me.” Her negative belief changed from her initial belief of “I am not lovable,” to the positive belief of “I am lovable.” As therapist and client continued to submerge periodically during the session into the quiet experience of internal processing with BLS, the client reports “I am love,” to ultimately “I am.”*

*The therapist continues to use BLS for the installation of these positive and expanded perceptions. As she gently guides the client into her body and her energy field, the client’s perceptions continue to expand as her inner wisdom emerges. She says, “My light continued to get brighter, and I can see that my trauma was part of my spiritual path. It was necessary to get me HERE.”*

The client’s process of awakening accelerated from this point on in treatment. The psychotherapy became a multidimensional experience for both client and therapist, moving back and forth from egoic to expanded awareness within a shared field of coherent energy, within the standard EMDR protocol. The client’s peak experiences that emerged in subsequent therapy sessions motivated her to continue on her spiritual path by taking meditation classes after being in treatment for approximately six months.

This client developed a stable pattern of consciousness over time with what she termed as *soul awareness*, which penetrated her ordinarily reality. As her own inner wisdom emerged, the client learned not only to exist and feel lovable, but also to evolve beyond healing the trauma to be fully present in her world and in her body and to continue striving to live her life with purpose and mission reflective of her highest potential. She eventually studied the program *Awakening Your Light Body* and was able to choose to resonate within the frequency of her light body during her

EMDR processing while feeling more grounded and present in the process and in her life. She continued to report that her heart became full as her perceptions of herself and her relationship to her world changed. She evolved developmentally, seeing herself as part of a greater whole while at the same time focused on attainable and satisfying goals within her life. The perception of becoming light continued as she practiced it in an integrated way within her meditation program.

The client continued in therapy for a total of two years, during which time she became grounded and stable, and was able to reach greater potential. The context of therapy changed from healing trauma to expanding her awareness and awakening to a higher perception about herself and her purpose in her life, while still reprocessing traumas that now had meaning for spiritual growth.

### **Discussion**

The client's experience of spontaneous awakening began as a peak experience within an EMDR therapy session. This illuminating experience may emerge in session for a client as the result of accessing an expanded state of awareness, but may be fleeting and momentary. It does not necessarily indicate an organizational shift in the psyche of the individual. However, structures of consciousness, reflecting integrated stable patterns of consciousness awareness, can be formed over time. As the therapist accepts and reinforces the perceptions and experiences inherent in soul awareness, the client has the potential to move through psychospiritual developmental lines as depicted by Wilber's (2000) Four Quadrant Model.

In this case example, the therapist was aware of the use of her intuitive senses, as she tracked energy flow and information within the therapeutic container. She sensed attunement and resonance with the client, and was sensitive to the shifts within the shared energy field while holding an awareness of a divine connection. Her knowledge of the shamanic practices of soul retrieval and distance healing played a role in her understanding of the process within the expanded experience of nonordinary reality. Although not performed in the traditional sense, the therapist was able to help the client retrieve a lost part of her own soul, as depicted in Shamanic tradition. The shaman believes that when we are traumatized, a part of our soul becomes lost. This is not just symbolic of an ego state, but is literally a part of the soul. The therapist was able to guide the client to retrieve this soul part, clearing the path for greater healing, flow of life force, awakening, and integrated wholeness. The client was able to perceive herself as an expanded light during this process, which was the beginning of her spiritual path. This awareness quickly took her through the stages of EMDR protocol, from identifying trauma and negative beliefs, emotions, and sensory experiences, to a swift emergence of spiritual wisdom and changing perceptions about the life purpose of her trauma. Her experience of becoming a luminous purple light was a resource that not only soothed her, but also transformed her within an instant of the experience. It is this innate and deep experience of Self that can heal and create greater ego integration of dissociative internal parts, and is always available as an integrating life force (Schwartz, 2013; White, 1997).

As within spiritual traditions, the self perception of becoming a luminous light is not necessarily the end goal in therapy. For some clients it may remain as a fleeting peak EHE with heightened awareness of a connection to a greater cosmic whole. That moment can change awareness, but not necessarily lead to greater spiritual awakening. However, the client presented had experienced an awareness that she wanted to build upon, in a quest for awakening beyond what had happened in the session. The experience of becoming light and her belief of becoming “I am” was the beginning of a new chapter in her life of seeking spiritual awakening. Over time, her awareness of her true essence and her connection to the Divine became a stable state of consciousness. The meaning of her trauma changed as she saw it as a necessary event to show her a spiritual path. An organizational shift within the client’s psyche emerged as she moved along developmental lines where her view of her connection to the Divine became an integrated aspect of her identity, changing her world view and her place within the world.

### **Becoming Light**

The reported spontaneous experience of the client turning into light has become a frequent experience for this therapist, and reported by other transpersonal psychotherapists that have studied the tools and techniques utilized within the case example. It is not possible to state a direct cause and effect for this phenomenon, but there may be contributing factors that lie in the teachings of spiritual and wisdom traditions, as well as in modern western science.

In spiritual traditions, teachers assist the individual on their journey to awakening. The belief is that all is energy (Aurobindo & the Mother, 1990; Khan, 1961, 1964, Witteveen, 1997). The master teacher provides a component of frequency, attuning to the frequency of the Divine. Attunement is “a state of being tuned to a certain pitch, or being in harmony with a certain note” (Khan, 1994, p. 194). The energy held in the subtle field of the initiate can be transformed as the teacher resonates with that initiate, holding a frequency of higher consciousness and soul awareness, connected within one unified energy field. Khan (1961) believed that when a higher frequency is in the presence of a lower frequency, then the lower resonates with the higher. This is the basis of homeopathy and may explain the transformation of lower frequency emotions of distress to higher frequency emotions of love and acceptance in the presence of the transmission of love. It is plausible to suspect that the spiritual frequency cultivated by the therapist contributes to the frequency within the shared field between therapist and client as depicted in the teachings of spiritual traditions.

Modern science has revealed research results compatible to the beliefs of spiritual and wisdom traditions, acknowledging a shared energy field that extends beyond the physical body and connected to all living things (Laszlo, 2009; McTaggart, 2002), such as Laszlo’s acknowledgement of the *bio-field*. According to Tiller (1997), and McCraty (2003), there is a radiation of energy that is transmitted outwards from the heart, and if the receiver is responsive to the range of frequency, then a heart bond will form and biological activity will be reflective of the higher frequency and transmit its own heart signal, creating a bond between the

broadcaster and the receiver. Physiological coherence and synchronization among systems within the body increases for optimal health (McCraty, 2003; McCraty & Childre, 2010).

Neuroscientists such as McCraty and Childre (2010), Siegel (2010), and Tiller (1997), support the belief akin to spiritual traditions that we affect one another within a shared field environment. This lends credence to the possibility that an awakened therapist, although not a spiritual master, influences the shared field between therapist and client, and contributes to a coherent vibrational environment supportive of client healing and awakening. This interconnection is relational, within a safe therapeutic environment. Rodrigues and Friedman (2013) refer to this as a healing field, “. . .where at least during some of the time both therapist and patient may be in a modified state of consciousness and exchange information and energy that can include lower consciousness, normal consciousness, and higher consciousness” (p. 582). Cortright (2007) acknowledged that within this shared field, client awakening can be activated through the resonance with the therapist, and the transmission of subtle energy as in healing practices of Eastern traditions. This philosophy supports the premise that the consciousness of the therapist plays an important role as the tool for change and transformation, and that transpersonal psychotherapy can span levels of consciousness for both therapist and client.

### **What Determines an Awakened Therapist?**

Research and transpersonal literature indicate that the transpersonal therapist has transpersonal qualities of compassion, empathy, and acceptance for the client’s process (Blackstone, 2006; Butlein, 2006; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Phelon, 2001; I. Siegel, 2013). However, it is this author’s assumption that awakened therapists take their own development further through meditation and spiritual development and have explored higher levels of spiritual dimensions than other transpersonal or nontranspersonal therapists. This transpersonal process on the part of the therapist may contribute unseen factors to the process of client awakening within the psychotherapy setting.

The elements of an awakened therapist emerged from an exploratory heuristic study conducted by this author. Participant consensus revealed that an awakened therapist is not a guru who has arrived at enlightenment. The therapist is one who is in a process of spiritual awakening, meditates, and lives a transpersonal life where soul perception begins to integrate with everyday perception. World views begin to reflect perceptions of unity and wholeness where each part of life is recognized as a reflection of the greater whole and of the elements that exist in the consciousness of the human species and all living things, akin to Wilber’s (2000) integral self. Therapists who consider themselves to be in the process of awakening experience a connection to the Divine, which is always within them. As the therapist attunes to the client, the client feels seen with unconditional acceptance (I. Siegel, 2013).

The awakened transpersonal therapist fluidly shifts states of awareness from the ordinary reality of egoic perception to the nonordinary reality of inner realms such as in shamanic practice. Welwood (2003) referred to this *double vision* as creating a

balance of perception between the freedom of transcendent truth and the limitations of the immanent truth of the human domain. The therapist can see into the ordinary world through egoic perception and shift awareness to experience the nonordinary reality. Similar to the Buddhist perception of nonduality, boundaries between subject and object are diffused and ego identification is diminished as soul awareness becomes the reference point for perception, beliefs, emotional responses, and action choices.

Therapists on the path of awakening report that there is an attunement to the Divine, which resonates into their field and all about them. The term *higher self* is used to refer to the aspect of themselves that awakens to soul awareness and integrates with their egoic thought process, bridging the inner and outer realities (I. Siegel, 2013; Walach, 2005). These therapists perceive that *spiritual resonance* is based in resonance with a higher frequency of soul consciousness and they sense it as vibrational in nature, always present in their field. It is an embodied experience, awakening all senses, that is always in them because of their dedication to their spiritual path and process of awakening.

The client has the choice to resonate with that range of frequency, dis-identifying with ego, changing perception, and transforming within the unified experience of cosmic wholeness. The therapist facilitates an experience where the client's attachment shifts from the therapist to the higher part of themselves connected to a larger cosmic whole. The therapist is not seen as a guru because there is not an overt action on the part of the therapist to warrant that perception. The therapist is not a spiritual teacher. The awakened therapist, "is focused on making the ego receptive to the soul and on lining up the individual consciousness to the interconnection with the universal will" (Gilot, 2003, p. 79). As the therapist learns to achieve this, then spiritual resonance integrates naturally into the therapy session as the therapist stays in a clear and expanded range of higher soul frequency.

That expanded range may be referred to as an altered state of awareness that can be entered into by both therapist and client. Each therapist who chooses a path of awakening has a way to enter internal focused concentration, where Divine nature reveals itself. This can be done through imagery, meditation, focused concentration, deep breathing, and body movement (such as Tai Chi). The therapist is not necessarily in a deep meditative state. The therapist is present on various levels of awareness simultaneously, or may fluctuate attention fluidly from inner to outer focus, egoic to expanded awareness. Regardless of whether the therapist is trained to journey into the nonordinary reality of the shaman, or has explored the ranges of nondual awareness of Buddhism, the nondual action of nonaction is taken, free from objective intention, and empty without dualist awareness (Loy, 1997).

This expanded range of awareness becomes accessible to the client if the client chooses to resonate with the therapist within that range of frequency as it permeates the shared energy field. The shared field becomes a flowing and coherent environment of energy and information exchange, where therapist and client are just *being* together (Blackstone, 2006; Cortright, 2007; Krystal, 2003; Krystal et al., 2002; Siegel, D., 2010; Siegel, I., 2013, 2017). This has the potential to create the

vibrational environment for what the shaman would consider distance, or nonlocal healing, as the therapist sits across the room from the client.

### **The Inner Journey Within a Shared Field**

Achterberg et al. (2005) and Braud (2003a; 2003b) researched nonlocal distance healing influence through intention and the use of the inner senses of the imagination, as done in shamanism. Their results yielded enough validity to give credence to the premise. This is at the core of shamanic healing. It is through the internal focus of imagination that sacred moments are created and the experienced shaman can *view* the recipient of their focused healing attention and sense a flow or blockage of energy. As an initiate follows a spiritual path, awakening unfolds. Within the spiritual tradition, the validity is not questioned.

According to Winkelman (2013), “Shamanistic activities induce modifications of consciousness that elicit natural processes of integration of the major brain strata, producing a global coherence of the operations of various brain systems and their functions expressed and experienced in visual symbols” (p.94). As greater coherence is achieved, then perception expands and maladaptive patterns are transformed (McCraty & Childre, 2010). Spiritual traditions would focus on the role of frequency in this process of increased coherence and expanded awareness (Aurobindo & the Mother, 1990; Khan, 1961). Change the higher ranges of energy patterns in the field, and it transmutes the lower denser patterns from the belief systems, to the emotions, and to the body memory. Both Western science (Newberg & Waldman, 2017; D. Siegel, 2010, 2011) and spiritual traditions support the premise that it is within the silent spaces of inner focus that sacred moments in therapy can be created and have transformational value (Miller, 2014; Pargament, Lomax, McGee, & Fang, 2014), unattached to ego or expectation, within a shared field.

Blackstone (2006) referred to this shared field as an intersubjective field, where therapist and client enter a state of nondual awareness within a shared experience, as within Buddhist philosophy. Krystal (2002, 2003) worked within expanded states of consciousness, allowing the spaciousness within herself to facilitate an intuitive and nonlinear process with her clients within an EMDR protocol. “The nondual approach to psychotherapy equalizes methodologies because nothing is given priority. Any next step in the therapeutic process becomes intuitively obvious” (Krystal, 2003, p. 119). It is for this reason that transpersonal psychotherapy is integrative with all methodologies (i.e., EMDR, hypnotherapy, CBT, DBT, Sensory Motor Therapy, Somatic Experiencing, etc.) that allow for inner focus, mindfulness, and silent processing through expanded awareness, or induction of altered states, where the therapist and client can focus inward and become immersed into expanded soul awareness.

Buddhist therapists refer to this inward journey as entering *samadhi*, a meditative consciousness, through focused concentration revealing the truth of existence and self, as illusion dissolves (Loy, 1997). The shamans explore the nonordinary reality through shamanic journeying (Krippner, 2005; Villoldo, 2010, 2015). Jung (1964/

1983) referred to accessing the collective unconscious through the imagination and dream state. Dossey (2014) described this inner universal experience as nonlocal consciousness, akin to morphic fields of resonance (Sheldrake, 2009; Wilber, 2000) where patterns and information are not personal, but transpersonal ranges of consciousness. These experiences, words, and levels of awareness cannot be assumed to be interchangeable between traditions, which makes it more difficult to consistently define the meaning of awakening. However, it is assumed that each of these various terminologies do not reflect the true nature of enlightenment as long as our perceptions are enclosed around the consciousness of the ordinary mind, as indicated by Sogyal Rinpoche, (2002). This is why the awakening therapist or client is on an evolving path, where soul awareness infiltrates identity and perceptions in the world. Yet, the Buddha nature is in each one of us, and enlightenment is attainable as emphasized repeatedly by Sogyal Rinpoche.

The therapist cannot predict when the client will be ready to resonate with a higher frequency of consciousness, or when (and if) they will experience becoming light; and there is no judgment about the readiness to awaken. The therapist becomes the doorway to spiritual resonance for the client, as energetic connection is nonverbally invited, sensing the resonance within the shared field by focusing internally and using inner intuitive senses, tracking information and energy flow.

These intuitive inner senses were described by Braud and Anderson (2002) as *alternative ways of knowing*, which include inner vision, inner auditory skills, direct knowing and intuition, kinesthetic sensing, proprioceptive skills, and unconscious processes of emerging material through dreams or mindfulness, which illuminate the process. These forms of knowing are akin to remote viewing and internally focused skills used by shamans throughout the ages and validated by transpersonal researchers (Achterberg et al., 2005; Braud, 2003a, 2003b; Millay, 1999). These internal senses, similar to Daniel Siegel's (2011) view of *mindsight*, become feedback mechanisms to determine resonance or nonresonance between the therapist, client, and the Divine (I. Siegel, 2013, 2017). The client is invited to focus internally and sink deep within, into an expanded state of awareness, flowing within the treatment methodology of choice.

Taylor and Egeto-Szabo (2017) suggested that although we can create conditions for awakening by stilling and intensifying life energy, it is difficult to predict client response, limiting the efficacy of this type of approach as a therapy. However, it is this author's experience that if the therapist can let go of expectation and accept that the client is where he or she is in the process, then the therapist can still maintain the stance of the awakened transpersonal therapist and provide the foundation for awakening experiences, while using alternative ways of knowing for assessment and intervention.

Teodorescu (2003) reported that the awakened therapist is the essential element in being able to guide a client into those expanded ranges of consciousness. Yet, the identification of an awakened therapist is difficult, since it is an internal subjective experience without a clear language to communicate the true nature of the experience (Osborne, 2013). The clearest indication of an awakened transpersonal therapist is that the therapist lives a transpersonal life, and the consciousness of the



therapist is reflected in the relationship to his or her world. The process of client awakening to spiritual identity can be realized as the therapist opens to deep emotional and vibrational communion with spirit, and attunement and resonance with the client where the client feels seen on many levels and two become one within a shared vibrational field of higher consciousness and spiritual resonance. The therapist's ability to access that higher range of frequency is an indication of awakening. This concept of spiritual resonance is similar to the concept of musical resonance, articulated by Anderson (2000), when a musical note is played on one string instrument and another instrument across the room begins to resonate with the frequency of the note as the vibration moves through air without intermediaries.

All of these factors related to therapist consciousness and inner focus of dual awareness within a shared field contribute to a model of transpersonal psychotherapy. However, they do not explain the specific reason for a client perceiving that he or she becomes purple light. Based in the knowledge previously discussed inherent in spiritual traditions about frequency and resonance, the color purple reflects a specific range of frequency. The most logical supposition is that the client's experience may be a reflection of the range of frequency held in the field of the therapist within a container of spiritual resonance. However, in that moment of spontaneous awakening, we cannot assume that the client is on a path towards enlightenment. The experience of the client did not come about as a result of cultivating an ongoing meditation or spiritual practice, as is common within spiritual traditions. It raises the question of whether a spontaneous client experience within a therapy session of becoming light can have a lasting impact on client consciousness. The answer to this question may lie in the therapist's ability to create a stable field of consciousness within themselves that is reinforced over time for the client (see next section), and in the client's motivation to pursue a spiritual path. In the case example, the client's experience led her to seek a spiritual path in an effort to integrate and build upon her experience, leading to further awakening.

### **The Awakening Client**

If we continue with the premise of interconnection, as held by spiritual traditions and modern science, then the assumption that the awakened therapist contributes to the activation of the shared field by his or her presence, is a plausible one. The client then has the potential to attune to and resonate with that range of frequency, which has been cultivated within the field of the therapist. Attunement plays a significant role in establishing wellbeing for the client. Daniel Siegel's triangle of wellbeing (Siegel, 2010) describes the essential elements of wellbeing as mind (regulator), brain (mechanism of flow) and relationship (shared experience). This is a self-organizing, self-regulating, emergent process (D. Siegel, 2017) that helps the client live an integrated life as adaptive neural networks in the brain are enhanced within the context of psychotherapy.

However, there are elements of nonlocal mind that have an impact on self-identification and wellbeing from an unconscious level. In shamanic tradition this would be the connection to the archetypal forces of nature and the Great Spirit that exist beyond individual consciousness where we can journey outside of linear time

and space into the nonordinary reality. Jung would refer to the collective unconscious where we are interconnected by archetypal themes and patterns. These elements of nonlocal mind become anchored through the subtle and physical bodies and integrated into individual consciousness. If we expand on Daniel Siegel's (2010) model and include an overlapping triangle of elements of nonlocal mind, such as heart (higher mind), earth energy and archetypal forces of nature, and deep internal relationship to Spirit or the Divine, we have a range of elements which are each important in a model of wholeness (I. Siegel, 2017). Heaven and earth converge as the integrated brain awakens to the higher consciousness of greater universal (nonlocal) mind. As an integrative foundation evolves, soul essence may reveal itself, with meaning embedded in a core of cosmic understanding, as the perceptions of the personality and the soul entwine.

As therapist and client take the shared journey from the ordinary egoic awareness to an expanded perception, an initial peak experience or EHE for the client may be activated. The client has the potential to move from a state of unawareness, locked in egoic perceptions, to an awakening of soul awareness. This changes the client's perception of the world and place within it. However, the continuous interaction throughout the psychotherapy process supports the integration of awakening consciousness over time, creating a stable pattern of higher consciousness, that is continuously present within the client's awareness as the nonlocal or collective elements influence client perception.

The reference point of the soul integrates into the client's ordinary consciousness. The path of personal healing continuously includes the infiltration of awakening soul consciousness as awareness is placed on the crossover point on the edge of egoic consciousness. The client remembers the soul and is free to reach full potential in the world of ordinary reality. As the therapist is accepting of this range of experience, the client becomes accepting as well, and relaxes into the experience. This author assumes that the therapist's range of awareness into a nonordinary or perhaps nondual experience impacts that range of awareness for the client as the lower frequency of trauma held within the client's physical, emotional, and mental bodies resonates with the higher frequency held by the therapist and provides access to the nonlocal levels of frequency held within morphic fields of consciousness. Signs of awakening to a higher level of conscious awareness continue as awareness between the realities become more porous.

The client may be entering new territory as peak experiences or EHEs continue to emerge within the therapy sessions, reporting past life memories, near death experiences, or a transcendent mystical union by becoming light. It is unimportant whether this is based in objective reality or is symbolic of deep material rising to the surface. The awakened therapist accepts and supports this range of experience, while setting aside personal agenda or expectations of the client's process. Once again, the therapist is not *doing* something to the client. The therapist only holds open a field of potentiality for expansion of conscious awareness. This experience for the client can be a remembrance of his or her authentic nature. The statement of the client presented, of "I am," indicates a growing awakening to that authentic nature. The client's experience of herself as purple light took her beyond her limited perceptions of her nature as a physical being. She experienced herself as

existing beyond the physical body and her emerging awareness of her authentic nature was beginning to shape her reality. The experience and deep meaning attached to the statement, “I am,” may change for the client over time as she progresses on her path of spiritual awakening, and her developmental levels and stages of consciousness evolve and stabilize.

Loy (2018) is of the position that awakening in Buddhist philosophy involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of how we see ourselves and then act within our life, emerging from an experience of non-self and emptiness. It is within the client’s state of inner focus that the experience of emptiness and reconstruction of perception may emerge. The client is no longer in therapy perceiving the duality of past trauma and present moment as depicted in the EMDR framework, but is immersed in a shared interconnected field of awareness (I. Siegel, 2018). As the client experiences him or herself as purple light, it is possible that the concept of linear time of past, present, and future dissolve and the client is *being* in the eternal moment, without perception of self and other.

Although the experience of becoming purple light could have been a fleeting peak experience for the client, the therapist embraced the experience with the client along with the expanded and authentic self perception. This therapeutic response, along with a trusting relationship, grounded and normalized the experience for the client. In order for the therapist to be authentic in response, the therapist must recognize the exceptional nature of this experience, outside of a conventional mental health model based in identification of dysfunction. The client’s adaptive functioning accelerates as the old traumas and the chaos of the current world no longer have the same meaning. Safety was found internally as the client’s reference point for self identification changed, and healing and spiritual awakening were simultaneously unfolding. The full spectrum model of transpersonal psychology embraces this range of experience within spiritual dimensions as developmental progress along a path towards unity and ultimate healing of the suffering of the client. The therapy goes beyond cognitive awareness and verbal exchange, and becomes one of internal and intuitive symbols, images, colors, sensory experiences, and energy flow within a shared coherent field. The therapeutic dance becomes a heuristic process of psychotherapy as illumination of the depths of the egoic issues comes to the surface within a context of a deeper connection to a cosmic whole (Moustakas, 1990).

The awakened transpersonal therapist recognizes that healing is not necessarily an ending point in therapy. It may be a new beginning for a deeper process of emerging consciousness and can be viewed as a rite of passage, as in spiritual traditions (Morrison, 2012). This unfolding is completely determined by the client. It is difficult to predict whether a client is ready or prepared for this expanded experience. This author has often been taken by surprise by a client who may be new to therapy and not involved in following a spiritual path, but suddenly awakens during the silent space of reprocessing trauma. This does not preclude the possibility that the readiness of the client may be determined by past life preparation and spiritual development. This is very difficult to determine. Newberg and Waldman (2017) reported that it is at the moment when there is a state change in consciousness that transformation happens as there are neurological changes in

the brain. It is plausible that emotional readiness, conscious or unconscious, based in all the factors mentioned is present in conjunction with neurological receptivity for spontaneous awakening to take place. The client may spontaneously seem to awaken without the therapist discussing spirituality, as the client appears to meet and mirror the therapist within the shared subtle field of spiritual connection, giving credence to an interpersonal neurobiology (D. Siegel, 2010, 2011, 2017). The therapist and client must let go of ego and expectation of the client's process, by staying centered within. The client mirrors the therapist's ability to just *be*. As the client awakens, therapeutic goals and agreements change, from healing trauma to working on reaching full potential.

### **Transpersonal Psychotherapy of the Future**

As transpersonal psychology has evolved, there have been transpersonal psychotherapy models that have emerged, valuing a holistic approach that integrates the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of the client (Frederick, 2014; Phelon, 2001; Vaughan, 1993).

Jung's (1996) personal study with Hindu gurus in India led him to the theory of the collective unconscious, which holds experiences of archetypal forces of nature, and a multidimensional spiritual body that corresponds to levels of awareness in the individual. Jung (1964/1983) guided his clients deep within their psyche through dream analysis and art, to access the deep meaning of their personal patterns and symbols, as well as the collective information that is unconsciously inherent within our species. This work set the foundation for depth psychology.

Assagioli (2000) and Grof (1993) each created models of transpersonal psychotherapy. Assagioli (2007) added the concept of higher consciousness and superconsciousness to the field of the human psyche leading the client to the recognition of the transpersonal self in his model of psychosynthesis. Assagioli's approach of psychosynthesis incorporated inner soul awareness into psychotherapy. He encouraged the client to focus internally, exploring both psychodynamic and spiritual realms through the use of the imagination as they developed deep intuitive skills.

Grof (1993) researched the effectiveness of nonordinary states of consciousness in the developmental and healing process of the psyche. He began with mind-altering substances such as LSD, and then developed Holotropic Breathwork to access altered states of awareness. His findings revealed that as the mind perceives traumatic events from an altered or expanded state of consciousness, solutions present themselves in ways that could not be accessed through ordinary egoic consciousness. Clients reported past life, prebirth, birth, near-death, and mystical experiences within a context of an interconnected field of cosmic wholeness, indicating a depth to the healing process that can be accessed by exploring biographical and transpersonal perspectives as consciousness expands. Grof brought forth new theory in the field of transpersonal psychology. His research suggests that in a full spectrum model of transpersonal psychotherapy, the therapist can assist the client in expanding the context of treatment by eliciting altered states

within the resolution of trauma, thus helping clients attain full potential, rather than be limited to conflict resolution.

Vaughan (1993) recognized that the transpersonal therapist must explore the transpersonal realms in order for the client to be able to enter the transpersonal ranges of consciousness. This takes the focus from the content of the client's issues, to the transpersonal context of merging with a larger cosmic whole. Through inner focusing and meditation, the awakened therapist dis-identifies with the ego and the history of the personality, providing an emotional environment for the client to do the same.

The focus of these transpersonal psychotherapy models has been to assist the client in awakening consciousness to aspects of themselves that exist beyond the ego, where soul awareness may emerge. The induction of altered states of consciousness through psychedelics and breath work (Grof, 1993, 2000), guided imagery, meditation, and focused concentration (Assagioli, 2007; Gendlin, 1996) have been explored and reported as effective tools to access the expanded awareness of higher consciousness, and deeper understanding within a transpersonal healing process (Simoes, 2002).

Each of these transpersonal models of psychotherapy have brought a unique contribution to the field of transpersonal psychotherapy, where through deep exploration within an expanded state of awareness a client may report peak experiences, exceptional human experiences (EHEs) that are mystical or unifying with a Divine presence (Palmer & Braud, 2002; White, 1994, 1997), or deep intuitive awareness revealing the origin of their struggle that takes them beyond the ego and accesses soul awareness.

Transpersonal psychotherapy of the future has the potential to evolve into a transformational and possibly transcendent multidimensional experience for both the therapist and the client, within a field of coherent energy. We are entering a new era in psychotherapy. Within the consideration of the plausibility that the range of frequency cultivated by the therapist's spiritual journey of awakening may be a vibrational influence in the shared field, lies the potential to evolve a transpersonal psychotherapy model where the work is both internal and external for both therapist and client. This mutual process becomes an important element in the realization of client transformation. The experience of the client perceiving themselves as light within an expanded range of consciousness may become a frequent and natural indication of the consciousness embedded within the therapeutic relationship. This experience changes the context and the content of treatment as the client moves along a continuum to developing their fullest potential. Clients may choose to follow a spiritual path as awakening is initiated through the healing process.

As stated earlier in this article, there have been previous authors who have written about the shared field and the state of nondual awareness within the therapeutic relationship (Blackstone, 2006; Krystal, 2003; Welwood, 2003), and the incorporation of soul awareness into the therapeutic work (Assagioli, 2000, 2007) creating the potential for the client to have transpersonal or transcendent experiences within psychotherapy. Krystal et al. (2002) offered a transpersonal

protocol for EMDR therapy. However, lacking is literature that describes or offers an explanation of the client specifically perceiving him or herself as light, and verbalizing a perception, whether accurate or not according to spiritual teachings, of becoming “I am.” Perhaps this is due to the lack of a clear transpersonal protocol in which the consciousness of the therapist is an essential element influencing client response and state of awareness. As a result of this lack of investigation on the subject, this author hopes that this discussion will stimulate further exploration about the influence of the consciousness of the therapist on the shared field of coherent energy, and the impact on spontaneous client awakening and transformation.

The incorporation of elements of energy healing practice, distance healing, and the therapist’s spiritual consciousness into psychotherapy may eventually create the potential for emergence of an identifiable transpersonal psychotherapy model, and not just as a subtle integrative element (see I. Siegel, 2017). It is a model grounded by an awakened therapist trained in a spiritually based energy healing practice within which soul consciousness is at the core of healing. This is very different than an energy psychology practice that relies on technique extrapolated from ancient healing traditions without the spiritual connection inherent in the tradition. Perhaps it is time to consider how we can take transpersonal theory into a clinical practice that incorporates a multidimensional protocol for both therapist and client, consciously activating higher frequency and awakening consciousness while swiftly healing trauma, and changing the context of therapy.

### **Recommendations for Future Training and Research**

The phenomenon of client reporting an inner experience of transforming into luminous light, with transcendent elements of divine connection and soul recognition, warrants further acknowledgment and exploration. The therapist’s cultivation of a spiritual or soul awareness through divine connection needs to be explored more fully as an important element in the transformational experience of the client, adding to the body of research and literature on the subject that is currently limited. The challenges of this type of exploration are that it cannot objectively be measured, and that it is based on subjective reporting of self proclaimed awakened transpersonal psychotherapists. The profound effects of this type of therapeutic experience are difficult for most therapists to understand or verbalize. The deep meaning of the experience can only be communicated through experience, and not words. Therapists from different spiritual traditions may use different words to describe similar experiences. It has been a prolonged process for this author of creating introductory lectures and programs for therapists within a therapeutic language that they understand (i.e. EMDR therapy), and the incorporation of guided meditation to offer them an experience of a process that they would have not known. This often leads them to want more training in a transformational process and integration of a transpersonal psychotherapy protocol.

Formal training can be developed to incorporate a spiritually based energy program of awakening, followed by training and consultation in the integration of these skills into clinical practice. An example would be the six-month program,

Awakening Your Light Body (Roman & Packer, 2009). This program is not attached to a particular spiritual lineage, yet the program lends itself to awakening the light body, or luminous body, as depicted in spiritual traditions. The therapist can be taught to transmit ranges of higher frequency and light within the shared field. Research can be established to evaluate the effectiveness of this training program in the advancement of a transpersonal multidimensional spiritual psychotherapy, using qualitative research through the lens of intuition (see Anderson, 2019).

Teaching one program in consciousness and energy work would be one way to get past the obstacle of each therapist having different training with a different language to attempt to explain their experiences. This would also be a way of teaching the therapist to perceive outside of a clear and formal structure, and to gather information on subtle levels. All psychotherapy training programs offer a clear and concrete format based in egoic perception. The format for this type of training must accommodate for shifts in states of awareness, creating fluid and creative interventions that are state specific yet integrative with one another. This process can easily be integrated within any psychotherapy method that allows for internally focused processing in quiet space, or developed as an independent transpersonal method. As the therapist develops awareness of his or her light body, then it is possible that the client can resonate as well and perceive themselves as light, accelerating healing and simultaneously initiating spiritual awakening.

## References

- Achterberg, J., Cooke, K., Richards, T., Standish, L., Kozak, L., & Lake, J. (2005). Evidence for correlations between distant intentionality and brain function in recipients: A functional magnetic resonance imaging analysis. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, *11*(6), 965–971. doi:10.1089/acm.2005.11.965
- Anderson, R. (2000). Intuitive inquiry: Interpreting objective and subjective data. *ReVision*, *2*(4), 31-39.
- Anderson, R. (2019). Intuitive inquiry: Inviting transformation and breakthrough insights in qualitative research. *Qualitative Psychology*, *6*(3), 312-319. doi:10.1037/qap0000144
- Assagioli, R. (2000). *Psychosynthesis: A collection of basic writings*. Amherst, MA: Psychosynthesis Center.
- Assagioli, R. (2007). *Transpersonal development: The dimensions beyond psychosynthesis* (2nd ed.). Forres, Scotland: Inner Way Productions.
- Aurobindo, S. (2003). *The future of evolution of man: The divine life upon earth*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press.
- Aurobindo, S., & the Mother. (1990). *The hidden forces of life* (A. S. Dalal, Ed.). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Blackstone, J. (2006). Intersubjectivity and nonduality in the psychotherapeutic relationship. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, *38*(1), 25-40.
- Braud, W. (2003a). Introduction. In W. Braud, *Distant mental influence: Its contributions to science, healing, and human interactions* (pp. xvii–xlvi). Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads. Retrieved from [http://inclusivepsychology.com/uploads/DMI\\_Introduction.pdf](http://inclusivepsychology.com/uploads/DMI_Introduction.pdf)
- Braud, W. G. (2003b). Transpersonal images: Implications for health. In A. A. Sheikh (Ed.), *Healing images: The role of imagination in health* (pp. 448-470). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (2002). *Integral research skills study guide*. Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.
- Butlein, D. A. (2006). The impact of spiritual awakening on psychotherapy: A comparison study of personality traits, therapeutic worldview, and client experience in transpersonal, non-transpersonal, and purportedly awakened psychotherapists. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B. Sciences and Engineering*, 67(01), 533.
- Collier, L. (2016, November). Growth after trauma. *Monitor on Psychology*, 42(10), 48–52.
- Cortright, B. (2007). *Integral psychology: Yoga, growth and opening the heart*. Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Davis, D. M., & Hayes, J. A. (2011). What are the beliefs of mindfulness? A practice review of psychotherapy-related research. *Psychotherapy*, 48(2), 198–208.
- Dossey, L. (2014). Spirituality and nonlocal mind: A necessary dyad. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 1(1), 29–42.
- Frederick, T. V. (2014). Spiritual transformation: Honoring spiritual traditions in psychotherapy. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 1(2), 109–115.
- Friedman, H. (2015). Further developing transpersonal psychology as a science: Building and testing middle-range transpersonal theories. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34(1-2), 55–64. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol34/iss1/7>
- Gendlin, E. (1996). *Focusing-oriented psychotherapy: A manual of the experiential method*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Gilot, L. B. (2003). Integral approach in transpersonal psychotherapy. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 22(1), 78–83. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol22/iss1/10>
- Grof, S. (1993). Realms of the human unconscious: Observations from LSD research. In R. Walsh & F. Vaughan (Eds.), *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision* (pp. 95-106). Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Grof, S. (2000). *Psychology of the future: Lessons from modern consciousness research*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Harner, M. (1980). *The way of the shaman*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Hensley, B. J. (2016). *An EMDR therapy primer: From practicum to practice*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. (2011). Retrieved from [www.ITP.edu](http://www.ITP.edu).
- Jung, C. G. (1983). *Man and his symbols*. Garden City, NY: Double Day. (Original work published 1964)
- Jung, C. G. (1996). Hauer's English lecture. In S. Shamdasani (Ed.), *The psychology of kundalini yoga: Notes of the seminar given in 1932 by C. G. Jung* (pp. 88-110). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Khan, H. I. (1961). *The Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, Vol. IV: Health, mental purification and the mind world*. London, England: Barrie and Jenkins.
- Khan, H. I. (1964). *The Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, Vol. XI: Philosophy, psychology and mysticism*. London, England: Barrie and Jenkins.
- Khan, V. I. (1994). *That which transpires behind that which appears*. New Lebanon, NY: Omega.
- Krippner, S. (2005). The technologies of shamanic states of consciousness. In M. Schlitz & T. Amorok (Eds.), *Consciousness and healing: Integral approaches to mind body medicine*. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier/Churchill Livingstone.
- Krystal, S. (2003). A nondual approach to EMDR: Psychotherapy as a satsang. In J. Prendergast, P. Fenner, & S. Krystal (Eds.), *The sacred mirror: Nondual wisdom and psychotherapy* (pp. 116–137). St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.
- Krystal, S., Prendergast, J., Krystal, P., Fenner, P., Shapiro, I., & Shapiro, K. (2002). Transpersonal psychology, eastern nondual philosophy, and EMDR. In F. Shapiro (Ed.), *EMDR as an integrative psychotherapy approach: Experts of diverse orientations explore*



- the paradigm prism* (pp. 319–339). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Laszlo, E. (2009). *The Akashic experience: Science and the cosmic memory field*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Loy, D. (1997). *Nonduality: A study in the comparative philosophy*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Loy, D. (2018). The many faces of nonduality. *Insight Journal*, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, online retrieved 2/17/19. <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/the-many-faces-of-nonduality/>.
- MacDonald, D. A. (2009). Identity and spirituality: Conventional and transpersonal perspectives. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 28(1), 86–106. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol28/iss1/9>
- McCraty, R. (2003). *The energetic heart: Bioelectromagnetic interactions within and between people*. Boulder Creek, CA: Institute of HeartMath.
- McCraty, R., & Childre, D. (2010). Coherence: Bridging personal, social, and global health. *Alternative Therapies*, 16(4), 10–24.
- McTaggart, L. (2002). *The field*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Meher Baba. (2000). *Discourses*. (4th printing). North Myrtle Beach, SC: Sheriar Press.
- Millay, J. (1999). *Multidimensional mind: Remote viewing in hyperspace*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic.
- Miller, M. (2014). *Healing complex trauma through eye movement desensitization and reprocessing and transpersonal psychotherapy: Psychotherapists' heuristic exploration of integration compatibility and transformative value*. Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. Retrieved from <http://gradworks.umi.com/36/29/3629332.html>
- Morrison, R. A. (2012). Trauma and transformative passage. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 31(1), 38–46. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol31/iss1/6>
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Newberg, A., & Waldman, M. R. (2017). *How enlightenment changes your brain: The new science of transformation*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Osborne, J. W. (2013). Linguistic and other challenges in researching transcendent phenomena: Considerations from Wittgenstein and Buddhist practice. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 45(1), 75–92.
- Palmer, G., & Braud, W. (2002). Exceptional human experiences, disclosure, and a more inclusive view of physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 34(1), 29–61.
- Pargament, K. I., Lomax, J. W., McGee, J. S., & Fang, Q. (2014). Sacred moments in psychotherapy from the perspectives of mental health providers and clients: Prevalence, predictors, and consequences. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 1(4), 248–262.
- Phelon, C. R. (2001). Healing presence: An intuitive inquiry into the presence of the psychotherapist. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B. Sciences and Engineering*, 62(4), 2074.
- Rodrigues, V., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). Transpersonal psychotherapies. In H. L. Friedman & G. Hartelius (Eds.), *The Wiley - Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 544–561). West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Roman, S., & Packer, D. (2009). Awakening your light body. *LuminEssence*. Retrieved from <http://www.orindaben.com>
- Rowan, J. (2005). *The transpersonal: Spirituality in psychotherapy and counselling* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Schwartz, R. C. (2013). *Internal family systems therapy*. New York, NY: Guildford.

- Shapiro, F. (2012). *Getting past your past: Take control of your life with self help techniques from EMDR therapy*. New York, NY: Rodale.
- Shapiro, F. (2018). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy: Basic principles, protocols, and procedures* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Sheldrake, R. (2009). *Morphic resonance: The nature of formative causation*. Rochester, VT: Park Street.
- Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., & Griffiths, M. (2014). The emerging role of Buddhism in clinical psychology: Toward effective integration. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 6*(2), 123-137.
- Siegel, D. (2010). *The mindful therapist*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Siegel, D. (2011). *Mindsight: A new science of personal transformation*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Siegel, D. (2017). *Mind: A journey to the heart of being human*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Siegel, I. (2013). Therapist as a container for spiritual resonance and client transformation within transpersonal psychotherapy: An exploratory heuristic study. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 45*(1), 49–74.
- Siegel, I. (2017). *The sacred path of the therapist: Modern healing, ancient wisdom, and client transformation*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Siegel, I. (2018). EMDR as a transpersonal therapy: A trauma focused approach to awakening consciousness. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research, 12*(1), 24-43.
- Simoes, M. (2002). Altered states of consciousness and psychotherapy: A cross-cultural perspective. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 21*(1), 145–152. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol21/iss1/17>
- Sogyal Rinpoche. (2002). *The Tibetan book of living and dying*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Taylor, S. (2012). Spontaneous awakening experiences: Beyond religion and spiritual practice. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 44*(1), 73-91.
- Taylor, S., & Egeto –Szabo, K. (2017). Exploring awakening experiences in terms of their triggers, characteristics, duration and after-effects. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 49*(1), 45-65.
- Teodorescu, D. S. (2003). An integral perspective on depression. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 22*(1), 100–119. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol22/iss1/14>
- Tiller, W. (1997). *Science and human transformation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Pavior.
- Vaughan, F. (1993). Healing and wholeness: Transpersonal psychotherapy. In R. Walsh & F. Vaughan (Eds.), *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision* (pp. 214–222). Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Villoldo, A. (2000). *Shaman, healer, sage*. New York, NY: Harmony Books.
- Villoldo, A. (2010). *Illumination: The shaman's way of healing*. New York, NY: Hay House.
- Villoldo, A. (2015). *A shaman's miraculous tools for healing*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Vujanovic, A. A., Niles, B., Pietrefesa, A., Schmertz, S. K., & Potter, C. M. (2013). Mindfulness in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder among military veterans. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice, 1*(S), 15-25.
- Walach, H. (2005). Higher self – Spark of the mind – Summit of the soul: Early history of an important concept of transpersonal psychology in the west. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 24*(1), 16–28. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol24/iss1/4>
- Walsh, R., & Vaughan, F. E. (1996). Comparative models of the person and psychotherapy. In S. Boorstein (Ed.), *Transpersonal psychotherapy* (pp. 15-30). Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Welwood, J. (2003). Double vision: Duality and nonduality in human experience. In J. Prendergast, P. Fenner, & S. Krystal (Eds.), *The sacred mirror: Nondual wisdom and psychotherapy* (pp. 138–163). St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

- White, R. A. (1994). *Exceptional human experience: Background papers*. Dix Hills, NY: EHE Network.
- White, R. A. (1997). Dissociation, narrative, and exceptional human experiences. In S. Krippner & S. Powers (Eds.), *Broken images, broken selves: Dissociative narratives in clinical practice* (pp. 88–124). Washington, DC: Brunner Mazel.
- Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral psychology*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (2007). *Integral spirituality*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Winkelman, M. (2013). Shamanic cosmology as an evolutionary neurocognitive epistemology. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 32(1), 79–99. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol32/iss1/9>
- Witteveen, H. J. (1997). *Universal Sufism*. Shaftesbury, England: Element.
- Wright, D. S. (2016). *What is Buddhist enlightenment?* New York, NY: Oxford.

### The Author

*Irene R. Siegel* has a master's degree in Social Work from Columbia University and a doctorate degree from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University). She is director of Center Point in Huntington N.Y. where she conducts her integrative EMDR therapy practice and teaches meditation and healing. She studied the ancient healing arts of shamanism throughout North and South America and teaches the integration of Western psychotherapy with ancient healing arts, as depicted in her recently published book *The Sacred Path of the Therapist: Modern Healing, Ancient Wisdom, and Client Transformation*. As an Approved EMDR Consultant, teacher, and lecturer she has broken through traditional barriers introducing the innovative concept of integrating mindful awareness and resonance into the EMDR protocol. E-Mail: [irenesiegel@me.com](mailto:irenesiegel@me.com)

What is transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy? What is spiritual direction and how does this differ from transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy? Are there academic and professional training courses in transpersonal studies? What is the purpose of this FAQ? Transpersonal experiences include: deep love and connection with other people, moments of highest happiness and serenity, the sense of sacredness or awe, mystical unions with nature or with the Divine, memories of previous lives, out-of-body and near-death experiences, psychedelic states, awareness of subtle energies or supernatural intelligences, creative inspiration, meditative and contemplative experiences. Transpersonal effects are defined as any subjective effect which feels as if it alters a person's cognition in a manner which relates to or contains information regarding their place in the universe, the inner workings of reality or consciousness, and the context of their existence. The fullest manifestation of these effects fall under what are sometimes called "peak", "transcendent" or "transformative" experiences. Transpersonal effects. From PsychonautWiki. Jump to navigation Jump to search. Transpersonal effects are defined as any subjective effect which feels as if it alters a person's cognition in a manner which relates to or contains information regarding their place in the universe, the inner workings of reality or consciousness, and the context of their existence. If you prefer to just address your challenges through psychotherapy, we can just do that. If you prefer to just work through life coaching, we can just do that. In my experience, combining both is the most effective way: Psychotherapy is specialized on how to address and overcome your personal challenges (lack of self esteem, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, self-sabotage, self-defeating patterns!), and life coaching is effective in offering strong practical and goal oriented solutions to help you realize your life's goals. Spontaneous Awakening in Transpersonal Psychotherapy Sri Aurobindo And Transpersonal Psychology Stages of mindfulness meditation: A validation study Transpersonal psychology: An outline of the field Transpersonal psychotherapy with incarcerated adolescents Transpersonal psychotherapy Transpersonal Research and Scholarship: Reflection