



MANTRA OF HOPE
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Existential Solutions
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Mantra of Hope Counselling

June 2026 Newsletter

"The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao." — Lao Tzu

Dear Friends, Clients, and Fellow Travellers on the Path,

June has been a month of extraordinary depth — one of conversations that lingered long after they ended, of silences that carried more meaning than words, and of moments that reminded us why we do the work we do. This newsletter is an invitation to sit with us, as we share what moved us, challenged us, and renewed our sense of purpose.

The World Congress of Existential Therapy

We had the privilege of attending and presenting at the **World Congress of Existential Therapy** — a gathering of philosophers, psychotherapists, researchers, and practitioners from across the globe. The air in the conference halls carried the unmistakable weight of inquiry: *What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to suffer? And crucially — what does it mean to find meaning in a post-Covid world?*

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4310 Sherwoodtowne Blvd
Mississauga, ON, L4Z 2G6
Telephone: 6478181385
Email: drpbhatt@gmail.com
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The Congress was a living reminder that existential therapy is not a relic of 20th-century philosophy. It is breathing, adapting, and responding — to grief, to social fracture, to loneliness, to the quiet crises that many carry invisibly into therapy rooms across the world.

The Tao and the Therapy Room — Finding the Way

One of the richest conceptual territories we explored this month is the **meeting point between Taoism and Existential Therapy**. These two traditions, separated by geography and centuries, share a surprising and profound kinship.

The Tao — The Way

The Tao is the underlying principle of the universe — formless, nameless, and yet the source of all form and name. In existential therapy, we speak of *being-in-the-world* — that one cannot be understood in isolation from the context, the relationships, and the moment in which one exists. The Tao echoes this deeply. There is no fixed self separate from the flow of life. Healing, then, is not about finding a rigid identity — it is about finding one's **natural way of moving through existence**.

Wu Wei — The Power of Non-Action

Wu Wei is often misunderstood as passivity. It is, in fact, the art of *effortless action* — of responding to life rather than forcing it. In the therapy room, Wu Wei reminds us that sometimes the most powerful therapeutic act is **to not intervene** — to hold space, to witness, to trust that the client's own inner movement will find its direction when not obstructed by urgency or fear. The therapist who is always *doing* may, paradoxically, be standing in the way.

Yin and Yang — Duality and Interconnectedness

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The Yin-Yang symbol is one of the most misappropriated in popular culture — and yet, when understood deeply, it holds extraordinary therapeutic wisdom. **Light contains darkness. Endings contain beginnings. Grief contains love.** In existential therapy, we do not seek to eliminate suffering; we seek to understand its relationship to meaning. The person who has known deep loss has also known deep connection. Yin and Yang invite us to hold *both* — not to rush toward resolution, but to trust the wholeness of the human experience.

Practical Applications:

- Using **Wu Wei** to guide therapists in recognising when *less is more* — particularly with clients in acute grief or transition
 - Inviting clients to identify the **Yin within their Yang** — the hidden gift within a painful season
 - Incorporating **Taoist reflection prompts** into session work: "*What would it feel like to stop fighting this moment?*"
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Our Presented Paper — Post Marital Dissolution and Finding Meaning



Bavly Kost, Sharan Bhullar, Dr.Prashant Bhatt at World Congress of Existential therapy.

See a short clip of the Presentation [here](#)

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We jointly presented case studies and integrated them into a paper on Post Marital Dissolution and the application of the Subterranean life of the hour- what happens in the subtext, beneath the surface

We presented our paper on the deeply human experience of **Post Marital Dissolution** — a period that is often one of the most disorienting of a person's life. Divorce or separation does not merely end a legal contract; it unsettles identity, narrative, and one's sense of the future.

We drew upon two powerful therapeutic tools in our work with clients navigating this terrain:

- **The Living Human Document** — a framework that treats each person's life as a living, evolving text to be read, not judged. Clients are encouraged to narrate their story not as a failure, but as a chapter — one that holds complexity, contradiction, and the seeds of new meaning.
- **Subterranean Life of the Hour** — a method that invites clients to descend beneath the surface of the *presenting moment* — to explore what lies underneath the anger, the numbness, or the grief. What is the hour really asking of you? What is it trying to teach?

Together, these tools helped clients move from a posture of *Why did this happen to me?* toward the more generative existential question: *What is this asking of me, and who am I becoming through it?*

See a short clip of the Presentation [here](#)

A Cane, A Legacy, and a Room Full of Meaning

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One of the most profoundly moving moments of the Congress came quietly — the way the most significant things often do.

Eric Craig — born in 1945, a veteran Humanistic-Existential teacher and practitioner of extraordinary stature — presented to **Alfried Längle**, founder of the *International Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* (Vienna, 1983), a cane. Not just any cane — but the very cane that **Sigmund Freud gave to his father in 1876**, upon his return from England.

"The cane is now returning home to Vienna," Craig said — and the room held its breath.

After many hours of rich discussion on **Relatedness, Freedom, Choices, and Consequences**, this gesture distilled everything. A cane — an object that supports, steadies, and helps one move forward — passed across generations, across oceans, across the great arc of psychotherapeutic history. It was a symbol of continuity, of legacy, of the profound **relatedness** that binds us not just to our contemporaries but to those who came before. We are linked conversations, not isolated voices.

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Eric Craig and Alfred Laingle, Existential therapy- how they came to this therapy, they spoke of their association with Viktor Frankl, the founder of Logotherapy and author of one of the great books of the 20th century- Man's Search for Meaning.

Freud's Cane returns home to Vienna

The extraordinary moment of [Eric Craig's presentation of Freud's cane](#) — a scene that many in the room described as quietly historic.

"Still Here" — Lewis Gordon and Black Existentialism

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The first keynote of the Congress was delivered by **Lewis Gordon** — philosopher, scholar, and one of the foremost voices in **Black Existentialism**. His talk was both intellectually rigorous and deeply personal.

Gordon spoke of his roots in Jamaica. He recalled how, over many years, he would call his maternal grandmother — a woman in her eighties — and open with: "*How are you doing, young lady?*"

Her answer, always, was two words:

"Still Here."

Simple. Unadorned. And, as Gordon came to understand over the years, **inexhaustibly layered**.

To be *Still Here* is not merely to have survived. It is an assertion of presence against forces that have historically sought to erase, diminish, or deny. It is a quiet act of resistance. It is the existential declaration of a person who knows that their existence has been contested — and who answers that contest with the sheer, irreducible fact of their being.

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Philosophy professor Lewis Gordon, a leading scholar on black existentialism, is editor of a new blog on the American Philosophical Association website, 'Black Issues in Philosophy.' (Peter Morenus/UConn File Photo) [Bringing Black Issues in Philosophy to the Blogosphere - UConn Today](#)

Still Here — Through COVID

Gordon brought this theme into visceral focus when he described his own COVID illness in 2020. He chose *not* to go to the hospital — a decision rooted not in denial, but in a painful awareness. He had witnessed how **Black and South Asian patients** were disproportionately

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failed by systems that were supposed to care for them. He had watched how many who entered those wards did not come out. His choice was shaped by a knowledge that should never have to exist — the knowledge that healthcare, too, is not always neutral.

He survived. And in surviving, those words carried yet another layer: **Still Here**.

The roundtable that followed explored how existential themes of **community, mortality, and systemic trauma** are inseparable from clinical practice. We cannot sit across from a client and pretend that the world outside the therapy room does not shape what happens within it.

Community, Memory, and Libya — Oral Histories

Existentialism has always been concerned with **freedom and responsibility** — but rarely in isolation from the political and historical. This month, we were reminded of that through conversations on community memory and oral histories, particularly in the context of **Libya**.

The memories of how **Black Africans were hunted and beaten in the aftermath of the Fall of Tripoli in October 2011** remain raw and largely unprocessed in public discourse. When community members, activists, and professionals were asked about the rights of those who wish to express views on the Gaddafi period peacefully, many considered it a non-issue — a telling silence in itself.

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2011- October-Fall of Tripoli -Libyan Arab Spring-One of our Lab managers took up the gun and joined the Thuwaar-(Revolutionaries). See Blog [Shafshoofa Maleshi](#)

On **4th February 2026**, **Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi** — born in 1972, who had played a pivotal role in Libya's rapprochement with the West from 2000 until the fall of the regime — was killed in Zintan. Libyan journalist **Abdulkader Assad** told the BBC's *Newsday* programme: *"It could be*

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locals who felt their political influence threatened by his popularity. It could also be foreign actors who took him out because of his controversial past."

What strikes us, through an existential lens, is this: **history does not end with events**. It lives in communities, in silences, in what is said and what is carefully not said. Oral histories are not archives — they are living beings, breathing the particular anxieties and hopes of those who carry them.

Closing One's Eyes — On Projection and Responsibility

Lewis Gordon and other speakers from across Africa closed with a theme that sat with us long after the sessions ended: the act of **Closing One's Eyes** as a subtle, often unconscious admission of **projection**.

To close one's eyes is to refuse to see. But the refusing is itself a form of seeing — a choice that carries moral weight. As Gordon noted, *there is a form of responsibility present in all denials*.

This is not a comfortable idea. And it should not be.

We have all, at some point, pulled the blanket of comfort over memories that implicate us — or our communities, or our nations. **Colonialism. Racism. The attempted — and sometimes successful — genocide of Indigenous peoples**. These are not merely historical footnotes. They are present realities, woven into institutions, into policies, into the quiet assumptions we carry into ordinary days.

Existential therapy does not offer absolution. It offers something more demanding and more meaningful: **awareness, and the freedom that comes with it**. To see clearly — even when it is painful — is the beginning of genuine growth.

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A Closing Word

June has reminded us that the work of existential counselling is never merely clinical. It is **historical**. It is **political**. It is **deeply human**. It asks us to sit with what is unresolved — within ourselves, within our clients, within our communities — and to resist the temptation to close our eyes.

The grandmother's words stay with us:

Still Here.

May we each find, in our own way, the quiet, fierce, irreducible dignity of those two words.

With warmth and gratitude,

The Mantra of Hope Counselling Team *June 2026*

If you would like to speak with a counsellor, or learn more about existential therapy and our services, please reach out to us. You do not have to navigate the complexity of being human alone.

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[Zhi Mian Therapy: Key Features | zhimian](#)

[Bringing Black Issues in Philosophy to the Blogosphere - UConn Today](#)

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