

3.2

DIRECTIONAL CONSTRUCTS

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Supplementary material for Integrating counselling and psychotherapy: Directionality, synergy, and social change (Sage, 2019).

Within both academic and lay discourse, there are numerous terms that describe directional phenomena (see, for instance, Austin & Vancouver, 1996, p. 339). Each of these have subtly different meanings, varying by such features as the degree of inferred control (e.g., ‘hope’ [low] vs. ‘want’ [high]), and subjective likelihood (e.g., ‘wish’ [low] vs. ‘plan’ [high]) (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Phase models of directionality, however, provides a useful way of organising these terms: with different concepts associated with different phases (see Figure 1).

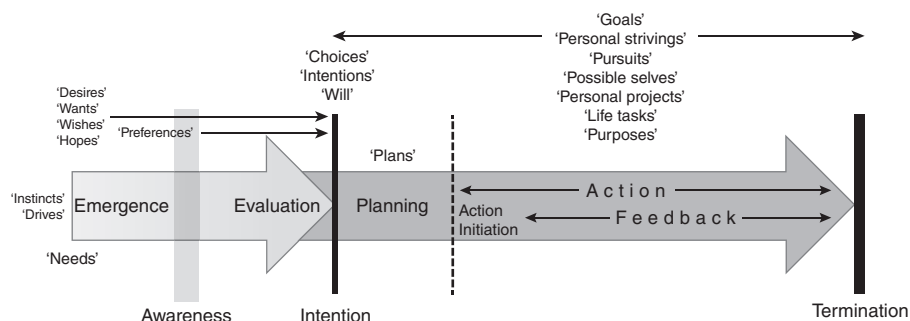


Figure 1 Directional Constructs Mapped onto the Directional Arc

Key directional constructs are defined and described, below. For the purposes of this text, the term ‘directions’ is used to refer to all directional constructs, across all phases of the directional arc. Currently, there are no other terms in the English language that cover this whole suite of phenomena. The closest, perhaps, is ‘pro attitude’ (Malle & Knobe, 2001, p. 51).

PREDECISIONAL PHASES (EMERGENCE, AWARENESS, AND EVALUATION)

Instincts and drives

An instinct can be defined as a ‘biologically determined drive to action’ (Rycroft, 1995, p. 82). For Freud, drives were the psychological representatives of this biological instinct (Wolitzky, 2003) although, for Rycroft (1995, p. 82), ‘No useful purpose is served by trying to distinguish between an instinct and a drive.’

As indicated here, within the therapeutic field, the concepts of instincts and drives stretch back to Freud and his contemporary, in particular Adler (Ellenberger, 1970). Prevalent in humanistic approaches, such as Rogers and Maslow. They are still used in the psychodynamic literature today (e.g., Birtchnell, 1999, pp. 6,9).

As Rycroft’s (1995, p. 82) definition suggests, the terms ‘instinct’ or ‘drive’ are typically used to refer to a directional force that is biologically-based. Usually, this means

that it is innate and there for an evolutionary reason. For instance, as with Freud, we might posit a 'sexual drive' or an 'aggressive drive', but we would be unlikely to talk about Mae's 'drive to care for her mother,' or 'an instinct to post a picture on Instagram.' If we did, we would be inferring that these actions had some biological imperative behind them.

The terms 'instincts' and 'drives' tend to emphasise the 'internal', noetic pole of a direction, as opposed to its 'external' aspect. When we think about a person's 'sex drive', for instance, our attention is likely to be drawn towards their internal feelings and processes, rather than the object of their desire. Indeed, the external correlate of an 'instinct' or 'desire' is generally fairly diffuse and vague. The term 'sex drive', for instance, is likely to evoke images of a force that could have multiple 'objects'. Hence, while we might say, 'Sophie seems to have a strong sex drive'; we would be unlikely to specify this down to 'Sophie seems to have a strong sex drive... for Albert.'

The extensive use of such concepts as 'instincts', 'drives', and 'forces' in psychology has been criticised by existential authors, who feel that it constructs human beings in mechanistic terms. May (1969), for instance, writes:

[T]he more absolutely and completely you formulate the forces or drives, the more you are talking about abstractions and not the existing, living human being. For the living person...always transcends the given mechanisms and always expresses the 'drive' or 'force' in his unique way. (p. 18)

A similar viewpoint is held within the present text, with its particular emphasis on agentic and intelligible human directions. However, instincts and drives can be considered directions at the most embodied, unconscious level: forces towards something that operate far below the level of the conscious will.

Needs

To need something is to 'Require [it] because it is essential or very important rather than just desirable' (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). Hence, a need can be defined as 'a thing that is wanted or required' (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). In a psychological sense, basic psychological needs can be defined as, 'necessary conditions for the growth and well-being of people's personalities and cognitive structures' (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 7).

Although the concept of 'needs' has 'no clear theoretical home' (Flanagan, 2010), it is one of the few constructs that has been endorsed across a broad spectrum of psychotherapeutic orientations. This ranges from humanistic psychology (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951) to contemporary CBT approaches like schema therapy (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003); and includes both traditional (Wolitzky, 2003) and more contemporary relational (Curtis & Hirsch, 2003) psychodynamic practices. Hence, Flanagan suggests that 'needs' can serve as an integrating concept that can bridge a broad range of therapeutic models and practices. 'Needs' are also probably the most

widely-used directional term in the contemporary psychological literature: with around 14,000 hits in the titles of psychological articles from 2000 to the present (PsychInfo), compared with around 1,500 hits for 'drives', 1,300 hits for 'wants', and 7,000 hits for 'goals'.

In contrast to 'drives' and 'instincts', the concept of need tends to emphasise the noematic pole of the directional trajectory. When we say, for instance, 'I need love' or 'I need chocolate', we are tending to focus on the thing that is needed, rather than on the inner processes.

Also, quite uniquely, the concept of need infers that something will not be able to happen unless the need is fulfilled: that is, the needed thing is necessary or required. For instance, if we say, 'human beings need food,' what we are really meaning is that, 'human beings need food to survive.' However, in most instances, this 'purpose clause' (e.g., 'to survive', 'to experience wellbeing') is implicit rather than explicit.

Because needs are necessary or required, they tend to imply a stronger directional force than terms like 'wants' or 'goals' (as the above definition suggests, they are more 'than just desirable'). Hence, for instance, when people say that they 'need' chocolate, rather than 'wanting' it, it can be amusing, because it implies that the chocolate is essential to their mental or physical wellbeing! Similarly, when children say things like, 'I need my mobile phone,' or 'I need money to go shopping' they may be reminded by parents that these are 'wants' and not 'needs'. In essence, this is a way of saying to the child that these things may be desirable but they are not essential: they are not things that the child has to have.

Although the concept of needs is distinctive and fits well with a range of therapeutic approaches, its requirement for a purpose clause means that its use is often ambiguous. If we say, for instance, that 'human beings need affection', it is not entirely clear what this means, as it does not state what will happen if this is not achieved. Rather, to be clear, what should be stated is something like, 'human beings need affection to maintain their psychological wellbeing,' or 'human beings need affection to feel good about themselves.' Furthermore, by invoking such cause and effect relationships ('If X doesn't happen, then Y will happen'), the concept of need – as with 'instincts' and 'drives' – tends to invoke a more deterministic and mechanistic understanding of human being; in which people are 'moved' or 'pushed' by forces that lie 'behind' their conscious, in-the-world engagement (e.g., Boss, 1963; Cohn, 1997). Again, for this reason, the concept of needs is not used widely in this book.

Desires

A *desire* can be defined as 'A strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen' (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). The term is widely used in the psychodynamic field (e.g., Curtis & Hirsch, 2003); as well as in psychology (e.g., Bruininks & Malle, 2005) and the wider social sciences (e.g., Eriksson, 2011). For the purposes of the

present text, it will be the principal term used to describe directions in the emergence, awareness, and evaluation phases of the directional arc. As the definition – and research (Bruininks & Malle, 2005) – suggests, *desires* can be considered synonymous with *wants*; though the former may refer to directions of a more intense, emotional, and interpersonal nature. So, for instance, we might say, ‘She desired a night of passion with her lover,’ but we would be less likely to say, ‘She desired to fix the bathroom cabinet.’

Wants

Wants can be defined as ‘desires for some state of affairs’ (Cooper, 2012, p. 12). The term has been used in both the therapeutic (e.g., Nelson-Jones, 2006; Polster & Polster, 1973) and the psychological (e.g., Cooper, 2014) literature, albeit relatively infrequently. Philosophers (e.g., Schopenhauer, 1969) have also discussed ‘wants’; and the term is widespread in economic thinking in the form of ‘wantability’, or ‘utility’ (e.g., Kahneman, 2011). Utility can be defined as ‘the goodness or usefulness of something to an agent and/or the pleasure or happiness the agent would derive from it’ (Eriksson, 2011).

Etymologically, the word ‘want’ comes from the Old Norse *vant*, meaning ‘lacking’ or diminish. So its original sense was as a wanting, and is related to the Old English *wanian*, ‘to diminish’ (*wane*) (<http://www.etymonline.com>).

The notion of ‘wants’ or ‘wanting’ can be considered one of the most basic ‘folk concepts’ (Bruininks & Malle, 2005): commonly used, and understood, in everyday language. A simple Google search, for instance, identified over 5.5 billion hits for ‘want’, compared with under one billion for ‘goal’, and around 700,000 for ‘strivings’. In developmental terms, ‘wants’ may also be one of the earliest and most basic forms of expression in children: for instance, ‘I want doggie,’ or ‘Emma wants a biscuits.’ Hence, ‘wants’ are a term that may be considered ‘meaningful to professionals and lay-people alike’ (Karoly, 1999, p. 265).

Woodfield (1976, p. 203) has suggested that ‘wants’ may be one of the most generic type of motivational state – the ‘vanilla ice cream’ of directional constructs. This is supported by research by Bruininks and Malle (2005), which found that ‘wants’ were not perceived as having any particular distinguishing features, as compared with other motivational concepts like ‘hopes’ and ‘desires’. This means that the term is relatively flexible and can cover a wide range of intentional phenomena. ‘Wants’, for instance, can refer to the most long-term project (for instance, ‘I want to contribute to a better society’) and the most immediate, short-term cravings (for instance, ‘I want a cup of coffee’). The term also covers both unconscious, affective desires (for instance, ‘I wanted my mum to be upset, although I didn’t recognise it at the time’) and more consciously planned objectives (‘I want to make brownies’) (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). In addition, ‘wants’ can represent relatively diffuse aims (with a noetic emphasis, for example, ‘I want pleasure’), or more specific endpoints (with a noematic emphasis, for example, ‘I want my Goan prawn curry in the next five minutes’). Finally, in contrast

to 'needs', 'wants' do not need a purpose clause; and, in contrast to 'needs', 'drives' and 'instincts', they do not invoke a particularly deterministic or mechanistic conception of human being. That is, if we say someone 'wants' something, we are not saying that they are compelled to strive for it.

The downside of 'wants' is that the term can be associated with more materialistic and superficial desires (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). For instance, on the website answers.com, a 'psychological want' is defined as wanting 'those things that are not essential to sustain life,' which includes, 'exotic food, fashionable clothing, and an air-conditioned home' (http://www.answers.com/Q/What_is_Psychological_wants_And_please_include_an_example). This contrasts with the 'psychological needs' that are described, such as 'compassion, self-esteem and companionship' (http://www.answers.com/Q/What_are_the_psychological_needs&altQ=What_are_the_psychological_needs_of_a_human).

More generally, the term 'wants' may have relatively negative connotations in our culture – perhaps in all cultures – with particular associations to selfishness and greed. An example of this is the familiar saying to children 'I want never gets,' which suggests that the more we desire something – or the more we express desire for something – the less likely we are to receive it. Indeed, in everyday conversation it might be considered inappropriate, rude, or childish to directly express our wants (i.e., 'I want x'), without some kind of tempering or apology ('I'm really sorry about this, but would it be ok to have x.'). A good example of this is Andy Pipkin in the Andy and Lou sketches on BBC TV's *Little Britain* (played by Matt Lucas), whose catchphrase 'I want that one' or statements such as 'I wanna go to Helsinki' are clearly inappropriate to normal adult communication. One explanation for this negative connotation of wants is that they might be understood as demands: that if someone is saying they want something, they are implicitly taken as stating that they are expecting or requiring it. Wants and demands, however, may be considered two quite distinctive constructs.

Wishes

A wish can be defined as a 'desire or aspiration' for something (*Oxford Concise English Dictionary*). It has been used only intermittently in the psychology and psychotherapy field, for instance in Luborsky et al.'s Core Conflict Relationship Theme method (Tryon, 2002). 'Wishes', as the definition suggests, is closely related to 'desires' and 'wants'. However, as the empirical research tends to show, with a 'wish', there tends to be less expectation of a positive outcome as compared with a 'want' (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). It is more of an aspiration for something 'out of reach'. So, for instance, if I said, 'I wish I could finish this paragraph,' there is some inference that I am struggling to complete it. 'I want to finish this paragraph,' carries less of these connotations. Closely related to this, research shows that, with a 'wish', there is lower perceived control than with a 'want' (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). So, for instance, if I say, 'I wish

my daughter would tidy up her room,' I am positioning myself as someone relatively helpless in making this happen. 'I want my daughter to tidy up her room,' by contrast, evokes more of a sense of personal agency.

Hopes

A hope can be defined as 'a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen' (O'Hara, 2013, p. 5). In contrast to 'wishes' and 'wants', it has been explored quite extensively in the psychological, therapeutic and psychotherapy research fields – particularly in recent years, and in relation to the growth of 'positive psychology' (e.g., O'Hara, 2013; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, Michael, & Cheavens, 1999). As the definition suggests, 'hopes' are closely related to 'desires' in that they are things that we want to happen. However, as the research suggests, they are conceptually closer to 'wishes', in that there is lower perceived control. In addition, what differentiates 'hope' from these other concepts is that there tends to be a greater optimism or expectation that the positive thing will happen (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Hence, while a 'hope', like a 'wish', may still be out of reach and not something I can do much about – as in, 'I hope my daughter will tidy up her room' – there is more of a belief in its possibility. And, with that, may come a greater cognitive and emotional investment and commitment (Bruininks & Malle, 2005).

Preferences

The term 'preference' has also been considered synonymously with 'wants' and 'desires': both in the psychotherapy research field (e.g., Swift, Callahan, Cooper, & Parkin, 2018) and in political theory (Eriksson, 2011). However, to the extent that prefer means 'liking better' (Oxford University Press, 1995), 'preferences' tend to be desires for one thing in comparison to another, rather than desires per se. For instance, if I say, 'My preference is for my daughter to tidy up her room,' I am implicitly indicating that I want this more than something else: for instance, tidying it up myself, or her making it even more messy.

PREACTIONAL PHASES (INTENTION, PLANNING)

Intentions

Determinations, or commitments, to act in certain ways. In contrast to predecisional constructs, 'intentions' have specific action content, and tend to be conceptualised as more feasible and controllable (Malle & Knobe, 2001; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). However, they are still prior to actual action being conducted. The construct is widely used in the philosophical and psychological fields (e.g., Malle, Moses, & Baldwin, 2001), though less so in therapy.

Plans

Means of striving to actualise intentions. In contrast to other directional constructs, 'plans' refers to methods of actualising directions, rather than the directions, per se. Used in psychology by Miller et al. (1960), and subsequently applied to therapy in the work of Caspar (1995) and Silberschatz and colleagues (Curtis, Silberschatz, Sampson, & Weiss, 1994; Silberschatz, 2017; Silberschatz, Curtis, & Nathans, 1989).

PREACTIONAL, ACTIONAL, AND POSTACTIONAL PHASES (INTENTION, PLANNING, ACTION, AND FEEDBACK)

Goals

Within the psychological literature, probably the most widely used definition of goals is, 'internal representations of desired states' (1996, p. 338). More elaborated definitions are, 'subjectively desirable states of affairs that the individual intends to attain through action' (Kruglanski & Kopetz, 2009, p. 29); and 'the 'idiographic, personally meaningful end states that individuals envision and intentionally seek to attain in their lives' (Karoly, in Elliot & Church, 2002, p. 243). The *Online Etymology Dictionary* states that the word 'goal' emerged in the 16th Century and referred to the endpoint of a race. Its origins are uncertain, but may be related to the Old English *gal, meaning 'obstacle' or 'barrier.'

'Goals', as suggested earlier, are one of the most frequently used directional term in the contemporary psychological literature (e.g., Aarts & Elliot, 2012; Little, Salmela-Aro, & Phillips, 2007; Locke & Latham, 2002; Moskowitz & Grant, 2009b); and their use seems to be increasing. Grouzet et al. write, 'Since the 1980s, psychological research on goals has experienced a real renaissance' (Grouzet et al., 2005, p. 800). Particular areas of focus have been on goals and well-being, goal dimensions, and goal-related processes such as goal-setting. As with directionality, goals have been described as, 'the essence of all that we think of when we think of what it means to be human' (Moskowitz & Grant, 2009a, p. 1), and the "'guides" that direct all nonreflexive and nonaccidental human responding' (Moskowitz & Grant, 2009a, p. 2). Like 'needs', 'goals' have also been proposed as an 'integrating metric' for psychology: a 'Rosetta stone' around which human activity and personality can be understood (Karoly, 1999).

Within the psychology field, the term *personal goals* is sometimes used (e.g., Brunstein, 1993), rather than just 'goals', to indicate that the focus is on goals that individuals have for themselves.

In recent years, there has also been an increasing interest in 'goals' in the psychotherapy research field (e.g., Michalak, Heidenreich, & Hoyer, 2004; Tryon & Winograd, 2011), and in relation to therapeutic practice (Cooper & Law, 2018). Although the term is most commonly associated with the more structured, directive, and focused thera-

peutic practices – such as CBT and interpersonal therapy (IPT) – it has been adopted and discussed within a wide range of therapies, including systemic, psychodynamic, and humanistic practices (see Grey et al., 2018).

Like ‘wants’, ‘goals’ are not a deterministic or mechanistic concept. As the definitions, above, indicate, they are something that the individual ‘intends’ or ‘seeks’ to ‘attain’ through ‘action’ – they involve agency. They also do not require a purpose clause; and can extend from long-term life projects (‘My goal is to be a bus driver’) to relatively short term wants (‘My goal is to finish this sentence’) (see Chapter 5, this volume).

However, whereas a ‘want’ or ‘desire’ is predecisional; a ‘goal’ is postdecisional and potentially actional. That is, it implies both that there is a specific intention and also some actual or hypothesised plan (Woodfield, 1976). If I say, for instance, ‘I want to be an astronaut,’ I means nothing other than I have an initial yearning towards it. On the other hand, if I say ‘My goal is to be an astronaut,’ it suggests I have some plans, or at least am thinking about them.

Closely related to this, a ‘goal’ is something we strive to achieve ourselves, whereas a ‘want’ – along with ‘desires’, ‘wishes’, and ‘hopes’ – are things that other people, or other forces outside of ourselves, might attain. As a fan of Brighton and Hove Albion football team, for instance, it would not make sense to say that ‘my goal is for them to win the Championship’. It is my ‘hope’ or ‘wish’ or ‘what I want’ – it would only make sense to say that it was my ‘goal’ if I had some ability to bring this result about: for instance, if I was their manager or played for the team.

In contrast to other directional terms, ‘goal’ tends to particularly emphasise the noematic (‘external’) end of the directional trajectory: the goal object. Hence, when we talk about ‘goals’, we tend to be defining relatively fixed and specific end states (‘My goal is to finish this essay by tonight’); rather than, for instance, more amorphous ‘strivings’, which could end in a variety of forms. This means that the concept of ‘goals’ ‘implies a degree of definition ahead of time that does not always fit with how activities and engagements proceed’ (Dreier, 2008, p. 100). For this reason, a focus on goals may be seen as overly superficial by therapeutic approaches which see behaviour primarily determined by unconscious forces (see, for instance, Grey et al., 2018). Furthermore, to the extent that therapeutic approaches define wellbeing in terms of spontaneous, ‘organismic’, naturally unfolding processes (e.g., Rogers, 1961), a focus on goals may be seen as imposing a degree of structure and calculation that is actively unhelpful to the client (e.g., Rowan, 2008). Nevertheless, given the prevalence of this term in the literature, it is the principal term that will be used in this book to describe directions in the actional phase.

Personal Strivings

A *personal striving* has been operationalised by Emmons (1986) as, ‘an objective that you are typically trying to accomplish or attain’ (p. 1060). The term has been used

primarily by Emmons and his colleagues in their widely-cited psychological research. For Emmons, 'personal strivings' refers to a broader, more superordinate and more abstract cluster of objectives than 'goals'. For instance, my general striving might be 'to be more attractive'; whereas my specific goals might be to, 'buy some decent clothes,' 'lose weight' and 'find a decent barbers.'

Pursuits

Dreier (2008), a psychologist and therapy researcher, defines a *pursuit* as, 'a complex, often cross-contextual and intermittent engagement with particular concerns that may reach across long periods of time and a complex set of occasions and contexts' (p. 100). The term has not been widely used in the psychological or therapeutic fields. However, Dreier suggests that it has the advantage over 'goals' that, as with 'strivings', it has a less fixed endpoint. That is, 'it may not be well-defined and may be changed on the way' (p. 100). Like 'strivings,' pursuits are also at a more superordinate level, and may encompass a number of situation-specific goals.

Possible selves

Possible selves are 'conceptions of the self in future states' (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 157). For instance, I might have a conception of myself as a loving grandfather in the future, or as a 'wise old man' of the therapy field. The term was introduced by psychologists Markus and Nurius (Markus & Nurius, 1986) as a means of linking motivation with the self-concept. 'Possible selves', like 'goals', represent future states. However, whereas 'goals' are things that we typically want, 'possible selves' have no inherent evaluative element. Hence, while I may have 'hoped for' possible selves, I may also have possible selves that I feel indifferent to, and possible selves that I fear or dread. In addition, 'possible selves', like 'strivings', represent a cluster of future potentials; and specifically in regard to who the person will become. A possible self, then, might be me as 'richer' or 'smarter' or 'better looking'; but not my house or my garden as different.

Personal projects

Personal projects can be defined as, 'a set of interrelated acts extending over time, which is intended to maintain or attain a state of affairs foreseen by the individual' (Little, 1983, p. 276). The term has been mainly used by Little and his colleagues in an influential and wide-ranging series of psychological investigations (Little et al., 2007). It draws on work from Sartre (1958), where it refers to the chosen way of being for the being-for-itself (van Deurzen & Kenward, 2005). Little suggests that 'personal projects'

may be synonymous with 'personal goals' (Little, 2007). However, like 'striving' and 'pursuits', 'personal projects' are more extended temporally and spatially, and may be multigoal processes (Little, 2007). In addition, while 'goals' are cognitions, 'projects' are behavioural acts. This takes them beyond 'plans' in terms of actual in-the-world activities.

Life tasks

Life tasks can be defined as, 'the set of tasks that the person sees himself or herself working on and devoting energy to solving during a specified period in life' (Cantor, Norem, Niedenthal, Langston, & Brower, 1987, p. 1179). Task, here, can be understood as 'a piece of work to be done or undertaken' (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). The term 'life tasks' has been adopted and explored by Cantor and colleagues in their psychological research, and by Wong (1998, p. 412) in relation to therapy. 'Tasks' are similar to 'goals' and 'plans', in that both set out a course of action. However, the term is conceptually closer to 'plans' in that there is a stronger emphasis on what the person is doing to get there, rather than on the specific endpoint. The term 'task', however, tends to carry a more negative evaluation than either 'plans' or 'goals' – and certainly more than 'wants' or 'desires' – in that it may be something I am required or expected to do. For instance, I might certainly say, 'I want a bottle of wine this evening,' and possibly also, 'My plan is to have a bottle of wine this evening.' But if I said, 'My task is to have a bottle of wine this evening,' I would be inferring that this was something of a burden, more akin to a job or a duty. In using the term life tasks, Cantor and colleagues are also focusing on plans that are relatively encompassing and extended over time (for instance, 'making friends'), rather than immediate and in-the-moment pieces of work (for instance, 'to meet Sandy later for coffee').

Purposes

A purpose can be defined as, 'the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists' (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). The term is rarely used in mainstream psychology; but is prevalent in existential and meaning-centred psychologies and therapies, where there is a particular focus on life purposes (e.g., Wong, 2013; Yalom, 1980). Like a 'goal', a 'purpose' is an ends towards which particular activities are oriented. So, for instance, we might say, 'My goal is to keep the room cool, and I did that by turning on the fan,' or 'The purpose of turning on the fan was to keep the room cool.' In that respect, the 'goals' in my life and the 'purposes' in my life are relatively synonymous. However, when I talk about the purpose of my life (as when I talk about the purpose of the fan), I am asking about the superordinate reason for which I am living. Hence, questions of purpose stretch beyond the individual self

towards contextual, philosophical, and spiritual explanations for doing things: that is, to higher-order directions that transcend the individual. If I say, for instance, that 'My purpose in life is to contribute towards a better society', I am not just saying that this is the goal towards which many of my activities are oriented. Rather, I am saying that, in some way, I am here to fulfil that function.

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