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Integrating Emotional Regulation Strategies in Psychotherapeutic Practice

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Abstract: ***Emotion regulation has become a crucial aspect of modern psychotherapy treatment, underscoring its importance in influencing psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and resilience. Recent work emphasizes the need of cultivating emotional awareness, meaning-making, and volitional involvement with interior experiences by integrating concepts from attachment theory, existential methods, and Self-Determination Theory. Therapeutic methods that prioritize autonomous support, introspective investigation, and adaptable emotional expression help clients in comprehending the personal meaning of their emotions instead of repressing or evading them. These theories emphasize developmental and relational factors, such as early caregiving patterns, social connectivity, and environmental stressors that affect emotional coping throughout life. This review synthesizes current data, highlighting the significance of integrative emotion-regulation techniques in improving treatment results and mitigating susceptibility to emotional dysregulation, existential distress, and maladaptive coping mechanisms. The implications for therapeutic treatment include the need for methods that affirm emotional experiences, enhance self-awareness, and foster more psychological flexibility.***

Keywords: Psychotherapeutic, Strategies Integrating, Emotional Regulation, Interpersonal, Interpersonal.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary psychotherapy focuses on emotion regulation because of its strong relationship to psychological well-being and because many mental health disorders are caused by emotional processing abnormalities. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental illnesses defines emotion-regulation dysfunction as a distinguishing characteristic of psychiatric illnesses, emphasizing the need to develop regulatory abilities in therapy (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Understanding, managing, and expressing emotions adaptively is essential to psychological health because they influence perception, decision-making, interpersonal communication, and coping. Thus, psychotherapists across modalities increasingly understand that emotional integration is necessary for significant and persistent therapeutic improvement.

Various psychotherapies address emotion control via various processes. Cognitive reappraisal and restructuring in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) change maladaptive emotional reactions by changing underlying interpretations (Clark, 2022; Draheim & Anderson, 2021). Psychodynamic therapy helps people recognise, explain, and resolve affective issues from past relationships (Pilecki et al., 2015). Emotion-regulation skills boost symptom reduction and treatment results in both ways (Aldao et al., 2014). Even with these advances, a full synthesis of how regulatory measures affect clinical practice is required.

The importance of integrative emotion regulation has been emphasized in recent theoretical work, especially in Self-Determination Theory (Roth et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2016). This process involves being conscious, constructing meaning reflectively, and expressing emotions voluntarily. Integrative regulation promotes an open and curious attitude toward emotional experiences, in contrast to repressive types of control that include reducing or separating from them. This change promotes genuineness, psychological adaptability, and enhanced relationship functioning, establishing integrated emotion regulation as a therapeutically beneficial approach in many therapeutic contexts. In contrast, a variety of psychopathological consequences, including higher discomfort and diminished closeness, are associated with repressive or dysregulated emotional coping mechanisms (Shahar et al., 2018).

Psychotherapy, in light of the mountain of research highlighting the significance of adaptive emotion regulation, has to keep progressing toward methods that intentionally foster emotional self-awareness, adaptability, and integration. The present review compiles important findings from studies on emotion expression, regulation training, and client experience to help therapists better assist their clients in developing adaptive emotional skills. Highlighting the critical role of integrating emotion-regulation strategies in psychotherapeutic practice and outlining practical and theoretical implications for future clinical work, this paper explores developmental foundations, therapeutic mechanisms, and contemporary empirical findings.

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II. EMOTION REGULATION IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

The most accurate description of interpersonal emotional regulation (ER), particularly in its extrinsic form, may be that of a psychotherapist who works to influence their patients' emotional reactions. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), defines a "mental disorder" as "a syndrome characterised by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental underling mental functioning." One of the criteria for this diagnosis is the central role of emotional regulation dysfunction in psychopathology.

A decrease in symptoms after treatment has been correlated with enhancements in emotional regulation adaptive methods (Aldao et al., 2014). While various novel therapeutic methods centered on emotion regulation (ER) have emerged in the past decade, such as ERT, it is essential to elucidate the role of ER in the therapeutic process by examining the degree to which ER processes underpin diverse psychotherapeutic approaches utilized globally.

PDT and CBT are two prominent psychotherapy techniques that are used to treat psychological and psychiatric illnesses (Pilecki et al., 2015). For each method, we describe how ER contributes to the patient's transformation path during therapy by way of its core components. It is reasonable to compare PDT with CBT in general since, despite their differences, these two macro approaches have common epistemological foundations (Charis & Panayiotou, 2021; Pilecki et al., 2015; Fernández-Álvarez et al., 2016;).

III. EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Emotions are innate tendencies that have developed over time to guide an organism's behavior in response to its environment. These tendencies are organized along fundamental defensive and appetitive states. Also, there are many cognitive processes that help understand or evaluate the scenario that causes an emotional reaction; these processes are in addition to experience, expressiveness, and physiology, which are only a few of the many components that make up an emotional response. For example, when faced with a potentially dangerous snake, a person's natural reaction would be to recognize the threat ("it's a snake"), feel fear, become more aware of their fear, increase their autonomic activity to get ready to flee, and display the fear on their face. Since many mental health issues have been associated with disruptions in these areas, it stands to reason that treatments focusing on these areas will have a significant impact (Kring, 2021).

Since emotion consists of both experienced and expressed feelings, accurate and trustworthy assessment of both aspects is crucial to many therapeutic approaches. The therapist's ability to gauge the client's distress during repeated exposure to a feared stimulus is crucial for the success of exposure-based therapies. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy are two examples of mindfulness-based treatments for depression. These approaches encourage patients to become more self-aware and in control of their emotional responses. Clients' emotional awareness is one of the primary goals of Emotional Processing Therapy (Greenberg, 2022) and then better at experiencing and expressing both good and negative emotions. Such therapeutic techniques need measures of emotional experience, awareness, and expression. Several assessments of these affective abilities have been demonstrated to be beneficial in adult psychotherapy.

Psychotherapists often utilize the Subjective Units of Distress Scale to gauge patients' emotional experiences. Using a scale from 0 (not at all) to 100 (very much), the SUDS assesses a single item (such as distress, fear, or anxiety). Every now and again, we switch to a scale from zero to ten. Adhering to Wolpe's initial intent, the SUDS is commonly employed in exposure therapy to gauge the client's level of dread in response to a phobic stimulus and the extent to which their pathological fear response becomes habitualized during and after exposure.

The SUDs lack accessible psychometric data, despite having been developed about 50 years ago and being a measure that is often used with exposure-based treatments. The main reason for this is because evaluating the internal consistency of a single-item measure or the test retest reliability of a measure for a concept like state anxiety, which is inherently unstable, is neither feasible or useful. A new research that looked at the SUDS and physiology in the setting of exposure-based therapies found that they had convergent validity. In an in vivo driving experience including adults with driving phobia and a nonphobic control group, alpers et al. (2015) discovered that SUDS and heart rate consistently covaried.

The SUDS is brief to administer, easy to understand, and face-valid, among its other benefits. Given that the client is expected to be fully present with their anxiety response throughout the assessment, the short duration of this measure becomes even more important in an exposure-based therapy context. The SUDS has the potential drawback of relying too much on the client to provide an accurate depiction of their present state of anxiety or distress. A further drawback is that it relies on single-item assessments, which raises issues about the percentage of variance from errors to real variance and sampling error, among other possible measurement flaws. Self-Assessment Another popular self-reported emotional experience test is Manikin. SAMs show valence and arousal nonverbally. SAM employs continuum manikins for each emotion.

The SAM figure rates valence from joyful, smiling to sad, frowning on a 9-point scale (1 = extremely pleasant, 9 = very unpleasant). On a 9-point scale, SAM figures vary from eager with wide eyes and an active body to relaxed with closed eyelids and an inactive body to assess arousal. Valence and arousal measure emotions. SAM psychometric data is more extensive than SUDS. SAM valence and arousal parameters alter with physiological responses to emotion, making it a valid measure of emotional responsiveness. The SAM assesses emotional reaction to visuals, graphics, music, advertisements, and unpleasant stimuli. SAM assesses emotional reactivity during exposure-based treatment (Sloan & Marx, 2024). SAMs might be digital or handwritten.

SAM has several advantages. Scare-related arousal and valence are effective in exposure models. The SAM may be the finest exposure-based treatment tool since it captures these two essential emotional responses and physiological signs. SAM, like SUDS, assumes honest emotional reporting. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule is another self-report emotional exam. PANAS' 20 items measure 10 positives (interesting, eager, energetic) and 10 negative (irritated, unsatisfied, afraid) effects. PANAS assesses emotions like SAM. PA and NA show valence and arousal. High NA signifies melancholy and unpleasant feeling, whereas high PA shows vigor, attention, and enjoyment. One is "not at all" and five is "very much" on the Likert scale. The instructions for various items have varied due dates. You may utilize PANAS with time directions for the present, today, the last few days, the week, the past few weeks, the year, and general, such as "you generally feel this way," which is how you feel on average.

In large college student samples, the PANAS PA and NA scales consistently demonstrate strong internal consistency ranging from.84 to.90. After two months of using generic time instruction (e.g.,.71), the PANAS remained steady. (Watson et al., 2018) replicated internal consistency and test-retest reliability with university workers and psychiatric patients. Both the consensus and discriminant validity of the NA scale have been established, as it has been favorably associated with depression, anxiety, and general distress, whereas the PA scale has been shown to be negatively connected. The sensitivity of PA and NA measures to time for the purpose of evaluating treatment outcomes (Watson, 2018). For five to seven weeks, individuals in one research were asked to do the PANAS every day following the "today" time instructions. Assessing the level of stress and social activities among participants. Social engagement was higher with PA, and there was a robust correlation between within-subject stress and NA variations but not PA. Another research (Clark & Watson, 2016) had participants describe their stress levels and social activities from the previous hour while taking the PANAS every three hours while awake, following "present moment" timing instructions. According to the PA-NA paradigm, social interaction was more strongly associated with PA than with NA, and perceived stress was shown to be associated with variations in NA but not in PA.

The PANAS has been widely used in research on anxiety and depression, where elevated levels of Negative Affect (NA) are indicative of both anxiety, especially generalized anxiety disorder, and depression, while diminished levels of Positive Affect (PA) are typical of depression and social phobia. Several studies have employed the PANAS to investigate changes throughout depression treatment, demonstrating that negative affect diminishes and positive affect rises in tandem with reductions in depressive symptoms during cognitive behavioral and pharmacological interventions. A supplementary investigation of individuals with comorbid anxiety and depression, who received naturalistic cognitive behavioral therapy, revealed a reduction in NA with the alleviation of anxiety and depression symptoms. Nonetheless, PA elevated just for a specific group of consumers who exhibited a notable reduction in depression and exclusively during a protracted duration of therapy (Kring, Persons, & Thomas, 2023).

IV. EMOTION REGULATION TRAINING

The area of emotion regulation lacks a thorough mechanical explanation for how emotion regulation is acquired, however there is an increasing body of work on emotion regulation training. Training in emotional regulation typically comprises practicing a method or set of methods, emotional competencies (like labeling or emotional awareness), or related cognitive processes over and over again, and then seeing if it improves the effectiveness of regulation or alleviates clinical symptoms. In terms of empirical evidence about the ability to train of emotion regulation, clinical literature is a major source. Several psychotherapeutic approaches have been developed with the express purpose of helping patients develop better abilities to control their emotions. These include cognitive-behavioral therapy, emotion regulation therapy, affect regulation training, and combined control and exposure training for PTSD (Watkins, 2016). These psychotherapies may teach emotion management implicitly or explicitly to the patient. Example: CBT fixes cognitive biases that cause emotional pain and bad conduct. These repairs usually need cognitive reappraisal because they involve reinterpreting the concepts and events that generated the maladaptive thinking pattern (Clark, 2022). Researchers found that CBT promotes cognitive reappraisal frequency and efficacy (Draheim & Anderson, 2021). CBT combines emotion regulation techniques, which are commonly used to change dysfunctional thinking. This integration makes direct regulatory training hard to distinguish from other treatment protocol effects. This section will explore DBT, ERT, and ART, which specifically educate emotion control abilities in different parts of their protocols. Many psychotherapies, including CBT, teach emotion management.

DBT, created to treat suicide thoughts and borderline personality disorder, targets distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, mindfulness, and emotion regulation. DBT explicitly teaches emotion management skills. Distraction and crisis management teach attentional deployment, whereas reality checks and reality acceptance teach cognitive transformation. Thus, DBT improves emotion control. DBT reduces amygdala reactivity and improves emotion control in borderline personalities (Goodman et al., 2014). DBT enhanced emotion control in adolescents with suicide thoughts and self-harm practices, reducing symptoms (Asarnow et al., 2021). The Difficulties in ER Scale showed that DBT reduced emotion dysregulation in a transdiagnostic group of depressed and anxious people.

Training diverse emotion control behaviors is an explicit goal of ERT. Raising motivational awareness (i.e., being cognizant of one's own motivational impulses and signals), building regulatory capacity, and exposing oneself to new contextual variables are the three primary tenets of ERT. Evidence suggests that ERT may help with emotion control and alleviate symptoms of a range of mood disorders. Researchers found that ERT significantly reduced the intensity of GAD symptoms in a randomized clinical study when compared to a basic attentional control intervention (Renna et al., 2020). Research has also shown that ERT may help people with GAD become more adept at cognitive reappraisal and increase their attentional flexibility. Moreover, (O'Toole et al., 2019) found that while ERT did not specifically address the mechanics of learning, it did show that symptoms improved in GAD patients who had learned to better regulate their emotions, suggesting a relationship between the two.

The ART method teaches emotional control. Model skills and explicit practice are used in ACE-influenced ART. ART encompasses physiological relaxation, nonjudgmental awareness, welcoming emotions and reminding oneself that uncomfortable sensations are normal, self-support and self-soothing, understanding emotion sources and triggers, and controlling undesirable emotions. ART starts with a thorough component and practice method explanation. To learn these skills and manage habits, individuals practice shorter steps as frequently as feasible after this initial encounter. A randomized controlled trial showed this strategy decreased depression and enhanced emotion management. The ART design promotes emotional control. This technique states that emotion control and ability improvements need explicit propositional knowledge (in the first full sequence instruction) and repeated practice to transfer to implicit procedural abilities. No matter the training process, learning-driven emotion regulation development typically combines explicit propositional information, such as a new emotion modulation technique or ability, and daily procedural practice to create implicit regulatory habits and efficiency.

Neuroimaging signs have been linked to treatment-induced improvements in emotion regulation in many clinical trials. (Scult et al., 2019), there were notable alterations in default mode and salience network connections in resting-state fMRI scans taken before and after ERT, which are associated with better clinical outcomes for GAD. An exposure therapy for PTSD trial found that cognitive reappraisal of negative emotional stimuli increased lateral frontopolar activation and connectivity to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (PFC), improving symptoms. Clinical neuroimaging has shown that cognitive reappraisal reduces activity in the anterior insula and dorsal anterior cingulate cortex in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) responders, reducing emotion dysregulation. These neuroimaging findings suggest that changes in brain regions involved in emotional response and cognitive control may explain psychotherapy-related changes in emotion regulation behavior.

Therapeutic research show that purposeful practice and training increase emotion regulation despite its complexity. Many studies let participants swap talents to improve therapeutic results. Fundamental science-based emotion regulation training may improve strategy implementation or cognitive processes like emotion working memory. A 20-day learning paradigm with emotional working memory tasks or a placebo with nonaffective activities was studied. Cognitive reappraisal emotion management tasks were done during baseline and post-training fMRI. Compare to placebo, emotion working memory training enhanced frontoparietal network efficiency during cognitive reappraisal. Active training increased frontoparietal and subgenual anterior cingulate brain activity, improving cognitive reappraisal test emotion regulation. Participants in other training trials consciously reappraise emotional stimuli once or four times then passively examine them a week later. One week later, those who reappraised four times had increased frontoparietal activity and amygdala inactivation during reappraisal and passive observing.

Clinical experience and foundational research suggest that teaching emotion regulation may alleviate a variety of psychopathological symptoms. It's difficult to determine the optimum training methods. These treatments' training techniques differ, making it challenging to identify which components of emotion regulation are taught, which skills impact therapy outcomes, and how training duration affects results. We investigated the association between 289 in-patient CBT patients' emotional regulation and therapy outcomes to address these difficulties. Acceptance, tolerance, and active modification of negative affect were key predictors of treatment outcomes, and a modified CBT protocol that included general emotion management training boosted its effectiveness. This study is difficult to translate onto conceptual models of emotion regulation, such as the extended process model, but it is a major step in understanding the connection between clinical results and emotion control training components.

Evidence from the expanding corpus of research on emotion regulation training is strong, suggesting that this kind of intervention may produce gains in self-control substantial enough to influence clinical symptoms if only temporarily. But what's noticeably absent from this body of work is an examination of how this training process really learns. In order to enhance emotion regulation training and therapeutic treatments, researchers need to understand how learning takes place in the development of skills related to emotion control.

V. INTEGRATIVE, CONTROLLED, AND DYSREGULATED EMOTION REGULATION

SDT calls multimodal intrapersonal emotion regulation (IER) healthy internal border regulation (Ryan et al., 2016). First, like mindfulness, IER involves nonjudgmental, receptive emotional awareness. A nonbiased technique recognizes emotional inputs without flattening, reducing, or ignoring them. Second, one must actively and voluntarily examine the emotional experience and its significance to other aspects of one's self, such as short- and long-term objectives, values, and preferences. Curiosity makes people explore emotions to comprehend and experience their value. Third, knowing the event and its possible significance or worth allows the person to make educated judgments regarding future behaviors, such as expressing feelings and seeking emotional support or withholding. IER is not a goal, yet it allows expression and withholding. Following this idea, IER improves wellbeing, openness to experience, authenticity, and introspection (Roth et al., 2018).

While informative, emotions may be terrifying. People usually strive to control their emotions during such evaluations. Suppressive emotion control is common in lab research and life. SER involves ignoring, avoiding, and burying negative emotions since it is evaluative or destructive. SER may emerge early in an emotional cycle when people ignore feelings. Avoiding or detaching from emotions reduces their impact. Thus, unlike IER, internal inquiry is constrained and the experienced emotion is not fully accessible or brought to awareness. SER may develop later in the emotional process and result in repressing the feeling. High-SER people may behave sincerely and avoid emotional support and mirroring due to regulated emotion suppression. Thus, it may complicate expressing personal issues or regulating negative emotions in relationships (Shahar, Kalman-Halevi, & Roth, 2018). For instance, emotion repression worsens depression. Since the emotional incident is not addressed, it may reoccur and create rumination.

Cognitive reappraisal and other strategies for managing emotions may be practiced in a guided or unguided way. To rephrase, reappraisal might be an unconscious defense mechanism for avoiding or downplaying sensations and the insights they provide. However, reappraisal may also be a useful adaptive tool for those who have honestly considered their emotions and their implications, and whose appraisals are sincere, as we will discuss more below.

Unlike IER and SER, which include orienting to one's emotions in regulated or intentional ways, emotional dysregulation involves feeling unable to manage one's emotions. Being overloaded and unorganized makes it hard to concentrate and get things done. Dysregulated people may have some emotional access but not focused, calm awareness as with integrative processing. Due to their overpowering nature, emotions may be exhibited impulsively or concealed. When individuals have problems managing their emotions, they may self-harm or isolate themselves due to outbursts or withdrawal. Dysregulated persons have little control over their activities, which causes interpersonal issues and subjective suffering whether they express or hide their sentiments. Thus, emotion dysregulation lacks IER components including openness, curiosity, and choice in actions and coping techniques.

VI. DEVELOPMENTAL AND INTERPERSONAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMOTION REGULATION

1) Autonomy-Supportive Environments and Emotional Growth: A safe space where people may feel and talk about their emotions without fear of repercussions is crucial for a person's healthy emotional development. Caregivers, instructors, and therapists may help individuals develop a healthy relationship with their emotions by listening with empathy, acknowledging their experiences, and promoting self-reflection. (Ryan, Deci, & Vansteenkiste, 2016) People are more likely to recognize their emotions, interpret them, and incorporate them into their decision-making when they are in an environment that fosters a feeling of psychological safety. Integrative emotion regulation may be built upon with the use of this kind of assistance, which gradually enhances internal resources like self-confidence, self-awareness, and emotional clarity. (Roth et al., 2018)

2) Controlling or Need-Thwarting Contexts and Their Impact: On the other hand, it may be rather challenging to cultivate appropriate emotion regulation in settings where there is a lot of pressure, criticism, or emotional invalidation. Many people learn to bury or detach themselves from their emotions when they are raised in environments that value positive emotions and punish or manipulate those who show negative ones. (Shahar, Kalman-Halevi, & Roth, 2018) Conditional regard, in which one's love or acceptance is withheld until one's feelings conform to the expectations of others, is one practice that may lead to emotional discord and disintegration. Because of this, individuals may develop dysfunctional ways of controlling their emotions, which makes it more difficult for them to comprehend and control their feelings. (Ryan et al., 2016)

3) Family Dynamics and Early Socialization of Emotion: Emotional abilities are shaped in large part by the interactions that occur within families throughout childhood and adolescence. Early models shape self-regulation behaviors; children watch caregivers' emotional expression, coping, and communication. Having a safe space to talk about how they feel and why is a hallmark of a loving family. An infant's emotional lexicon and capacity for self-regulation are both bolstered by this kind of early socialization. Children may find it difficult to establish consistent coping mechanisms in households characterized by frequent arguments, rigidity, or emotional instability. Individuals' emotional conduct and the ways they seek assistance during emotionally difficult circumstances are shaped by these internalized patterns that begin in childhood and continue throughout adulthood. (Kring, 2021)
4) Interpersonal Consequences of ER Styles: The quality of a person's relationships is influenced by their ability to control their emotions. More empathy, openness, and sensitivity to other people's emotions are traits of those who are able to process and make meaning of their own emotional experiences. The result is better understanding, communication, and closeness between people. On the other side, problems in relationships may arise from chronic repression or dysregulation of emotions. Both dysregulated expression and suppression may put a person's interpersonal connections under stress, with the former making them seem distant or inattentive to others. (Shahar et al., 2018) The importance of emotion regulation in interpersonal relationships is shown by the fact that these patterns impact not just romantic relationships but also friendships, familial ties, and therapeutic bonds.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

1) Incorporating autonomy-supportive techniques in therapy may enhance clients' ability to confront emotions with receptivity instead of evasion.
2) Promoting introspective involvement with emotional events allows people to comprehend the fundamental significance of their emotions and react with enhanced clarity.
3) Establishing a nonjudgmental therapy environment diminishes protective emotional patterns, hence increasing clients' readiness to confront challenging emotions.
4) Facilitating flexible emotional expression enhances interpersonal dynamics and bolsters clients' capacity to manage relationship difficulties.
5) Instructing on integrative emotion-regulation techniques might diminish dependence on suppression and foster enduring emotional resilience.
6) Enhancing clients' capacity to recognize, categorize, and structure emotional experiences may mitigate dysregulation and promote more stable self-functioning.
7) Integrating mindfulness and experiential methods into therapy fosters profound emotional integration and improves general well-being.

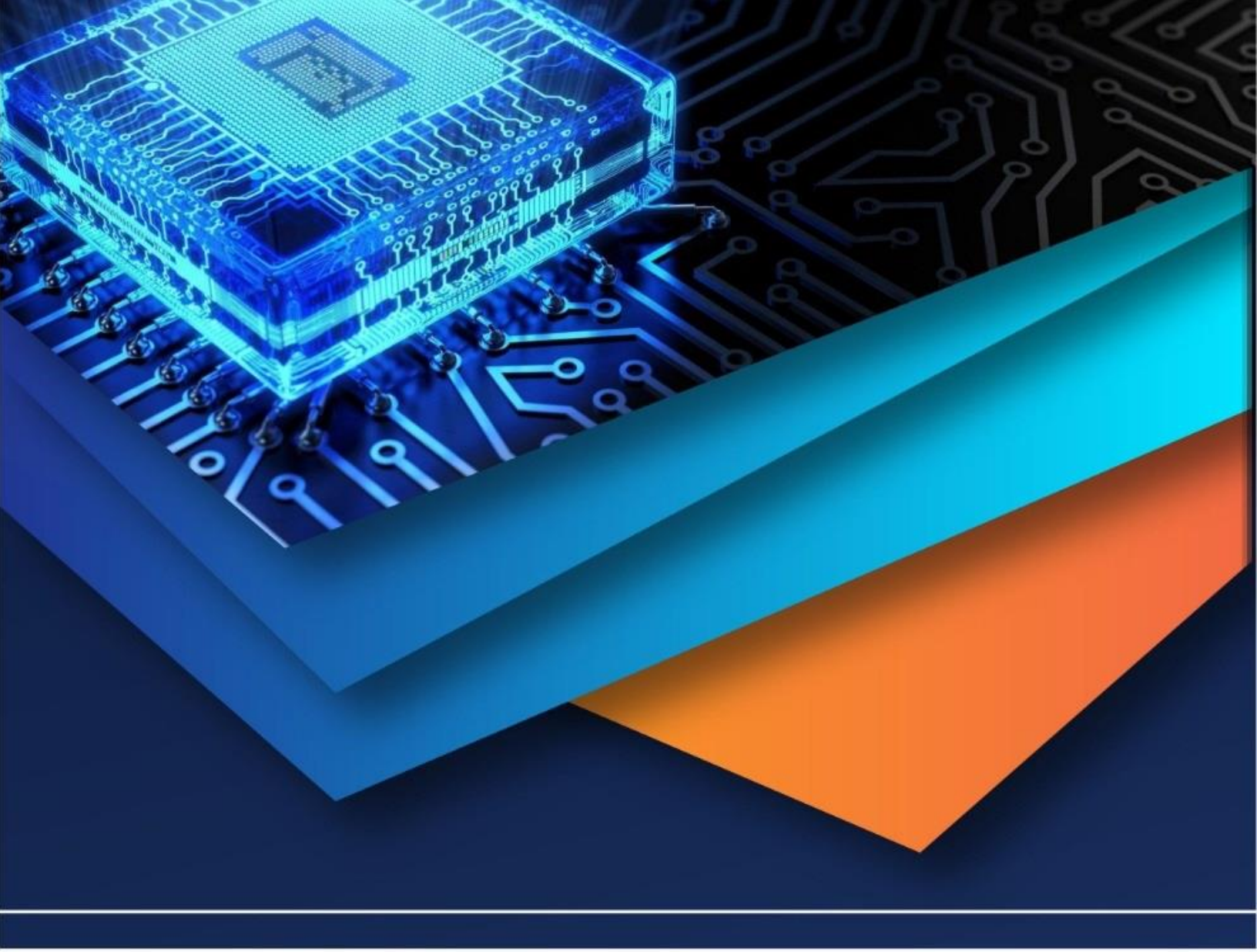
VIII. CONCLUSION

A synthesis of contemporary theoretical and empirical research indicates that successful psychotherapy treatment should transcend mere symptom alleviation to include a more profound engagement with emotional significance and control. Methods that encourage clients to examine their emotions with acceptance and inquiry, rather than fear, judgment, or repression, foster psychological integration, improved interpersonal dynamics, and enduring resilience. Developmental factors, especially early attachment contexts and relationship experiences, are fundamental in forming emotional patterns that last into adulthood. Identifying these effects enables therapists to address fundamental weaknesses while promoting autonomy, self-awareness, and relationship proficiency. Simultaneously, increasing existential demands and contemporary stresses underscore the need for therapeutic frameworks that facilitate meaning-making and genuine emotional expression. By adopting integrative emotion-regulation tools, psychotherapy may more successfully navigate the complex emotional terrains people experience today, providing avenues for improved well-being, fortified relationships, and a more cohesive sense of self.

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