

Theoretical Orientation Paper

Jessica Crenshaw Dunne

Department of Sport and Performance Psychology, University of Western States

COUN6110: Personality and Counseling Theories

Dr. Angel Brutus

September 14, 2025

Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive exploration of my personal consultation model by first reflecting on my worldview, cultural background, and life experiences and then articulates the counseling philosophies and models that align with my values and professional role as a sport and performance psychoeducational consultant. My worldview is rooted in the principles of Stoicism, Islamic ethics, and identity shaped by sport, independence and high achievement, and I draw from the philosophies of logotherapy and person-centered therapy to integrate the elements of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), ration-emotive behavioral therapy (REBT), and acceptance-commitment therapy (ACT) to form my consultation model. These models form my psychoeducational framework that hinges on the stages of change (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018).

Keywords: sport and performance psychology, psychoeducation, logotherapy, existential philosophy, person-centered therapy, CBT, REBT, ACT, psychological skills training, stages of change.

My worldview formed by my lived experience, my values, and my cultural background forms the foundation for my professional consultation philosophy. Reflecting on the interplay between my life philosophy and background informs how I perceive others and how I think I would be able to effect change. My worldview and life philosophy are influenced by Stoic resilience, Islamic ethics, and commitment to purpose and achievement. My experiences as an elite athlete, independent woman, and mother inform which counseling models are most aligned with my worldview. The result of this reflection is that I am drawn to both humanistic and cognitive-behavioral approaches which I will integrate into a framework that is tailored to the unique demands of each client in the sport and performance context.

Worldview and Life Philosophy

When I was around sixteen years old, a family friend gave me a t-shirt with the words: “I defy the ordinary.” That is how I have always thought of myself, and it is completely self-originated. My parents were neither permissive nor authoritarian or set perfectionistic standards. I am a high achiever but will not compromise my values to accomplish pursuits at the expense of others. I want to earn my success because I choose meaningful goals. Rising tides lift all boats. However, I am also a perfectionist and people-pleaser. My world view is mostly aligned with Stoicism tempered by compassion. I strongly believe there are things within my control and things that are not, and I tend to not express emotions that I believe to be unproductive. For things that are under my control, I can be stubborn in my persistence. However, when I encounter situation or factors that are not in my control, I tend to follow intuition more than logic. I diverge slightly from the Stoic mantra of accepting the hand that fate has dealt you (Holiday & Hanselman, 2016) in the sense that as a White woman growing up in the middle class, I was dealt a privileged hand. However, I believe that once I have taken any action to alter

a situation that is in my control, then I have to accept it – but not necessarily like it or in perpetuity. In *The Daily Stoic*, Holiday and Hanselman (2016) also quote Seneca lamenting sometimes all we have to show in life is our age. My identity is very much wrapped up in being anomalous, so I am most comfortable when I am in pursuit of an achievement.

As a recent convert to Islam, I have also incorporated the tenets of the religion into my life philosophy. What drew me first to Islam were the themes of peace and humility throughout the Qur'an. The Qur'an teaches leadership by example rather than proselytizing or even evangelicalism. I believe religion is deeply personal and individual, so I do not typically discuss my religion, but I still live by the standards set out by it. There is a deep sense of moral responsibility. You have free will but are held accountable for your actions, but your intentions are of utmost importance. One must also be socially responsible as exemplified in the pillar of Islam *zakat*, which means “charity;” life should be lived without excess. Community means respect and care for all peoples regardless of race or religions. The Qur'an states that God created different races and tribes so that we may become familiar with each other, not as a form of hierarchy (Qur'an, 49:13), and diversity is one of the blessings from God (Qur'an, 30:22). Muslims are encouraged to seek knowledge, live with patience and gratitude, and trust God.

Culture

My physical demographic information is 35-year-old White, cisgender, able-bodied female. My socio-economic demographic is a divorced, graduate-level educated, upper-middle class, Anglo-American, Muslim, mother of one child living in an affluent town in the Northeast. Psychologically, I have attention deficit hyperactive disorder that is managed without pharmaceutical intervention and have significantly above average cognitive ability and crystallized intelligence. My athletic demographic is a retired elite figure skater and current

competitive fencer. I am the only child of divorced and re-married parents, and the eldest child of three half siblings distributed among my biological parents' new marriages. Listing all these characteristics is an interesting exercise because although I present close to this description there is background and context that makes up my whole story.

Each part aspect of my culture has its own nuance, which makes me reflect on how imposing our own labels people disregards the story of their culture. Age is a matter of attitude to me; I perceive myself as young with plenty of time to achieve my goals. While I have always been able-bodied, I spent a lot of time at the endocrinologist before they diagnosed a three-year bone growth delay, explaining why my stature was in the negative percentile. While I am divorced, I don't consider myself a single mother because I share relatively equal custody and have an excellent co-parenting relationship with my ex-husband. I currently live in the Northeast but grew up in Richmond, Virginia (which largely considers itself to be the "South") until the age of 15 when I moved to New Jersey to train with an ice skating partner. I have now lived in the Northeast for longer than I lived in the Southeast. As a recent convert to Islam this is an identity component that I am still navigating and admittedly not quite comfortable with yet.

I understand it is a privilege that growing up, I did not think about my whiteness. It was not until recently that I considered how the experience of being a member of the majority has shaped my life. I could say that I am as "American" as they come because I can trace my ancestry back to the beginnings of colonial America. But the more accurate statement is that many of my ancestors were English colonizers who came to America in the early 17th century, with the exception of the branch who were potato famine refugee immigrants in the 19th century. There is evidence that at least one of my ancestors was an enslaver, and I feel shame about this

ancestry. These are legacies that I actively have to recognize when aligning with counseling approaches because I need to check my potential biases.

Community Impact

I think my community has impacted my personality by reinforcing it. As previously stated, my parents were not tiger parents, but they expected all of their children to perform to the best of their abilities once they were established. I showed academic aptitude and was identified “gifted” in elementary school, so I was expected to maintain that standard of academic performance. On the other hand, my half-brother struggled with ADHD and processing disorders throughout primary and secondary school, so he was expected to seek help and perform at an average level based on his abilities. But they never installed a hierarchy of those standards; it was acceptance of capabilities. Our dreams were never too big for our parents, but we were always held accountable for the path we took to achievement. The aforementioned brother is now a successful Broadway actor. My parents supported my moving to another state by myself a few months before my sixteenth birthday to train with a new skating partner. This move forged my fierce independence and fortitude. It also created a coping mechanism of emotional suppression which was reinforced by an emotionally abusive (later) skating partner. Currently I am in the social minority as a divorced woman, which further reinforces my feeling of difference and independence. In the athletic context, I participated in a feminized sport (figure skating) with male power dynamics and now participate in a male-dominated “masculine” sport (fencing). I am protective of women and an active advocate of women in sport, which I plan to continue in the male-dominated sport and performance psychology profession.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The first counseling philosophy that I was drawn to was existential therapy and specifically, logotherapy in their searches for meaning. Marcus Aurelius, a late Stoic philosopher, urged us to, ‘get active in your rescue...and do it while you can,’ (Holiday & Hanselman, 2016; pp. 387). Viktor Frankl, the architect of Logotherapy, believed that meaning sustains our existence (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). Because existential philosophy was developed in the context of the global destruction of World War I and World War II, it accepts that we must have a way to deal with the bad things in life that are unexplainable or out of our control (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). According to Islam, life is a test and those who struggle the most are rewarded to the most (Qur’an, 94:6 and 29:2). The philosophical underpinnings of Logotherapy came from Viktor Frankl’s time spent in a concentration camp where he survived through finding purpose in an incomprehensible system of suffering (Frankl, 2016). Central to all these philosophies is the free will to choose your actions.

Secondly, the theory that I expected to be most philosophically aligned with was person-centered therapy. Sport has taught me resilience, and my lived experience has required independence; so I connect with the Rogerian idea of self-actualization (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). I have also witnessed how being open about my own positive and negative life experiences has encouraged others to feel comfortable disclosing their experiences. This philosophy is especially salient as a sport and performance psychology (SPP) professional because athletes are often taught that no one else determines their success other than themselves. The conditionality of sport is akin to the person-centered theory that the conditional love of parents contributes to pathology (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). Success and recognition are condition on performance, and the members of the sport context and even family can relate

conditionally to a performer. Further the notion of increasing self-regard (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018) correlates with the competence element of self-determination theory as it relates to athlete motivation (Duda & Treasure, 2021).

Models of Psychology

I see myself as a present-focused, empathetic consultant who can relate to performance issues on a personal level but is also a catalyst for actionable methods of change when the client is ready. I can use the philosophical underpinnings of logotherapy (finding purpose) and person-centered therapy (unconditional regard and self-actualization) to guide the models of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and acceptance-commitment therapy (ACT). To note, as a future SPP *consultant* the use of the term “therapy” is applied with acknowledgement that it refers to interventions because diagnosis and treatment are outside my scope of practice. Accordingly, I feel that REBT, CBT, and ACT contain the most specific action-oriented intervention directives to help guide a case conceptualization and intervention plan. As a consultant, my job is to give performers the tools to enhance the mental aspect of their performance, and these models provide the best “tools” for a psycho-educational lens.

In the context of psychological theory history REBT, CBT and ACT build off each other with REBT as the inceptive model of CBT from which ACT developed as in the Third Wave (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). REBT uses the ABCDE model of psychology in which a person’s beliefs (B) influence the emotional and behavioral consequences (C) to an activating event (A). The consultant’s work is to help the client dispute (D) irrational beliefs (B) and establish effective rational beliefs (E; Toth et al., 2024). In the Rogerian sense, this detaches a client’s self-worth from the quality of their thoughts. The cognitive-behavioral method resonates

with a psychoeducational approach because the practitioner leads the problem and identification and change process (Keegan, 2010) which is action-forward and can be used in single session interventions (Britton et al., 2024). As Britton and colleagues (2024) pointed out, the sport context frequently calls for quick and impactful interventions in real-time, and this high intensity environment is where I thrive and derive fulfillment from seeing immediate feedback.

Acceptance-commitment is where my extensive athletic experience and the existential philosophy meet the psychological framework. Logotherapy and ACT focus on meaning and values, respectively, and values are the foundation of meaning. In my experience, I have learned that there are certain things we must accept about ourselves and our environment, otherwise we are in a constant state of struggle, which ACT defines as *cognitive flexibility* (Wood & Turner, 2025). When disputing (REBT) and replacing (CBT) thoughts becomes futile, then we must return to exploring how our core values (ACT) can move us forward.

Incompatible models

My non-clinical SPP role dictates which models I can apply to my practice. Theories with less focus on skills or teaching may not be compatible with a psychoeducational approach, such as psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapies. Practically, psychoanalytic therapy is meant to be a frequent and long-term process with sessions two to five times a week for an average of three to five years (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). As evidenced in the Britton and colleagues article (2024) SPP clients expect brief and powerful interventions. Because I will be focusing on performance enhancement as opposed to general mental health counseling, I anticipate that clients will expect more immediate “solutions” to their issues. The goals of education are also not compatible with the psychoanalytic process of revealing the unconscious reaction derived from childhood (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). Education is meant to drive the mind forward.

While learning about a client's history is a vital part of the initial relationship-building stage, interpreting their childhood is out of my scope of practice. Likewise, the insight-driven process of psychodynamic therapy is not conducive for practical thought and behavior changes that may enhance performance. While having an inferiority complex is an important consideration in SPP as it is in Adlerian psychodynamic therapy, I think an SPP consultant would find it difficult to get a client to "buy-in" to the idea that their performance issues are a matter of their childhood environments (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). The familial aspect of both these therapy models may indeed contribute to performance issues conscious or subconscious way, but neither system provides a clear guide to teaching skills to enhance the mental fortitude to rise above those issues.

There are several models of therapy that I believe would not work in isolation for me as a consultant but are in fact still vital components of my consulting philosophy. The underlying philosophies of systemic, gender-sensitive, and multicultural therapies are all related to cultural competence and advocacy, which are important aspects of the consultant role but serve more as guiding principles than intervention framework. Sport and performance organizations, especially teams and casts, are often referred to by both the performers and the organization as a "family." These organizations are systems which can be negatively affected by relational ambiguity, as proposed by systemic therapy in Prochaska and Norcross (2018). Role ambiguity and dysfunctional norms are some common issues in sport systems (Eys et al., 2021). But not all performance issues can be attributed to group dynamics. Gender dynamics in sport has been a pervasive issue in terms of equity, inclusion and demographic parity. However, using the perspective that internalized oppression is the main cause of performance declination would be limiting for a consultant, but does not negate the importance of being an advocate for broader

systemic change. Advocacy is also a large part of the work of a multi-cultural therapist. But, I believe that multiculturalism should be a foundational philosophy of my practice like person-centered and existential philosophy. As proposed by Prochaska and Norcross (2018) psychological approach should be tailored to the individual with an emphasis on the therapist(consultant)/client alliance. Thus, being culturally sensitive is both a requirement of creating an effective intervention program, but also only one part. Systemic, gender-sensitive, and multicultural approaches all provide distinct yet vital components to creating individualized SPP plans.

Personal Model of Counseling Skills

The general existential skills of living authentically and taking responsibility for your own choices fold neatly into the unconditional positive regard of Rogerian theory. In my practice, unconditional positive regard means using the existential phenomenological acceptance of the validity of each client's experience. The client and I will both acknowledge that we have the freedom to choose how we behave and how we react to our thoughts and emotions in accordance with our own values but then must take responsibility for the consequences of those choices. Motivational interviewing (MI) uses unconditional positive regard to establish the consultant-client relationship and is widely used by SPP practitioners (Mack et al., 2021). The more directive nature of MI (a departure from traditional Rogerian therapy) is better suited to psychoeducational consultation because it could help establish goals in a shorter period of time. Taking this more impactful approach to begin the relationship establishes a present-focused and action-forward relationship.

Once goals are established the, the REBT skill of disputing irrational beliefs, CBT practice of replacing dysfunctional thoughts, and then committed action prescribed by ACT

continue the trajectory established by MI. The most compelling aspect of REBT for the performance context is the ability to dispute irrational beliefs. Many athletes who suffer from performance anxiety have dogmatic self-talk that is irrational in the sense that it is not realistic in the sport context because there are many factors not within their control. Disputing dogmas such as “I *have* to win” recognizes that goals have turned into absolutes which can affect the client’s perception of failure (McCardle & Moore, 2012; Tóth et al., 2024). I want to then use the CBT principle of replacement to change cognitive biases into more productive self-talk (McCardle & Moore, 2012). Finally, these two processes require committed action in the ACT perspective to fully cycle through the change process where the client commits to behaving in accordance with the new, value-driven thoughts. Committed action both completes and initiates the cycle because it prioritizes goal-setting that aligns with a client’s established values (Wood & Turner, 2025).

Sport and Performance Theory Integration

In general, these philosophies and skills fit well with the predominant self-determination theory (SDT) in sport and performance psychology. SDT is a theory of motivation that states humans have a need to satisfy the psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Standage et al., 2019). Logotherapy attempts to improve competence through discovering purpose, and purpose can drive the motivation for efficacy. The Rogerian person-centered approach provides the underpinning of relatedness with its unconditional regard because the performance context is dominated by performance conditional relationships, so the consultation relationship can provide a safe haven. The Rogerian view that clients are capable of creating their own change also relates to the concept of competence. From this platform, the CBT approaches improve mental competence through cognitive restructuring. Taking the

psychoeducational approach gives clients the ability to autonomously activate them when necessary.

More specifically, the skills and methods within the chosen counseling theories relate to mental skills prevalent in sport and performance psychology. Wood and Turner (2025) integrate ACT with SPP theory through the lens of psychological skills training (PST). They primarily propose the elements of PST such as goal-setting, self-talk, imagery and relaxation show committed action. For example, values-based open goals may move the athlete towards living more authentically. ACT committed action relates to Locke and Latham's (2002) mechanistic theory as cited in Gould (2021) where setting goals direct behavior in towards specific immediate and long-term actions, i.e. committed action. Rational thinking and self-talk have been found to be effective coping mechanisms among athletes (Williams & Hacker, 2021). Self-talk is a method of cognitive control related to REBT and CBT through cognitive restructuring and thought stoppage (Williams & Hacker, 2021). CBT and REBT skills facilitate the recognition of negative self-talk, which is the manifestation of dysfunctional thoughts and irrational beliefs. And the practice of reframing self-talk directly correlates to the CBT process of replacement. Disputing and replacing also improves confidence in athletes through self-efficacy (Tóth et al., 2024). Williams and Hacker (2021) summarize how verbal persuasion facilitates self-efficacy through positive self-talk. Each of these approaches provide solid framework for applying SPP theory to mental skills.

Challenges and Benefits

Both the challenges and benefits of each philosophy or approach are dictated by the stages of change and predicated on stage matching (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). For example, an existential approach would be too philosophical and not provide enough structure when the

client is in the action stage, but it would be highly beneficial in the contemplation stage where the client is searching for purpose. In the precontemplation stage motivational interviewing could provide a good starting point for a resistant client (Mack et al., 2021) but would not be as helpful in the preparation stage where I need act as the expert to create an intervention plan. I recognize the REBT/CBT/ACT disputation-replacement-action cycle carries a heavy cognitive load and may become overwhelming, so they may need to be used in isolation to lessen relapses on the spiral model of the stages of change (Prochaska & Norcross, 2018). Even separately, they are well suited to the more structured needs of the action and maintenance stages. The CBT and REBT methods are largely based on logic which may feel invalidating to some clients especially those with foreclosed identities who may feel threatened by confrontation. However, the mindfulness aspect of ACT could mediate the effects of confrontation in allowing the client to observe themselves nonjudgmentally. Together these approaches create a system that can encompass the entire stage of change cycle as long they are matched to the appropriate stage.

Day-to-day Practice

Considering my population will most likely be private clients participating in individual sports and organizational contracts catering to individual sports, my days will vary depending on the service delivery mode of the day. My method is psychoeducational provided in a safe and empathetic space. When first meeting with private clients I will use the spirit, if not the precise technical execution of motivational interviewing to establish the alliance between the client and me. I will focus on the MI elements of active listening, open-ended questions and reflections to assess the needs of the client and their stage of change to create an intervention plan. The plan would use the correlating approaches to teach client's the necessary skills to achieve their mental

performance goals. For example, when faced with a maladaptive perfectionist athlete, I may employ REBT disputation exercises if the client was ready to confront that aspect of their identity. If not, then I may use a logotherapy approach to explore their purpose in participating in their chosen performance context. When planning seminars and workshops for organizations I will likely select broader mental skills for the session that would be applicable to a large portion of the participants. I could give a presentation on cognitive flexibility using ACT practices to a group of experienced fencers or workshop best self-talk practices with a group of coaches. I anticipate that my psychoeducational approach may appeal to clients who are looking for short-term interventions for specific issues or limited seminar series or those potential clients who are resistant to the idea of clinical therapy. I hope to provide a warm and impactful entry point into the benefits of mental performance training and psychotherapy.

Conclusion

The development of my personal consultation model is an important step in the formation of my professional practice. I found alignment with models that embrace both identity exploration and actionable strategies. Logotherapy, person-centered philosophy, REBT, CBT, and ACT each contribute elements to my dynamic, psychoeducational approach suited to the demands of the sport and performance context. My model consists of values-driven action, cognitive flexibility, and consultant-client alliance as a stimulus for growth. While I will not use them in isolation, the principles behind systemic, gender-sensitive, and multicultural theories are important elements to my cultural competence. Choosing which elements of my model to use with each client will revolve around which stage of change they occupy. As a consultant, I hope my model embodies authenticity, action and compassion and empowers clients to achieve their goals.

References

- Britton, D., Wood, A. G., & Pitt, T. (2024). Having Impact and Doing It Quickly: The Place for Brief and Single-Session Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies in Sport Psychology Practice. *The Sport Psychologist*, 38(2), 137-146. Retrieved Sep 9, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2021-0146>
- The Clear Qur'an Series: English Only* (Dr. Mustafa Kattab, Trans.). (2016). Book of Signs Foundation.
- Duda, J. L. & Treasure, D. C. (2021). The Motivational Climate, Motivation, and Implications for Empowering Athletes. In Williams, J. M. & Krane, V. (Eds.), *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance* (8th ed., pp. 57-76). McGraw Hill.
- Eys, M., Burke, S.M., Evans, B. (2021). The Sport Team as an Effective Group. In Williams, J. M. & Krane, V. (Eds.), *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance* (8th ed., pp. 122-138). McGraw Hill.
- Frankl, V. (2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press.
- Gould, D. (2021). Goal-setting for Peak Performance. In Williams, J. M. & Krane, V. (Eds.), *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance* (8th ed., pp. 189-209). McGraw Hill.
- Holiday, R. & Hanselman, S. (2016). *The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and The Art of Living*. Portfolio/Penguin.
- Keegan, R. J. (2010). Teaching Consulting Philosophies to Neophyte Sport Psychologists: Does It Help, and How Can We Do It?. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 1(1), 42-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2010.518663>

- Mack, R., Breckon, J., Butt, J., & Maynard, I. (2021). Practitioners' Use of Motivational Interviewing in Sport: A Qualitative Enquiry. *The Sport Psychologist*, 35(1), 72-82.
Retrieved Sep 11, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2019-0155>
- McArdle, S. & Moore, P. (2012). Applying Evidence-Based Principles From CBT to Sport Psychology. *Sport Psychologist*, 26(2), 299–310. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.26.2.299>
- Prochaska, J. O. & Norcross, J. C. (2018). *Systems of Psychotherapy* (9th Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Standage, M., Curran, T., and Rouse, P. C. (2019). Self-Determination-Based Theories of Sport, Exercise, and Physical Activity Motivation. In T. S. Horn & A. L. Smith (Eds.), *Advances in Sport and Exercise Psychology* (4th ed., pp. 289-311). Human Kinetics.
- Tóth, R., Resperger, V., & Tóth, L. (2024). Optimizing athletes' mindsets: Application of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in sport. *SPRINT – Sports Research International*, 1(1), 25-29. <https://doi.org/10.1556/1020.2024.00008>
- Williams, J. M. & Hacker, C. M. (2021). Cognitive Techniques for Building Confidence and Enhancing Performance. In Williams, J. M. & Krane, V. (Eds.), *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance* (8th ed., pp. 278-313). McGraw Hill.
- Wood, S., & Turner, M. J. (2025). Integrating Psychology Skills Training (PST) with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2025.2472341>

Comments

Great content. As you continue to matriculate through your program, you will continue to narrow down your theoretical orientation. Consider which one truly stands out and aligns with your overall 'lens' from which you see things, while also permitting yourself to engage in pulling from other approaches. You will learn there is a difference between theoretical orientation (how you view things) and theoretical approach (the 'what' you do during client encounters).

Comments

Great demonstration of understanding the different theories outlined in your submission. Logotherapy is a theory of motivation in which finding meaning in adverse experiences, Existentialism is a theory of philosophy (assisting athletes in finding personal meaning), CBT (address maladaptive thought patterns) and REBT (address emotional disturbances and promote flexible thinking) are theories of cognition that in turn influences behavior, PCT is humanistic, to your point, focuses on self-actualization and the impact of the practitioner/client relationship, and ACT combines behavioral change strategies with mindfulness to enhance psychological flexibility, emphasizing values-based/meaningful action, while SDT is a theory of motivation emphasizing environmental cultivation of intrinsic motivation supported by competence, autonomy and relatedness.