



Drawing on synchronicity to promote client wellbeing

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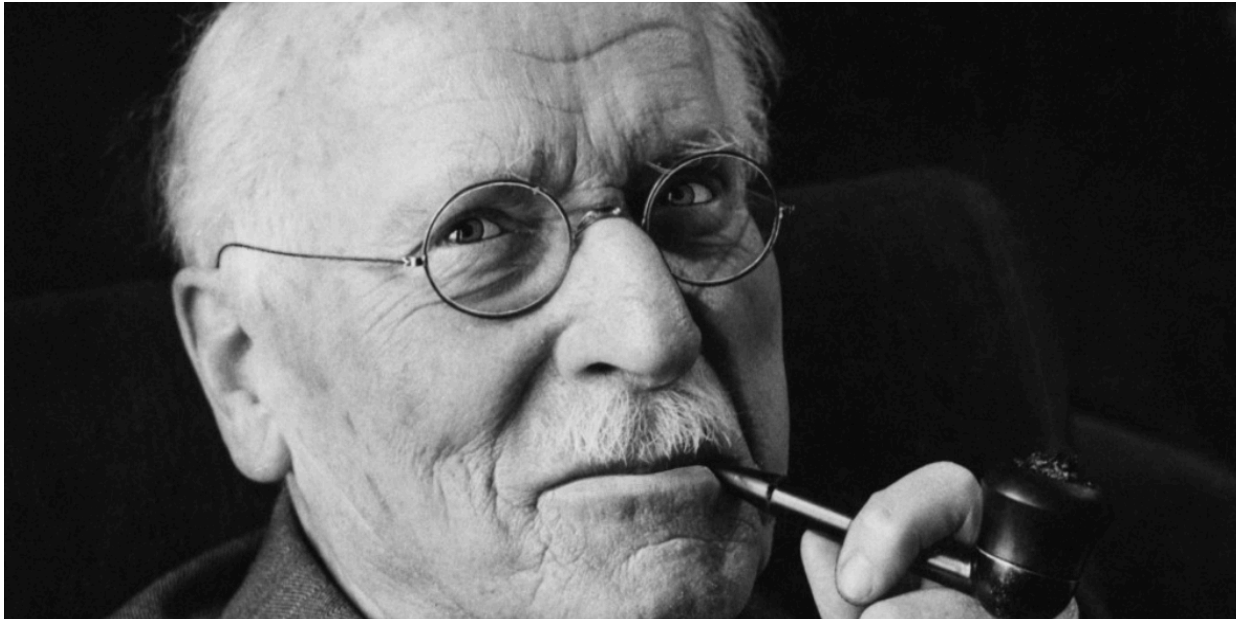


What is synchronicity?

- Meaningful coincidence that connects our inner and outer worlds
- Has a numinous quality
- Relates to life purpose, connection



Carl Jung – “numinous experience”





Examples of Synchronicity

- Very striking coincidences
- Propinquity
- Number synchronicity (11:11, 6's)
- Sense of person's presence after death
- Fortuitous events “the universe provides”
 - E.g. “When pupil is ready, the teacher will come”



Rationale for exploring Synchronicity

- PERMA model of positive psychology
 - Pos affect, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement
- Relative emphasis on rationality v. intuition
- Acknowledgment of spiritual dimension
 - Mind, body, spirit are all relevant. Beware of reductionism
 - More people access alternative therapies than conventional



Rationale for exploring Synchronicity (cont)

- Psychiatry confuses spiritual crisis with psychosis
- Update science to acknowledge quantum physics
- Psychology relates to personal experience. Don't deny.

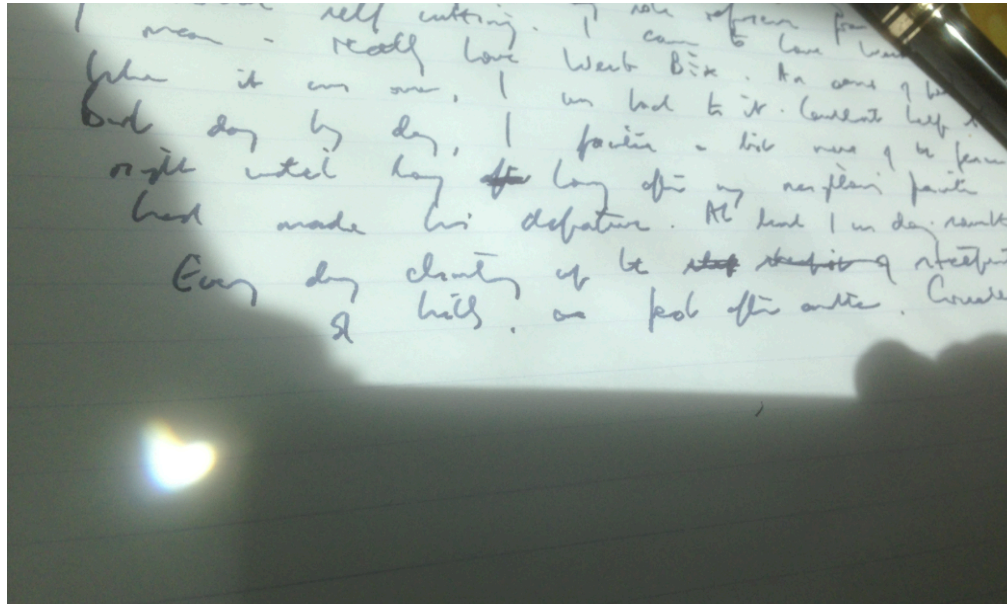


Relevance to Therapy

- Nezu and Nezu (WCBCT, 2004)
 - Incorporating client's spiritual beliefs can enhance therapy
- Meichenbaum (2013)
 - CBT ignores spiritual dimension as BT used to ignore cognition
- Ken Pargament (2015)
 - Spiritual/ sacred experience can be systematically assessed
- Positive psychology promotes such interventions



Personal experience





Exercise in pairs

- Have you personally experienced a meaningful coincidence? Can be simple, recent or long ago
- What did you make anything of it at the time, or afterward?
- If so, what impact did it have for you? E.g. did it influence your emotions, choices, direction, engagement?



Personal meaning of synchronicity

- Affirmation that you are on track
- A “tick from the universe”
- A “free kick from the universe”
- Relates to destiny/ daimon/ jigsaw puzzle
- Relates to “kairos” – cubic cm of chance



Case study – ‘Eric’

- Presented in early 30's
 - Chronic alcohol and ice addiction, depression, trauma Hx
- Seen for 6 months of therapy consistent with CBT
- Attended overseas drug rehabilitation program
- Later volunteered this story about his turning point
 - Only after learning I was writing about synchronicity
 - Thought it might have seemed “borderline psychotic behaviour”



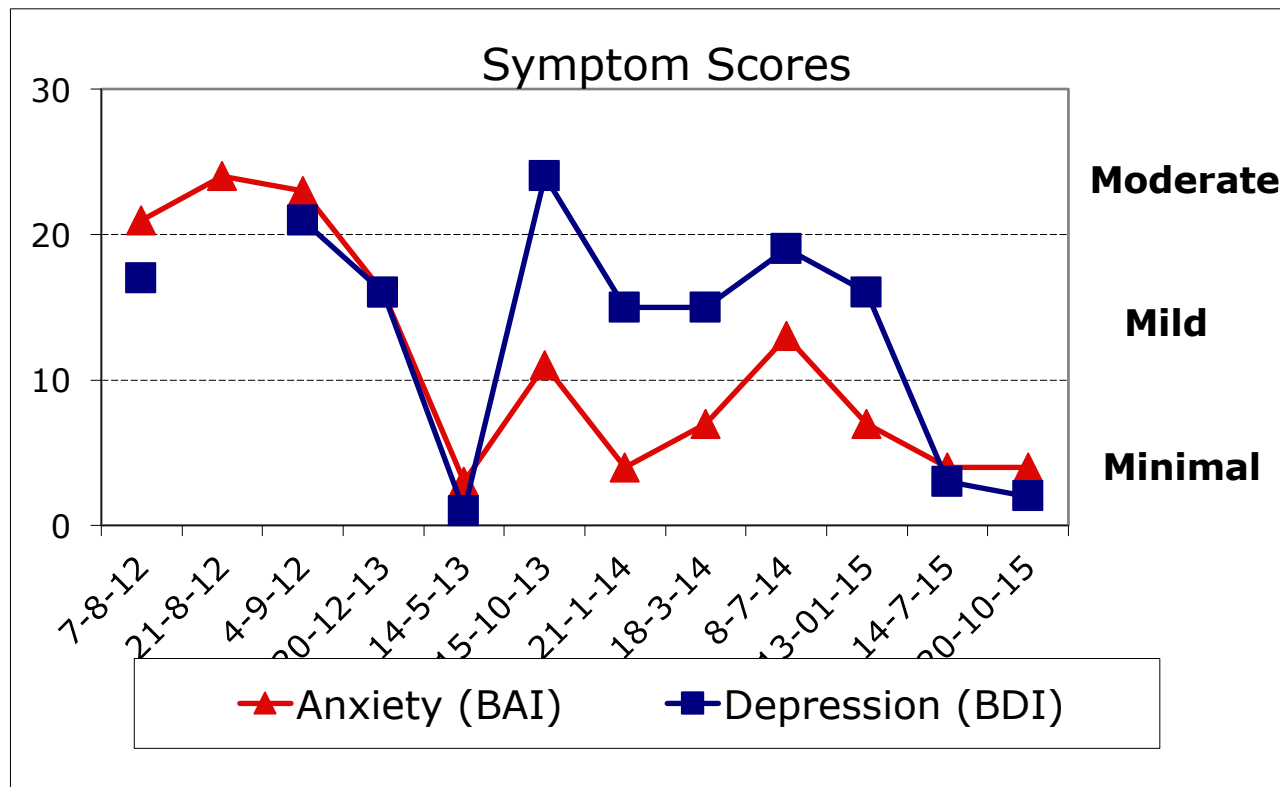
Suicidality – Eric's story





Case study – ‘Eric’

- *“I’ve been getting these messages all my life. When I’m in touch with me and my inner feelings, I’m aware of (strongly coincidental) good things happening around me ... that’s my higher power. That’s synchronicity.”*
 - Has since married
 - Fathered a child
 - Functioned well with full-time return to work, no lapses
 - Enhanced family relationships
 - Therapy sessions have a deeper quality





Case study – ‘Gary’

- Presented in early 50’s with “severe clinical depression”
 - Had seen psychiatrist for 8 years, psychologist for 6 years
- Suffering from undiagnosed PTSD & marked guilt
 - Related to infant daughter’s death 20 years earlier
- Used EMDR from 4th session
 - At end of session asked whether I believed in synchronicity
- Told story of night after 4th and 5th EMDR sessions
 - A turning point in absolving guilt



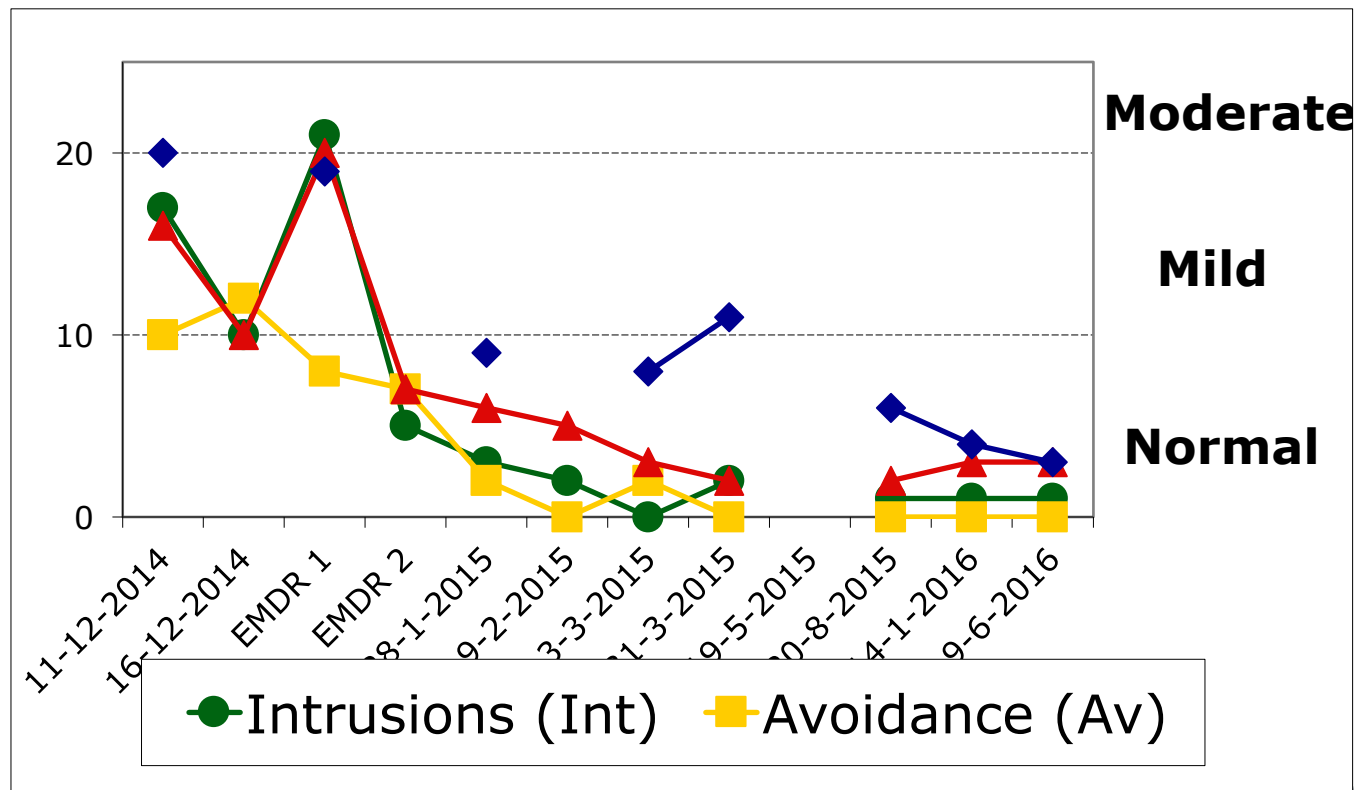
Visitations and guilt – ‘Gary





Case study – ‘Gary’

- The flashing clock and the pat on the head the week before *‘seemed too coincidental’*. *‘She knows I care about her, she knows that I know she’s OK.’*
- *‘It’s all happening for a reason ... The timing is perfect ... Coming to see you ... That night it happens ... It all happens for a reason. It’s put me in a fantastic mindset.’*
- *Not so many things worry me any more ... I have a lot of living ahead of me...I’m on the right track ... Things are definitely pointing in the right direction.’*
 - Bond not relinquished, but reconstructed
 - More motivated, efficient and energized at work
 - Better relationship with family members
 - Minimal depressive and PTSD symptoms for 12 months





How to draw on synchronicity in therapy

- Be open to acknowledging a spiritual dimension
- Be open to client's disclosing numinous experience
- Can explicitly give client permission to acknowledge
 - E.g. Nezu and Nezu (2004); Parmenter (2015)
- If client acknowledges synchronicity
 - Show acceptance and interest
 - Explore what it means to client (like dreams)
 - Consider symbolic meanings in context of goals



Exercise in pairs

- Has a client related a meaningful coincidence?
- If so, what impact did it seem to have for them?
- Did you draw on this in therapy? If so, how?
- If not, how might you draw on this?
- Roxburgh et al in Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (March 2016) reported that 44% of therapist respondents had experienced synchronicity in the therapy setting and 67% thought synchronistic experiences could be useful for therapy.



Assessing for spirituality

(Pargament, 2015)

- Explicit assessment
 - Do you see yourself as a spiritual person?
 - Are you affiliated with a religious/ spiritual community?
 - Has your spirituality influenced how you have coped w problem?
 - Have you had any numinous experiences such as synchronicity?
- Implicit assessment
 - From what sources do you draw strength & courage to go on?
 - When have you felt most fully and deeply alive?
 - What legacy would you like to leave?
 - Have you ever felt that things that happened were meant to be?
- Ken Pargament (Pos Psych World Congress, 2015)
 - Spiritual experience is ineffable, not reducible. Leads deeper.



Psychosis v. satori

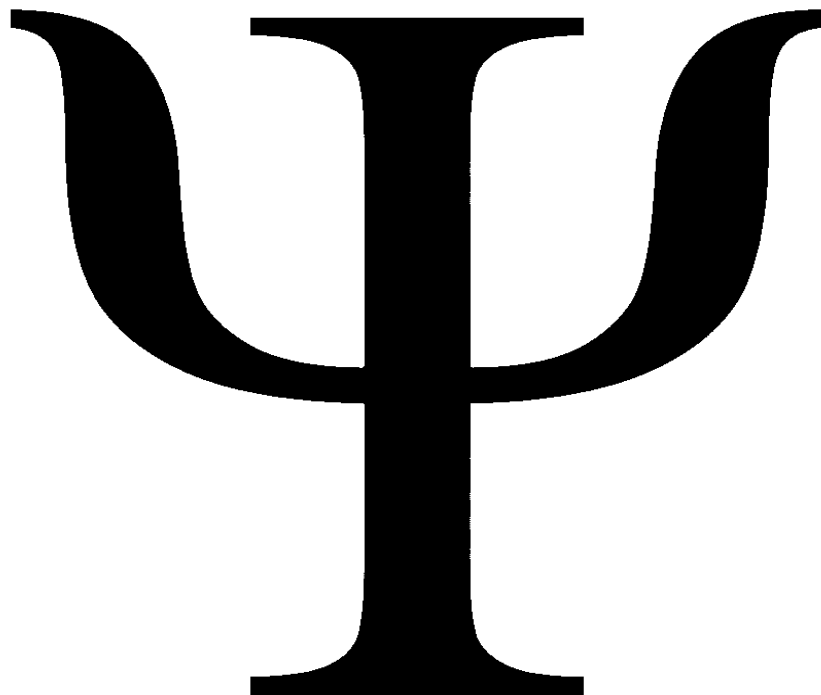
- Notion of spiritual emergency
- Stages in (trans)personal development
- Consider James, Jung, Maslow, Wilber
- Mystical experience is ineffable
- Transcendental states, boundaries dissolve
- Rowan p.265-6 beware of hospital
- Consider beliefs, risk of harm, positives



Psychospiritual Model - Ken Wilber

- Pre-egoic stages (prior to self-awareness)
- Egoic stages
 - Conformity, conscientiousness, autonomy, integration
- Trans-egoic stages
 - Mystical experience to advanced enlightenment
 - Challenges: baulking, or psychic inflation

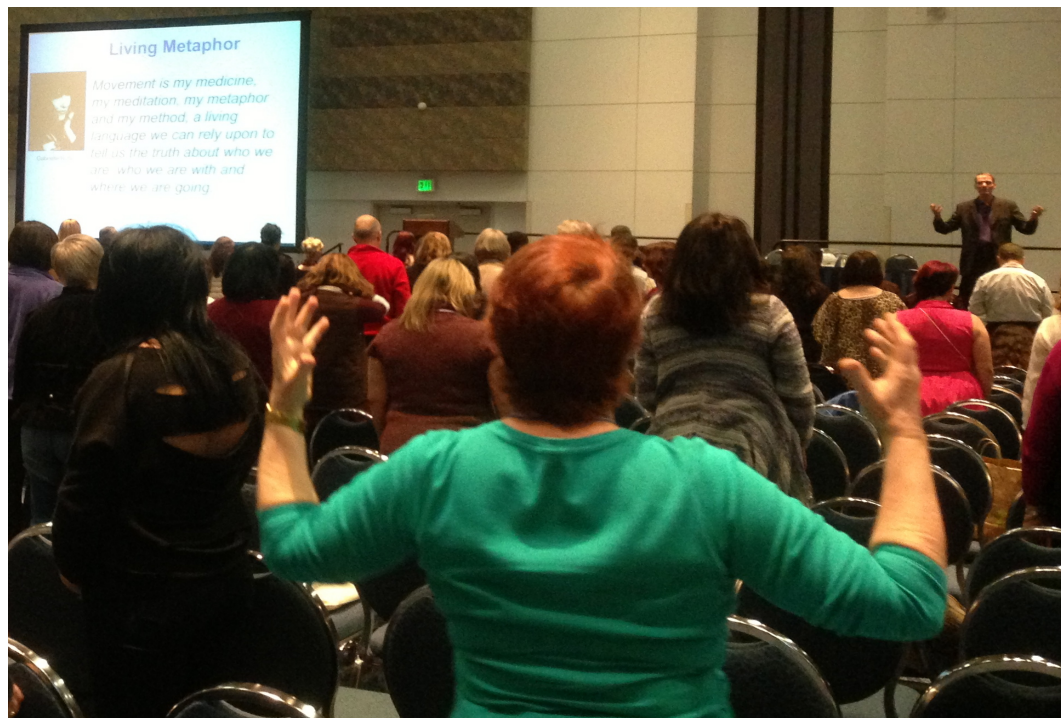


















Relevance of quantum physics

- Wolfgang Pauli and Jung
- Isaac Newton's interest in alchemy
- Entanglement and synchronicity
- Primacy of consciousness in matter
- Uncertainty principle - myth of objectivity
- Implicate order (David Bohm)



Synchronicity in practice

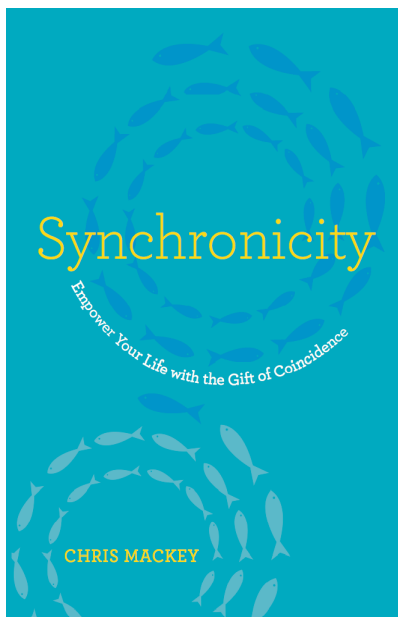
- Be open
- Set an intention
- Vary routine
- Follow your nose (use intuition in the present moment)
- Notice what you notice – experience and symbolism
- File it away
- Respond to “Aha!” experience
- Consider meaning, symbolism in context of your life
- Record it
- Share it



- Therapy can be more powerful if we acknowledge numinous experience (meaning and connection)
- Can promote uncommon therapeutic breakthroughs
- Synchronicity taps into spirituality, intuition
 - Consider personal meaning
 - Relevant and legitimate experience can go beyond the rational
- Client might only acknowledge if given permission
- We need a more inclusive, integrated science



Synchronicity: Empower your life with the gift of coincidence





Websites

www.synchronicityunwrapped.com.au

www.chrismackey.com.au

See blogs and research poster



Any questions?



Thank you