

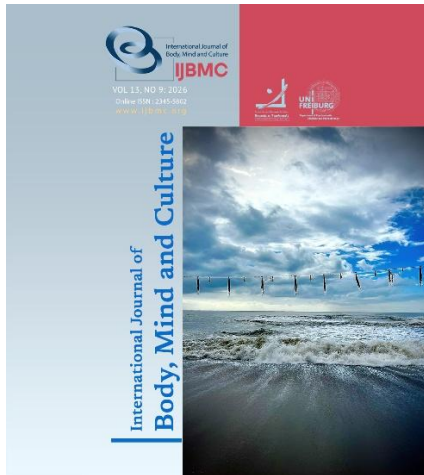
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Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP): An Integrative Multidimensional Psychotherapy

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper introduces Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) as a multilevel, multidimensional, and circular integrative framework for understanding psychological functioning, self-development, and mental health. Rather than proposing a new school of psychotherapy, SWP aims to provide an overarching conceptual architecture that organizes complementary therapeutic principles within a unified systems-oriented model. SWP conceptualizes psychological functioning through six reciprocally interacting dimensions: Body-Working, Emotion-Working, Perception-Working, Attention-Working, Future-Working, and Life-Working. Psychological change is understood as a process of continuous circular self-reconstruction, in which each dimension dynamically influences and is influenced by the others. The model emphasizes flexible therapeutic entry, reciprocal regulation, and the integration of past experiences, future aspirations, and meaningful everyday living. By integrating systems thinking, psychodynamic, humanistic-existential, cognitive-behavioral, mindfulness-based, and embodied perspectives, SWP offers a coherent framework for psychotherapy, psychoeducation, and personal development. The model may also facilitate dialogue among diverse therapeutic traditions by emphasizing multidimensional psychological organization rather than allegiance to a single theoretical orientation. SWP is presented as a theoretical and conceptual framework that requires further empirical evaluation. Future research should examine its psychometric foundations, mechanisms of change, clinical feasibility, and effectiveness through randomized controlled trials, longitudinal studies, and cross-cultural investigations.

Keywords: Self-Working Psychotherapy, Integrative Psychotherapy, Body-Mind Approach, Attention, Emotion Regulation, Systems Thinking.

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Introduction

Psychotherapy has undergone substantial theoretical and clinical transformation over the past century. Since the emergence of psychoanalysis, diverse therapeutic schools have attempted to explain psychological suffering and facilitate psychological healing through distinct assumptions and intervention models (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Psychodynamic approaches emphasized unconscious conflict and developmental experiences, cognitive-behavioral therapies focused on maladaptive thoughts and behaviors, while humanistic and existential approaches emphasized authenticity, meaning, and self-actualization (Beck, 2011; Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980).

Despite the growing movement toward psychotherapy integration, important conceptual questions remain regarding how diverse therapeutic principles can be organized within a coherent theoretical framework. Existing integrative approaches often combine techniques from different schools without explicitly specifying the underlying structure that connects bodily processes, emotional regulation, perceptual organization, attentional functioning, and developmental change. Consequently, there remains a need for conceptual models that organize these complementary dimensions within a unified systems-oriented framework.

This integrative perspective is also consistent with contemporary biopsychosocial frameworks, which conceptualize health and psychological functioning as products of continuous interactions among biological, psychological, and social processes rather than as outcomes of isolated mechanisms (Seyed Alitabar, 2025a).

Many therapeutic models prioritize one dimension of human functioning while neglecting others. For instance, cognitive approaches often prioritize thought patterns, while somatic and emotion-focused dimensions may receive comparatively less attention (Norcross & Goldfried, 2019).

In response to these challenges, Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is proposed as a conceptual integrative framework that organizes psychological functioning as a multilevel, multidimensional, and circular system. Rather than introducing another independent school of

psychotherapy, SWP provides an overarching theoretical architecture in which Body-Working, Emotion-Working, Perception-Working, Attention-Working, Future-Working, and Life-Working continuously interact through reciprocal relationships and processes of continuous self-reconstruction (Johari Fard, 2025). Within this framework, psychological well-being is understood as an ongoing process of adaptive organization across these interconnected dimensions rather than as symptom reduction alone. At the same time, recent developments in neuroscience and embodied cognition increasingly emphasize the inseparable relationship between body, emotion, cognition, and awareness in shaping psychological functioning (Craig, 2009; Damasio, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Research on emotional regulation also suggests that psychological distress emerges through complex interactions among bodily states, emotional experiences, perception, and attentional processes (Gross, 2015; Pessoa, 2008). Such multidimensional conceptualizations are compatible with the biopsychosocial view that psychological and health-related outcomes emerge through reciprocal interactions among bodily, psychological, interpersonal, and broader social processes (Seyed Alitabar, 2025a).

Why Self-Working Psychotherapy? Although numerous evidence-based psychotherapies have demonstrated effectiveness across various psychological disorders, no single approach comprehensively integrates embodied experience, emotional processing, perceptual reconstruction, attentional regulation, and temporal organization within a unified systems-oriented conceptual framework. Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is proposed to address this conceptual gap by organizing these complementary domains into a coherent multidimensional model. Rather than replacing existing psychotherapies, SWP aims to provide an integrative framework that may facilitate case formulation, clinical reasoning, and future theoretical integration.

The aim of this conceptual paper is to present the theoretical foundations, organizational principles, and clinical implications of Self-Working Psychotherapy while clarifying its distinctive contribution to contemporary psychotherapy integration. Although preliminary empirical

studies have begun to investigate the Self-Working therapeutic program, the present article is primarily theoretical and is intended to provide a foundation for future empirical, clinical, and cross-cultural research. The primary contribution of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is not the development of a new therapeutic technique, but the proposal of a systems-based meta-framework for organizing existing evidence-based psychotherapeutic principles within a unified multidimensional structure.

Theoretical Foundations of Self-Working Psychotherapy

Self-working psychotherapy emerged in response to the growing need for multidimensional and integrative approaches capable of addressing the complexity of human psychological functioning. Contemporary psychotherapy increasingly recognizes that no single therapeutic orientation sufficiently explains the broad range of psychological suffering and human development (Goli, 2025; Norcross & Goldfried, 2019; Wampold & Imel, 2015). In response to this challenge, Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) emerged from the recognition that contemporary psychotherapy possesses a rich diversity of evidence-based approaches, each contributing valuable insights into human psychological functioning. Rather than proposing another competing school of psychotherapy, SWP is intended to serve as an integrative conceptual framework that organizes complementary therapeutic principles within a coherent systems-oriented model. The framework assumes that psychological change is most effective when bodily regulation, emotional processing, perceptual reconstruction, attentional development, and temporal self-development are understood as dynamically interconnected dimensions of human experience (Johari Fard, 2025).

At its core, self-working assumes that psychological suffering often emerges when individuals become disconnected from themselves, their values, bodily awareness, emotional experiences, or meaningful life direction (Frankl, 1985; Yalom, 1980). Consequently, psychotherapy should extend beyond symptom reduction and support the conscious reconstruction of the self through

multidimensional psychological engagement (Johari Fard, 2024). Table 1 shows conceptual comparison of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) with selected psychotherapeutic approaches.

Systems Thinking and Psychological Integration

The theoretical orientation of self-working psychotherapy is strongly informed by systems thinking. Systems theory conceptualizes human functioning as an interconnected network in which emotional, bodily, cognitive, relational, and environmental dimensions mutually influence one another (Norcross & Goldfried, 2019).

From a systems perspective, psychological suffering cannot be reduced to isolated symptoms or singular causes. Anxiety, depression, emotional dysregulation, and maladaptive behaviors often emerge through dynamic interactions among biological vulnerabilities, cognitive schemas, emotional experiences, attentional processes, interpersonal relationships, and sociocultural influences (Siegel, 2012).

Many therapeutic traditions emphasize specific dimensions of human functioning. For example, cognitive-behavioral therapies primarily focus on cognition and behavior (Beck, 2011), psychodynamic approaches emphasize unconscious conflict and developmental experiences (Yalom, 1980), and mindfulness-based interventions prioritize awareness and acceptance (Segal et al., 2018). While these approaches have demonstrated clinical effectiveness, their relative specialization may limit their capacity to fully address the multidimensional nature of psychological experience (Norcross & Goldfried, 2019).

Self-Working Psychotherapy therefore attempts to provide a broader integrative framework capable of organizing therapeutic processes across multiple psychological domains simultaneously (Johari Fard, 2025). Rather than replacing existing therapeutic approaches, self-working seeks to integrate their useful principles into a coherent developmental system.

Self-working is carried out as a therapeutic educational cycle. In fact, in this cycle, there are two-way relationships between each therapeutic step, and the treatment, in addition

to its progressive and dynamic nature, has a cyclical structure; because sometimes in the first steps of therapy, the individual does not have the capacity and readiness to enter the depths of the personality, but after one cycle and more education and

awareness of the therapeutic process, he can carry out the next cycle more consciously, more maturely, more responsibly and more creatively.

Table 1. Conceptual comparison of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) with selected psychotherapeutic approaches

Dimension	CBT	Psychodynamic Therapy	ACT	Mindfulness-Based Approaches	Emotion-Focused Therapy	Self-Working (SWP)	Psychotherapy
Primary Focus	Cognitive and Behavior	Unconscious processes and relationships	Psychological flexibility	Present-moment awareness	Emotional processing	Multidimensional self-development and Life Path	
Body	Limited	Indirect	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Body-Working dimension	
Emotion	Cognitive regulation	Insight into emotions	Acceptance of emotions	Nonjudgmental awareness	Core therapeutic focus	Emotion-Working integrated with all dimensions	
Perception/Meaning	Cognitive restructuring	Internal representations	Cognitive defusion	Observing thoughts	Meaning through emotion	Perception-Working as meaning reconstruction	
Attention	Cognitive attention	Limited	Present-focused awareness	Core therapeutic process	Supportive	Attention-Working as an integrative organizing process	
Future Orientation	Goal setting	Limited	Values and committed action	Minimal	Limited	Future-Working as a core developmental dimension	
Everyday Living	Behavioral activation	Indirect	Values-based action	Generalization	Emotional change	Life-Working as meaningful daily living	
Organization of Change	Primarily linear	Developmental	Process-based	Awareness-based	Emotion-based	Circular reciprocal interactions among six dimensions	
Therapeutic Structure	Protocol-oriented	Insight-oriented	Process-oriented	Practice-oriented	Emotion-oriented	Flexible multidimensional framework	
Overall Aim	Symptom reduction	Insight and personality change	Psychological flexibility	Awareness and acceptance	Emotional transformation	Continuous circular self-reconstruction and psychological growth and Clarify the Life Path	

(Note: This comparison is conceptual and does not imply empirical equivalence between models.)

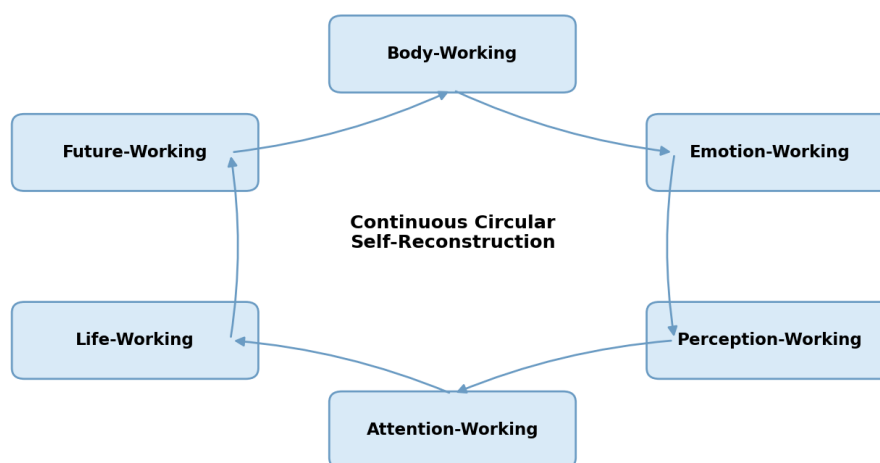


Figure 1. The Cycle of Self-Working (Johari Fard, 2024; 2025)

The circular model represents a dynamic feedback system in which changes in any dimension may propagate bidirectionally across other dimensions through recursive regulatory processes.

Accordingly, SWP rejects a one-way hierarchical model of psychological change. Psychological development is understood as an ongoing process of bidirectional regulation, in which change introduced at any dimension may gradually transform the entire psychological system through reciprocal feedback processes. Therapeutic intervention may therefore

begin from whichever dimension is most clinically accessible or most relevant to the individual's current needs.

This circular organization constitutes one of the distinguishing characteristics of Self-Working Psychotherapy. Rather than treating body, emotion, perception, attention, future orientation, and everyday living as separate therapeutic targets, SWP conceptualizes them as mutually regulating dimensions of a single developmental system that continuously reconstructs the self across time (Figure 1).

Psychodynamic and Developmental Foundations

Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) acknowledges the valuable contributions of psychodynamic and developmental theories in explaining how early life experiences, attachment relationships, unconscious processes, and internalized relational patterns influence psychological functioning throughout the lifespan. Developmental experiences contribute to the formation of enduring emotional responses, bodily habits, perceptual frameworks, attentional styles, and patterns of interpersonal interaction.

Similar to psychodynamic and schema-based approaches, SWP assumes that unresolved developmental experiences may continue to influence present psychological functioning. However, SWP differs in its primary therapeutic emphasis. Rather than focusing predominantly on uncovering unconscious conflicts or achieving insight into past experiences, SWP conceptualizes psychological development as an active process of ongoing self-reconstruction.

Within the SWP framework, insight is considered an important beginning rather than the endpoint of psychotherapy. Sustainable psychological change requires coordinated development across multiple dimensions of functioning. Therefore, developmental experiences are addressed through reciprocal interventions involving Body-Working, Emotion-Working, Perception-Working, Attention-Working, Future-Working, and Life-Working. This multidimensional approach assumes that psychological transformation occurs not only by understanding the past but also by consciously reorganizing present functioning and intentionally shaping future development.

SWP also recognizes the importance of early maladaptive schemas described in Schema Therapy. However, schemas are conceptualized as components of a broader self-organizing system rather than isolated cognitive structures. Schema-related beliefs continuously interact with bodily regulation, emotional experience, attentional functioning, and life direction. Consequently, therapeutic work extends beyond schema modification toward the reconstruction of the individual's entire developmental system.

The therapeutic relationship remains an essential context for psychological change. Experiences such as attachment,

interpersonal safety, emotional validation, and corrective relational experiences facilitate self-reconstruction across all six dimensions of the SWP model. Thus, developmental healing is understood not as the recovery of the past alone but as the continuous reconstruction of the self within present relationships and future possibilities.

Humanistic and Existential Foundations

Humanistic and existential psychology provide an important philosophical foundation for Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP). Humanistic traditions emphasize authenticity, self-actualization, subjective experience, and the inherent capacity for psychological growth, whereas existential approaches highlight meaning, responsibility, freedom, uncertainty, and the active construction of one's life (Frankl, 1985; Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980).

SWP adopts these fundamental assumptions while organizing them within a broader multidimensional framework of self-development. Rather than treating authenticity, responsibility, creativity, and meaning as isolated existential ideals, SWP conceptualizes them as developmental outcomes emerging from the reciprocal interaction among bodily regulation, emotional integration, perceptual reconstruction, attentional awareness, future-oriented development, and meaningful everyday living.

From the perspective of SWP, psychological well-being extends beyond symptom reduction or behavioral adaptation. It involves the continuous reconstruction of the self through conscious participation in one's bodily experiences, emotional life, interpretive processes, intentional attention, future aspirations, and lived existence. Consequently, meaning is not viewed as a static philosophical concept but as an evolving process constructed through ongoing interaction with oneself, others, and the surrounding world.

Accordingly, SWP does not claim originality regarding concepts such as responsibility, authenticity, or meaningful living. Rather, its contribution lies in integrating these long-established humanistic and existential principles into a coherent developmental model that connects them with

body, emotion, perception, attention, future orientation, and everyday psychological functioning.

Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Psychological Flexibility

Mindfulness-based interventions and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) have made substantial contributions to contemporary psychotherapy by emphasizing present-moment awareness, acceptance of internal experiences, psychological flexibility, and values-guided action (Hayes et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2013). These approaches have demonstrated considerable effectiveness across a wide range of psychological conditions and constitute important theoretical influences on Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP).

SWP adopts the principles of mindful awareness, experiential acceptance, and values clarification while extending them within a broader developmental framework. Rather than conceptualizing attention primarily as a capacity for nonjudgmental observation, SWP proposes Attention-Working as an active developmental process through which individuals consciously regulate, integrate, and reconstruct bodily experiences, emotional responses, perceptual organization, future aspirations, and everyday living.

Accordingly, awareness within SWP is not regarded as an end in itself but as a dynamic mechanism of intentional self-development. Observation becomes meaningful when it facilitates conscious participation in psychological change. From this perspective, attention functions as an organizing process that coordinates reciprocal interactions among all dimensions of the self rather than operating as an isolated cognitive capacity.

Similarly, psychological flexibility is conceptualized as more than behavioral adaptability or acceptance of internal experiences. Within SWP, flexibility reflects the individual's capacity to maintain dynamic balance across bodily regulation, emotional processing, perceptual reconstruction, attentional stability, future-oriented growth, and meaningful participation in daily life. Thus, flexibility emerges from the continuous integration of multiple dimensions of psychological functioning.

While ACT and mindfulness-based approaches primarily emphasize acceptance, cognitive defusion, present-centered awareness, and values-guided action, SWP situates these processes within a broader systems-oriented and multidimensional framework. Consequently, SWP does not replace these approaches but provides an integrative conceptual structure through which their principles may be understood as interconnected components of a unified developmental process.

Therefore, SWP should not be understood as an alternative to ACT or mindfulness-based psychotherapy. Instead, it is proposed as an integrative conceptual model that incorporates these evidence-based principles while extending them through a circular, multilevel, and multidimensional understanding of psychological development.

Cultural Foundations of Self-Working

Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is grounded primarily in contemporary psychological science while recognizing that psychological development is also profoundly influenced by cultural, philosophical, and existential traditions. Human beings construct their identities, values, emotional experiences, and life meanings within specific cultural contexts. Consequently, an integrative model of psychotherapy should remain scientifically rigorous while being sufficiently flexible to accommodate diverse cultural understandings of human growth.

This position is consistent with culturally informed mind-body perspectives suggesting that cultural beliefs, traditions, and shared narratives actively shape how individuals experience psychological distress, bodily states, health, and healing, and therefore should be incorporated into integrative and person-centered models of care (Seyed Alitabar, 2025b).

Within SWP, culture is not viewed merely as a background variable but as an active component of psychological development. Family relationships, language, social values, ethical traditions, and collective narratives continuously influence bodily experience, emotional regulation, perception, attentional habits, future aspirations, and everyday living. Psychological well-being therefore emerges

through the reciprocal interaction between the individual and the sociocultural environment.

Although SWP is informed by contemporary evidence-based psychotherapy, it also acknowledges philosophical traditions that emphasize lifelong self-cultivation, conscious living, ethical responsibility, and the continuous development of the person. Such perspectives are reflected in both Eastern contemplative traditions and Persian intellectual heritage, where psychological growth is understood not merely as symptom reduction but as an ongoing process of cultivating wisdom, balance, responsibility, and meaningful living.

From this perspective, SWP conceptualizes self-development as a culturally embedded process of continuous self-reconstruction. Rather than promoting a culturally specific worldview, the framework is intended to remain adaptable across different societies by integrating universal psychological principles with culturally meaningful forms of self-understanding and personal growth.

Accordingly, cultural responsiveness in integrative psychological models involves more than adapting surface-level therapeutic techniques; it requires recognition of how culturally shaped meanings influence the relationship among bodily experience, psychological functioning, illness interpretation, and pathways to healing (Seyed Alitabar, 2025b).

SWP is not an indigenous psychotherapy model; rather, it is an evidence-informed integrative framework developed within an Iranian cultural context while drawing upon contemporary international psychotherapy research. Nevertheless, the cultural assumptions of SWP remain theoretical and require future empirical investigation through cross-cultural research conducted in diverse clinical and non-clinical populations.

The Multilevel and Multidimensional Model of Self-Working Psychotherapy

A defining characteristic of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is its multilevel and multidimensional organization of psychological functioning. Rather than conceptualizing psychological development as a sequence of isolated therapeutic stages, SWP proposes a dynamic system in which

multiple dimensions of human functioning continuously interact through reciprocal and circular relationships.

The framework consists of six interrelated dimensions of self-development: Body-Working, Emotion-Working, Perception-Working, Attention-Working, Future-Working, and Life-Working. Each dimension represents a distinct aspect of psychological functioning while remaining inseparable from the others. Consequently, sustainable psychological growth is understood as the result of continuous interaction among these dimensions rather than improvement within a single psychological domain.

Unlike hierarchical models that assume psychological change progresses through predetermined stages, SWP adopts a circular systems perspective. Therapeutic intervention may begin at any dimension depending on the individual's presenting concerns, psychological readiness, clinical priorities, and contextual circumstances. Changes occurring within one dimension gradually influence the remaining dimensions through ongoing reciprocal regulation.

This multidimensional organization enables psychotherapy to address bodily regulation, emotional integration, perceptual organization, attentional development, future-oriented growth, and meaningful living as mutually regulating components of a unified developmental system. Accordingly, psychological well-being is conceptualized as the continuous reconstruction of the self across all dimensions of human functioning.

Although the six dimensions of SWP are conceptually distinct, they are interdependent and partially overlapping constructs. Future research is required to refine their discriminant validity.

Principle of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP)

Principle of Circular Self-Development

One of the central theoretical principles of SWP is Circular Self-Development. This principle proposes that human psychological functioning develops through continuous bidirectional interactions among all dimensions of the self. No single dimension is considered primary or permanently superior to the others. Instead, each dimension

simultaneously influences and is influenced by the remaining dimensions throughout the process of psychological development.

Principle of Reciprocal Regulation

SWP assumes that body, emotion, perception, attention, future orientation, and everyday living operate as reciprocally regulating systems. Improvement in one dimension facilitates adaptive changes in the others, whereas dysregulation within any dimension may gradually disrupt the functioning of the entire psychological system.

Body-Working

Body-working constitutes the foundational level of intervention in self-working psychotherapy. The body is conceptualized not merely as a biological structure but as an embodied psychological system through which stress, emotions, trauma, memory, and behavioral patterns are continuously expressed (van der Kolk, 2014).

Body-Working constitutes one of the foundational dimensions of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP). It is based on the assumption that psychological functioning is inseparable from bodily processes. Physiological regulation, posture, breathing patterns, muscular tension, autonomic nervous system activity, and interoceptive awareness continuously interact with emotional, perceptual, attentional, future-oriented, and everyday psychological functioning.

Within SWP, Body-Working extends beyond symptom management or physical relaxation. It represents the intentional cultivation of bodily awareness and self-regulation as essential components of psychological reconstruction. The objective is not merely to reduce physiological distress but to establish a stable bodily foundation that facilitates adaptive functioning across all dimensions of the self.

Research in embodied cognition and somatic psychotherapy increasingly demonstrates that bodily states significantly influence cognition, emotion regulation, and interpersonal functioning (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Ogden et al., 2006). Trauma and chronic emotional stress frequently manifest through bodily tension, autonomic dysregulation,

disrupted breathing patterns, muscular contraction, and maladaptive physiological responses (Payne et al., 2015; van der Kolk, 2014). Accordingly, self-working proposes that psychotherapy frequently begins through bodily awareness and regulation because bodily stabilization facilitates deeper emotional and cognitive processing (Johari Fard, 2025).

In self-working psychotherapy, Body-Working consists of three interconnected dimensions: Body Awareness: Body awareness refers to conscious attention toward bodily sensations, posture, breathing, movement, muscular tension, physiological activation, and sensory experience (Craig, 2009). Many individuals experiencing anxiety, trauma, depression, or emotional suppression become partially disconnected from bodily awareness. They may fail to recognize stress responses, physiological activation, or bodily indicators of emotional discomfort (van der Kolk, 2014).

Self-working therefore encourages individuals to cultivate greater awareness of bodily experience through mindful observation, grounding exercises, posture awareness, breathing observation, and body scanning techniques (Johari Fard, 2024). Increased bodily awareness may improve emotional recognition, stress regulation, and psychological resilience by reconnecting individuals with embodied experience (Craig, 2009).

Body Relaxation: Body relaxation refers to interventions that regulate physiological arousal and reduce bodily tension.

Research consistently demonstrates that psychological stress activates autonomic nervous system responses involving muscular tension, respiratory disruption, and heightened physiological activation (Damasio, 1999). Relaxation interventions may therefore support emotional regulation and attentional stability.

Self-working incorporates breathing exercises, progressive muscular relaxation, bodily calming techniques, sensory grounding, and physical stabilization methods as mechanisms for reducing emotional dysregulation (Johari Fard, 2024).

Body relaxation serves not merely as symptom reduction but as preparation for deeper psychological reconstruction. Body Learning: Body learning refers to acquiring healthier bodily habits and behavioral patterns that support

psychological well-being. Individuals frequently embody maladaptive postures, movement patterns, sleep habits, self-expression styles, and behavioral reactions shaped through developmental experiences and chronic emotional states (Ogden et al., 2006).

Self-working therefore emphasizes relearning healthier bodily engagement through movement, posture awareness, physical regulation, and intentional behavioral modification (Johari Fard, 2025). Thus, body-working serves as both the foundation and stabilizing platform for emotional and cognitive change.

Emotion-Working

Emotion-working represents the second level of intervention in self-working psychotherapy and focuses on emotional awareness, expression, regulation, and integration (Gross, 2015). Within self-working, emotions are conceptualized as adaptive psychological systems rather than symptoms requiring suppression. Emotions function as meaningful signals related to survival, motivation, interpersonal communication, identity, and meaning-making (Panksepp, 1998).

However, many psychological difficulties emerge through emotional suppression, dysregulation, unresolved affective experiences, or maladaptive emotional conditioning (Linehan, 2015). Drawing from affective neuroscience, emotional experiences involve complex neurobiological systems including limbic activation, autonomic regulation, memory networks, and interpersonal processes (Panksepp, 1998; Siegel, 2012).

Self-working psychotherapy conceptualizes Emotion-Working through three dimensions:

Emotional Release: Emotional release refers to identifying, expressing, and safely processing previously suppressed emotional experiences.

Individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, trauma, or relational distress frequently suppress emotions such as sadness, fear, shame, anger, or grief (Gross, 2015). Suppressed emotional material may manifest indirectly through bodily symptoms, avoidance behaviors, or maladaptive coping mechanisms (van der Kolk, 2014). Therapeutic emotional

release enables individuals to consciously reconnect with denied or avoided affective experiences (Johari Fard, 2024).

Emotional Expression: Emotional expression involves communicating internal emotional experiences in adaptive and psychologically constructive ways.

Self-working emphasizes that emotional awareness alone may be insufficient if emotions remain internally isolated or behaviorally inhibited. Individuals therefore learn healthier emotional communication patterns involving verbal expression, symbolic expression, relational communication, and emotional articulation (Johari Fard, 2025). This perspective aligns with emotion regulation research suggesting that adaptive emotional expression supports psychological flexibility and interpersonal functioning (Gross, 2015).

Emotional Core Construction: Emotional core construction refers to the development of healthier emotional patterns and emotional meaning systems. Repeated emotional experiences gradually shape identity, expectations, and interpersonal reactions. Consequently, psychotherapy should help individuals reconstruct emotional responses and cultivate adaptive emotional resilience (Siegel, 2012).

Self-working therefore conceptualizes emotional growth as an active and developmental process rather than passive emotional acceptance alone.

Perception-Working

Within Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP), Perception-Working refers to the conscious organization, interpretation, and reconstruction of psychological meaning rather than sensory perception alone. Individuals do not respond directly to external events; rather, they respond to the meanings, interpretations, beliefs, assumptions, and personal narratives through which those experiences are understood.

Accordingly, Perception-Working focuses on the ongoing reconstruction of the individual's interpretive system. Maladaptive perceptions, rigid beliefs, distorted assumptions, and self-defeating narratives are viewed as dynamic psychological constructions that continuously interact with bodily experiences, emotional responses, attentional processes, future expectations, and everyday life.

Perception-Working consists of three complementary processes: Perceptual Awareness, involving conscious recognition of one's habitual interpretations and meaning-making processes; Perceptual Reconstruction, referring to the flexible modification of maladaptive beliefs, assumptions, and interpretive patterns; Reality Integration, through which individuals develop increasingly balanced, adaptive, and context-sensitive understandings of themselves, others, and the world.

Unlike traditional cognitive restructuring approaches that primarily emphasize dysfunctional thoughts, SWP conceptualizes perception as a multidimensional interpretive process emerging through reciprocal interaction with all other dimensions of psychological functioning. Consequently, perceptual change is understood not as isolated cognitive correction but as continuous self-reconstruction within a circular developmental system.

Attention-Working

Attention-Working represents the central integrative dimension of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP). While attention has traditionally been studied as a cognitive function concerned with the selection and maintenance of information processing, SWP conceptualizes attention as a broader developmental capacity through which individuals consciously regulate, integrate, and reconstruct their psychological functioning.

Within the SWP framework, attention is not limited to passive observation or present-moment awareness. Rather, it is understood as an active and intentional process that continuously coordinates bodily regulation, emotional integration, perceptual organization, future-oriented development, and meaningful everyday living. Through this coordinating role, attention enables individuals to become active participants in their own psychological development instead of remaining passive observers of internal experience.

Attention-Working consists of three complementary processes: Attentional Awareness, referring to the conscious recognition of internal and external experiences; Attentional Regulation, involving the intentional direction, maintenance, and flexible shifting of attention according to situational

demands and personal values; Attentional Integration, through which attention coordinates reciprocal interactions among all dimensions of the self, facilitating coherent psychological functioning and adaptive self-development.

Unlike mindfulness-based approaches, which primarily emphasize nonjudgmental awareness of present experience, SWP conceptualizes attention as an active mechanism of psychological organization and self-reconstruction. Likewise, although executive functions and metacognitive processes contribute to attentional functioning, Attention-Working extends beyond cognitive control by integrating bodily, emotional, perceptual, future-oriented, and existential dimensions within a unified developmental system.

Accordingly, Attention-Working functions as the principal coordinating process within the circular architecture of SWP, promoting continuous self-regulation, adaptive integration, and conscious self-development across all dimensions of psychological functioning.

Future-Working

Future-Working represents the future-oriented developmental dimension of Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP). While many psychotherapeutic approaches primarily focus on resolving past experiences or managing present psychological symptoms, SWP proposes that psychological functioning is continuously shaped by anticipated futures, personal aspirations, values, goals, and emerging identities.

Within the SWP framework, individuals are understood not only as products of their developmental histories but also as architects of their future psychological lives. Expectations, aspirations, personal ideals, and meaningful goals exert continuous influence on bodily regulation, emotional experience, perceptual organization, attentional functioning, and everyday behavior. Consequently, future orientation is conceptualized as an active regulatory process rather than a distant objective.

Future-Working consists of three complementary processes:

Ideal Self Construction: Individuals are encouraged to consciously define who they aspire to become rather than remaining constrained by previous limitations or

maladaptive narratives (Johari Fard, 2025). This process differs from perfectionism or unrealistic idealization. Instead, the ideal self is conceptualized as a psychologically coherent direction grounded in personal strengths, values, realistic aspirations, and self-awareness. Future-oriented self-construction may increase motivation, resilience, psychological flexibility, and emotional regulation by fostering meaningful engagement with life (Frankl, 1985).

Strength Identification: Self-working emphasizes identifying and cultivating individual strengths as resources for psychological development (Johari Fard, 2024). Positive psychology research increasingly demonstrates that strengths-based approaches may improve emotional well-being, motivation, and adaptive functioning (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Rather than focusing exclusively on deficits or pathology, self-working encourages individuals to recognize capacities that may facilitate growth and self-development.

Values Clarification: Values clarification refers to identifying personally meaningful principles that guide action and life decisions. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy emphasizes the importance of values-based action in promoting psychological flexibility and reducing experiential avoidance (Hayes et al., 2012). Similarly, self-working conceptualizes values as central organizing principles that help individuals align behavior with meaningful life directions (Johari Fard, 2025).

Life-Working

Life-Working represents the dimension through which psychological development is translated into everyday living. Within SWP, psychological growth is not considered complete until it is expressed in daily choices, relationships, responsibilities, creativity, ethical conduct, and meaningful participation in life. Consequently, therapeutic change extends beyond the consulting room into the lived experience of the individual.

Life-Working conceptualizes everyday life as the context in which body, emotion, perception, attention, and future orientation become integrated into coherent patterns of living. Psychological well-being therefore emerges not only

from internal change but also from the continuous practice of adaptive living.

Life- Working (Life-Theme) represents the integration of past understanding and future aspiration into meaningful present-centered living (Johari Fard, 2025). Borrowing conceptually from artistic and narrative traditions, self-working psychotherapy conceptualizes life as an evolving creative process in which individuals actively shape the “theme” of their existence.

Mental health, from this perspective, is not defined solely by symptom reduction but by the capacity to live consciously, responsibly, maturely, and creatively within the realities of life (Johari Fard, 2024). Life- Working involves four essential dimensions: Conscious Living: Conscious living refers to deliberate awareness regarding bodily states, emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and life direction.

Mindfulness research consistently suggests that present-centered awareness contributes to psychological flexibility, reduced emotional distress, and improved emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Shapiro et al., 2006). However, self-working expands awareness beyond observation toward intentional life participation.

Mature Living: Mature living involves psychological responsibility, emotional regulation, and realistic engagement with challenges and limitations. Self-working assumes that maturity involves moving beyond impulsive reactivity toward reflective and balanced functioning (Johari Fard, 2025). **Responsible Living:** Responsible living refers to accepting ownership of personal choices, relationships, and psychological development.

Existential psychology consistently highlights personal responsibility as central to psychological growth and meaning-making (Yalom, 1980). Similarly, self-working emphasizes responsibility as a key developmental principle. **Creative Living:** Creative living refers to adaptive flexibility and the active shaping of meaningful life experiences. Rather than conceptualizing life as predetermined or fixed, self-working emphasizes psychological creativity and adaptive engagement with uncertainty (Johari Fard, 2024). Thus, Life-Theme becomes the lived expression of integrated psychological functioning.

Clinical and Cultural Implications

As a multidimensional and integrative framework, Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) is intended to guide psychological intervention across diverse clinical and non-clinical settings. Rather than prescribing a fixed sequence of therapeutic procedures, SWP encourages clinicians to identify the dimension that is most accessible, clinically relevant, or psychologically significant for each individual. Therapeutic intervention may therefore begin with bodily regulation, emotional processing, perceptual reconstruction, attentional development, future-oriented planning, or everyday life functioning, depending on the client's needs and treatment goals.

Throughout psychotherapy, these dimensions are viewed as reciprocally connected. Progress within one dimension is expected to facilitate adaptive changes in the others through continuous circular regulation. Consequently, therapeutic planning remains flexible, individualized, and responsive to the dynamic organization of the client's psychological system.

Beyond psychotherapy, SWP may also provide a conceptual framework for psychoeducation, preventive mental health programs, coaching, personal development, educational settings, and community-based psychological interventions. However, further empirical investigation is required before specific clinical protocols can be recommended for particular psychological disorders.

Although Self-Working Psychotherapy is presented in this article as a conceptual framework, preliminary evidence supporting its therapeutic program has begun to emerge. To date, the Self-Working Therapeutic Program has been described in foundational publications (Johari Fard, 2024, 2025) and presented at international scientific conferences. In addition, several research projects conducted have investigated the effectiveness of the program across diverse populations, including university students, individuals with type 2 diabetes, women with depression, and psychosomatic patients. Preliminary findings suggest improvements in psychological flexibility, resilience, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, quality of life, hope, meaning in life, and related psychological outcomes. Nevertheless, these findings should

be considered preliminary until replicated through peer-reviewed randomized clinical trials, longitudinal investigations, and independent cross-cultural studies.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present article has several limitations. First, SWP is presented primarily as a conceptual and theoretical framework rather than a fully validated psychotherapy protocol. Consequently, the proposed model should be regarded as a foundation for future investigation rather than a completed evidence-based treatment approach.

Second, although preliminary empirical studies have begun to evaluate components of the Self-Working Therapeutic Program, the available evidence remains limited. Large-scale randomized controlled trials, longitudinal investigations, independent replication studies, and cross-cultural validation are required to establish the reliability, effectiveness, and generalizability of the model.

Third, additional work is needed to develop standardized treatment manuals, therapist training guidelines, clinical competency frameworks, intervention protocols, and psychometric instruments capable of assessing the six dimensions proposed within SWP.

Fourth, future research should investigate the mechanisms through which reciprocal interactions among Body-Working, Emotion-Working, Perception-Working, Attention-Working, Future-Working, and Life-Working contribute to psychological change across diverse clinical populations.

Finally, comparative studies examining SWP alongside established evidence-based approaches—including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Schema Therapy, Emotion-Focused Therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions—would further clarify its theoretical contributions and clinical applications.

Conclusion

Self-Working Psychotherapy (SWP) proposes a multilevel, multidimensional, and circular framework for understanding psychological development and mental health. Rather than conceptualizing psychotherapy as the application of isolated

techniques, SWP emphasizes reciprocal interactions among bodily regulation, emotional integration, perceptual organization, attentional development, future-oriented growth, and meaningful everyday living.

SWP should be viewed as a complementary integrative framework rather than a competing school of psychotherapy. Its objective is to organize and synthesize empirically supported therapeutic principles while maintaining compatibility with contemporary evidence-based clinical practice.

The principal theoretical contribution of the model lies in organizing these dimensions within a unified systems-oriented architecture that conceptualizes psychological change as continuous self-reconstruction across the lifespan. In doing so, SWP seeks to complement existing evidence-based psychotherapies by providing an overarching conceptual framework capable of integrating diverse therapeutic principles while remaining adaptable across clinical, educational, and personal development contexts.

Although further empirical validation remains essential, SWP offers a promising foundation for future research in psychotherapy integration, systems-oriented clinical practice, and multidimensional models of psychological growth. Some of the future research directions are: development and validation of SWP assessment instruments; randomized controlled clinical trials; longitudinal studies examining mechanisms of change; cross-cultural validation across different populations; therapist competency and training research; comparisons with existing integrative psychotherapy models; investigation of potential neurobiological correlates of the proposed multidimensional framework.

In conclusion, Self-Working Psychotherapy represents a preliminary systems-oriented conceptual framework that integrates multiple psychological domains within a coherent multidimensional model. Although empirical validation remains necessary, the proposed framework offers a promising foundation for future theoretical development, clinical innovation, and interdisciplinary psychotherapy research.

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