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## **“In Eighty Stories Around the Human Life”. The Psychological Time Binding Strategies in the (auto)BIOGRAPHICAL Narrative GAME**

### **Abstract**

The theoretical construct of balanced time perspective provides a valuable context for the process of searching the possibilities of its psychological applications. The possibilities could be connected not only with the therapeutic, but also with the preventive and educational fields of psychology. Some of the tools for achieving a balanced time perspective belong to existentially-oriented narrative psychology. This article presents one of them, created by myself, a narrative psychological tool for supporting adult development, which is titled *Eighty Stories around the Human Life. The (auto)BIOGRAPHICAL Narrative GAME*. This method is composed of such elements as a box of 100 coloured copyright playing cards with a dice, *The Book of Stories*, *The Manual* with exercises, and *The Hypertextual Life-Story Map*. All these interconnected game parts had been prepared for the purpose of supporting the receivers' ("players") decisions about the content and sequence of an auto-narrative reconstruction of their lives. One of the most important strategies behind organizing this process during (and through) the game, is to practice and improve cognitive-emotional skills of recognizing, enriching, and harmonizing different time perspectives. The deliberate binding of *the daily time* context of actual experience with the past and future dimension of biographical *time of life*, connected with the transcendent perspective of *life itself*, leads the players to construct rich, multidimensional, and personally meaningful life story accounts. Selected important psychological functions of such a beneficial story construction and narrative abilities are described. The article is illustrated by presenting selected "game card exercises" proposed as the "narrative stimuli" for examining human lives in the time perspective context. From this point of view, *the psychology of time* meets the *narrative psychology* in the potentially meaningful cooperation, leading to the relatively new field of "applied psychology of time".

**Keywords:** time perspective, time binding strategies, supporting adult development, narrative psychology, applied psychology

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## Harmonizowanie wzorców doświadczania czasu w narracyjnej grze (auto)BIOGRAFICZNEJ „W osiemdziesiąt historii dookoła życia”

### Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje autorskie narzędzie wspomagania rozwoju człowieka dorosłego zatytułowane „*W osiemdziesiąt historii do-o-KOŁA ŻYCIA*. Narracyjna GRA (auto)BIOGRAFICZNA”. Narzędzie to skonstruowane zostało w celu udzielania pomocy w procesie takiej rekonstrukcji indywidualnych narracji autobiograficznych odbiorców, które wzmacniają osiągnięcie tzw. zrównoważonej perspektywy czasowej. Indywidualne decyzje „graczy”, dotyczące zawartości treściowej oraz sekwencji procesu autonarracyjnej rekonstrukcji biografii, wspierane są przez dostarczanie tzw. bodźców narracyjnych przyjmujących postać zebranych w *Księdze Opowieści* fabularnych narracji-historii oraz opisanych w *Przewodniku metodycznym* zadań-ćwiczeń do wykonania. Intencjonalne „wiązaną” aktualnie doświadczanego czasu *codzienności* z przeszłym i przyszłym wymiarem biograficznego czasu życia wzbogacone zostaje o transcendentną perspektywę uniwersalnie ujmowanego życia ludzkiego, w czym pomocna może się okazać tzw. *Hipertekstowa Mapa Opowieści o Życiu*. Uruchamianie szerszego kontekstu biograficznego, z jednoczesnym doskonaleniem umiejętności plastycznego przemieszczania się pomiędzy poszczególnymi wymiarami czasowymi w założeniu intensyfikuje bogactwo i wielowymiarowość konstruowanych o życiu opowieści, czyniąc je zarazem dla odbiorców osobliście znaczącymi. Artykuł został zilustrowany wybranymi, wchodzącymi w skład gry, ćwiczeniami stanowiącymi propozycję konkretnych oddziaływań pomocnych w zgłębianiu indywidualnych biografii w perspektywie temporalnej. W tym obszarze zakres zainteresowań i potencjalnych oddziaływań *psychologii czasu* zbliża się do *psychologii narracyjnej* oraz *psychologii egzystencjalnej*, wskazując na potencjalną możliwość współpracy w ramach relatywnie nowego obszaru „stosowanej psychologii czasu”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** perspektywa temporalna, strategie „wiązaną czasu”, wspieranie rozwoju człowieka dorosłego, psychologia narracyjna, psychologia stosowana

### Introduction

The necessity of taking into consideration the way of experiencing and making use of time by a patient/client appears in a psychologist-practitioner’s field of activity either in circumstances of already existing disturbances, when they require therapy (e.g. in the way of *time line therapy* – James, Woodsmall, 1988; O’Connor, Seymour, 1990; 1996), or as an aim of deepened education, achieved by allowing for the so-called *time ecology* (Sztumski, 2010). While the off-therapeutic option already has diverse solutions in the scope of daily life time management (hierarchy of goals, setting priorities for undertaken activities etc.), the need of taking into account in everyday practice a broader perspective of “the time of life” (not “time management” but rather “managing self in time”) still needs multiple improvements (Covey, 1989).

The task of providing an effective work tool to a psychologist, an educator, or a group trainer focused on supporting personal development, or directly to interested adults searching for self-analysis and the restructure of individual experience allowing for “the time of life”, is set by an author’s method of a narrative. The autobiographical game *In Eighty Stories around the Human Life* is the subject of

interest within this article. In line with varied, interdisciplinary theoretical context close, among other things, to the phenomenological-personalistic, existential and narrative trends in modern psychology, it is aimed at the achievement of multifaceted and mutually interrelated pro-developmental targets of a *narrative prevention of existential problems* nature (Tokarska, 2002b; 2009; 2010a; 2011a).

The title issue of time experiencing patterns is one of the main constructional keystones of the whole presented method, as well as one of many crucial thematic plots raised within it. The time dimension is present in many card games in a direct way (like in the card game number 68, titled "TIME") or creates the context of other important human existence issues recalled and elaborated within the game.

### **Time in psychological considerations and applications**

Psychological considerations most often allow for three basic dimensions of human time experiencing – defined as "body time", "mental time" and the so-called "existential time" (Tucholska, 2007; Nosal, 2010). Referring to bio-psychological establishments, the interest in *body time* is centred around experiencing cyclicity and rhythmicity ("inner rhythms") and the strategies of subjective time estimation (so-called "inner clocks" of biological nature). In *mental time* researchers study the human experience of time duration and passage, the subjective feeling of event continuity and temporal segmentation within attention, perception, memory, speech as well as movements control. The field of their interests also involves, among others, the reconstruction of human life experiences, coding patterns in a spatial way (so-called strategies "*in time*" and "*through time*" – James, 1989), and the consequences of linear time experiencing by man functioning within the culture of the West (Sztumski, 2008).

The subject of particular interest within the presented method of the narrative autobiographical game, remains *existential time*; the experience of the phase character, and a "finiteness" of time in the life cycle, simultaneous experience of the respective time dimensions, particularly the human-specific tendency to "bind" (*time binding*) into personally meaningful entirety. Specificity of human existence in time is both defined by pursuing integrity of the past, the present and the future, as well as by the ability to overcome what is given to him in direct experience (Kinget, 1975). The cognitive-existential fact that man is not a simple sum of life experiences, but has been equipped with the skill to process them constantly and distance himself in his awareness (restructuring past experiences and planning the future), is used as a basic interaction mechanism in all varieties of therapy. Language is treated here as a fundamental tool – "time architect" (Fraser, 1987) – preserving the consciousness of limited frames of individual life. It enables the spread of the temporal horizon, not only beyond "here and now", but also over the period "before birth" and "after death", including inner temporal dialogues about "Me – at the time flow" (Sobol-Kwapińska, Oleś, 2010). The diversity of human orientation towards particular time dimensions expresses itself, among others, in a dissimilar *attitude* towards one's

own past/present/future and in the richness of content of cognitive representation (so-called *content saturation*), depth of retrospective and prospective in time, and separation strategies of the whole time continuum (*scope*). It also expresses itself in a diverse level of *consistency* – the proportion between what in an individual's opinion has happened in his life and what can still happen in the future (Nawrat, 1981; Sobol-Kwapińska, 2007).

Most researchers of human time experiencing in the existential dimension emphasize the relation of openness to all temporal dimensions and capabilities to optimally (not necessarily proportionally) balance references to particular time dimensions with the optimal development of an individual, and even with his mental health. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999, 2008), Boniwell and Zimbardo (2004) apply the concept of "optimally balanced temporal perspective" (*optimally balanced TP*) in this scope, defined as an ability to move smoothly and flexibly among diverse time perspectives, depending on the need following from a given task situation, situation circumstances and personal resources. In a specific situation, fixation on a definite time dimension, unrelated to others, is considered by them as non-adaptive. These authors attribute an extremely vital pro-developmental role to the ability of harmonizing particular time dimensions – simply taking the position that it is one of the conditions of complete realization of human potential (cf. Popiołek, Chudzicka-Czupała, 2010; Śleszyński, 1998). Edwards (2002) also proposes a thesis that temporal balance (*time balance*) enables man to maintain continuity in change and development processes. Thomaе (1981) indicates a close relation between reaching a dynamic balance within orientation at particular time dimensions and finding the sense of life. Shostrom (1972) recognizes dimension: *time competence/time incompetence* (apart from *internal/external locus of control*) as important indicators of adequate functioning of an individual. Hulbert and Lens (1988) additionally stress a close relation between the possibility of effective use of all time dimensions of one's own biography and having proper access to them, the possibility to freely "move" among them – without feeling the pressure or tension of any of them. Supporting (stimulating and enriching) such cognitive-emotional access to particular time areas of one's own biography and the abilities of their personally meaningful integration, is one of key goals set for the presented method. These areas are described not only as the past, present and future, but are reached by the more extended context of the transcendent dimension of time flow (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008) named previously by Keen and Valley-Fox (1989) as "cosmic time". Freedom from denial or memory rejection mechanisms of the past, conscious and complete participation in the present, trust and active anticipation of the future, and consideration of a broader context and review of particular experiences are considered crucial elements of the *time perspective* approach (Tokarska, 2010b). Such an attitude supports searching for the "complete and rich theoretical picture" of the subject, guarded that no loss of important elements will occur while using the time dimension in the applicative psychological enterprises. All those capabilities and psychological skills facilitate the final process of meaningful integration of

all the “time rooted plots” into individual *life stories*. Searching for the sense of continuity, distinction and coherence of one’s own story and constructing the identity of oneself as a “co-author and character”, simultaneously are usual ways of work within the narrative approach in psychology. We could say that in this field *the psychology of time* meets the existentially-oriented *narrative psychology* in the potentially meaningful cooperation, leading to a relatively new field of “the applied psychology of time”.

**Tab. 1.** Adaptive vs. dis-adaptive capabilities and selected pro-developmental goals in the context of time perspective (the modified version of Tokarska, 2010b)

time dimension	area of mental functioning	adaptive or dis-adaptive capabilities and psychological skills	selected goals and pro-developmental tasks
<b>past</b> “You are trapped in the life that you decided to remember” (S. Musgrave)	<b>memory</b> cognitive-emotional access to one’s own past which is free from denial or rejection mechanisms	<b>acceptance versus negation</b> feeling guilty or blaming people and external circumstances	→ activation of gratitude; making use of one’s own experiences; forgiving oneself and other processes
<b>present</b> “Life is not a company to manage, but a mystery to contemplate” (G. Burkhard)	<b>conscious participation</b> access to the present and complete participation in it	<b>utilization versus dissipate</b> feeling guilty of “wasting time” understood as: thoughtlessness leading to the loss of crucial plots of biography and/or lack of activity effect or the loss of energy and the feeling of sense as a derivative of life under constant pressure of “using the time” well enough	→ ability to harmonize two fundamental types of spending time: acting and being (refraining from acting to “existing/being in the world”)
<b>future</b> “The experience is a comb you get from life when bald” (J. Clare)	<b>anticipation</b> considering the type of expectations: trust in the future, balancing active – task – attitude and “surrendering” to the course of events	<b>activation versus passivity</b> apathy or distrust; fear; seeing the future “in dark colours”	→ positive implication in the mutually related scopes: general emotional climate and the psychological cognitive skills, like: specifying dreams, hierarchizing goals and planned strategies of their achievement
<b>“transcendent time”</b> “Keep calm. In a hundred years, you will not care” (W. Emerson)	<b>consideration</b> of a broader, meaningful perspective as a context of particular experiences review and biography as potentially meaningful entirety	<b>trust versus distrust</b> distrust in the supporting powers of the universe limited to the rational dimension of self-perception and outer reality	→ transcending the dilemma whether we act in light of future prospects rather than being driven by past forces; broadening the frames (boundaries) of one’s own biography by the period “before birth” and “after death”; searching for important individual and universal connections with the Nature, Universe, Sacrum

<p><b>integration</b>                  "One who has no time – is poorer than a beggar ..."                  (a Nepali proverb)</p>	<p><b>identity</b>                  gaining the sense of continuity, distinction and coherence of one's own story and oneself as a "co-author and character" simultaneously</p>	<p><b>sense versus meaninglessness</b>                  feeling of distraction and/or inner chaos in the scope of thoughts, emotions, decisions and activities; loss of the feeling of meaningfulness and sense</p>	<p>→                  perceiving the own biography as the multiple, complex and meaningful entirety and making attempts to connect it in a valuable way with other people's biographies; write it in the "story of the world"</p>
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## Re-telling life stories in the search of meaning

### "Serious games"? The modern ludology perspective of education & therapy

Games strengthen their position in modern culture, becoming a phenomena that pervades almost all spheres of human life. This could be well understood within the framework of a variety of a relatively new branch of humanistic studies called *ludology*, interested in diverse types of commonly popular games and plays, with emphasis on computer games (cf. Caillois, 1962, 1997; Frasca, 1999; Huizinga, 1955, 1998; Juul, 2003; Szeja, 2004; Surdyk, 2007). Ludological research allows the perspective of using plays (*paidos*) and games (*ludos*) in education in a broad sense; "playing in order to learn and learning as a form of play" or "education through entertainment" (cf. Rodriguez, 2006). Such a perspective opens new possibilities to construct psychological methods of human development support at particular stages of life that refer to the formula of play and game. Some of them, like in Frasca's (1999) concept – that most serious pursuits exhibit playful aspects – called for games that could "make a difference in people's lives", and in such a context, so-called "serious gaming" is considered a medium of deep education and sometimes also a medium for a social change. According to some concepts "playing is the medium of where lived experience is organized as a structured situation [...] and the core aim of play becomes the organization of experience" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 30). All therapies searching for the similar purpose as facilitating the process of re-constructing the individual life experience have prescribed to gain it in a decisive "serious way". The narrative therapy is one of the rare between them, that claims that play-like activities and humour could be, in some cases, effective strategies supporting the healing mechanisms – not losing the seriousness dimension of a human existence at the same time (Chrzastowski, de Barbaro, 2011). Narrative therapy refers to the metaphor of life compared to a story ruled by narration, and the man experiencing it, to a subject (author) who tells the story and is its co-author (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1985, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). It focuses on the reconstruction and comprehension of the story told by people about their own lives. Assistance in cognitive separation to gain real independence of one's own way of life – type of story – from stories (patterns, narrative scenarios) is offered to an individual from the outside (Dryll, Cierpka, 2004; White, 1990, 1999). The main help is in finding and reconstructing

the thread that links particular elements, as well as exploring opportunities to tell the already known stories in a new way (switching over the “genres”: e.g. choosing a *comedy* or a *grotesque* pattern of telling the life story instead of a *tragedy* or *irony* pattern [Gergen & Gergen, 1983]).

### **Telling life stories “before” ...**

Encouragement and giving help in the process of telling one’s own life story “before” or in the face of a breakdown or crisis (when it will be necessary to meet a professional therapist), is the main way of conduct within psychological (achieved at workshops or trainings) proposition of human development support throughout life (Tokarska, 2000, 2002a, 2004, 2006). Off-therapeutic assistance in the process of self-cognition and ordering individual experience fulfilled by narrative methods originally leads, among other things, to such results (Tokarska, 2007) as: significant deepening of self-reflection in people who are not oriented at this kind of cognitive activity in everyday life, specifying thoughts through their verbalization allowing more complete use of one’s own experiences, narrative ordering of experiences that facilitates verbalization of “life and development strategies”, providing the development of “biographical competence” (Pietrasiński, 1993; Tokarska, 2011a). Supporting the insight into one’s own past and acquainting conditions of one’s own development, as well as finding the leading topic (life direction that enables to standardize and consolidate various experiences), can bear fruit in the form of an increased feeling of meaningfulness and sense, bringing positive effects on particular levels of an individual’s functioning in turn. Knowing the strategies of regaining control over one’s own awareness, equipping with the ability to retrieve the state of balance by oneself (described in the concept of “flow/optimal experience”, Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) is expressed in the growing independence of outside conditions and in the increase in the general sense of high quality of life, and as a result, in the growth of probability of a positive life balance. Gaining distance to the content of one’s own biography, is, on the other hand, connected with a cognitive separation of the teller from the contents of speech, which is a favourable starting point to co-author one’s own story (subjective feeling of achievement) and the sense of responsibility for one’s own life that is related to it. These effects also refer to levels of functioning as motivational-decision-making, efficiency of actions, dealing with problem situations and communication (Trzebiński, 2002) either.

### **Narrative ordering of time flow experience**

Logo-therapeutic results, expressed in the ability to give sense to particular experiences of one’s own life and autobiography as separate, personally meaningful entirety (that also belongs to the whole richness of human stories), seem to be particularly promising. Some of the narrative strategies refer to the identification, analysis and dynamic balancing of the main threads of human existence (*love, suffering, death*), along with image confrontation with those of them that have not yet been dealt with by the teller (Tokarska, 2010d, 2011b, 2011c; cf. Seligman et al., 2013). Comprehending successive areas of one’s own biography with self-reflection,

confronts the already gathered experience, but also those plots (topics) of human existence that so far have remained inaccessible. As a basis for a practical narrative approach in psychology, an assumption on the significant influence of narrative ordering of the autobiographical experience, as a form of supporting human development, has already been used during preparation of a range of diverse forms of work that initiate and maintain this process. Sets of treatments on biographical material, deserving the status of *narrative methods*, most often take the form of interview models, questionnaires or “guides” which are supposed to make it easier for the storyteller to freely move within one’s own experience, understood as “space-time of the story of one’s own life”. Acknowledged sets of tools of narrative ordering of autobiographical experience within this area include, among others (cf. Tokarska, 1999): D. McAdam’s (1985, 1988) and J. Fowler’s narrative autobiographical interviews (1981), a guidebook entitled *Your Mythic Journey* written by S. Keen and A. Valley-Fox (1989), as well as the method of a board, autobiographical game proposed by an Italian adult education specialist D. Demetrio (1999).

### **The narrative autobiographical game *In Eighty Stories around the Human Life* as the tool for harmonizing diverse patterns of time experiencing**

#### **The method’s basic structure and main activities**

The presented method of an autobiographical narrative game is a part of a larger project in which purposeful narrative influences are used to activate and support a narrative way of understanding self and the world, self-reflection and autobiographic awareness. The previously mentioned Keen’s idea of *a mythic journey* and Demetrio’s *autobiographical game* have led me (as the author) into developing my own proposal for a holistic and open-ended form of supporting personal growth in adults. The method had been composed of such elements as a box of 100 coloured copyright playing cards with a dice, *The Book of Stories*, *The Manual* with exercises and *The Hypertextual Life-Story Map* (which plays the role of a graphic proposal of possible interconnections between all the thematic issues inside the game). Diverse elements of the method have been prepared for the purpose of supporting the receivers’ (“players”) decisions about the content and the sequence of an auto-narrative reconstruction of their lives. From another point of view, this could serve as “the table of contents” or “the map” for psychological investigations reconstructing the human paths of cognitive ordering of biographical experience (the sequence of decision-making and content selection).

In both fields of use (psychological research & practice) one of the most important strategies organizing the process of “storying the experience” during (and through) the game, is the practice and improvement of participants’ cognitive-emotional skills of recognizing, enriching and harmonizing different time perspectives. The deliberate binding of *the daily time* context of their actual experience with the past and future dimension of biographical *time of life*, connected



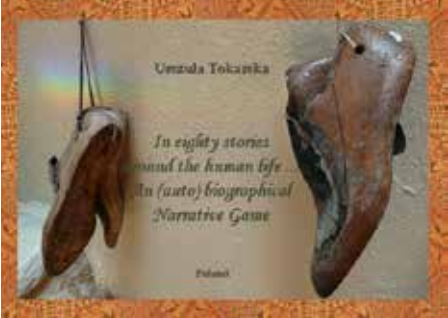
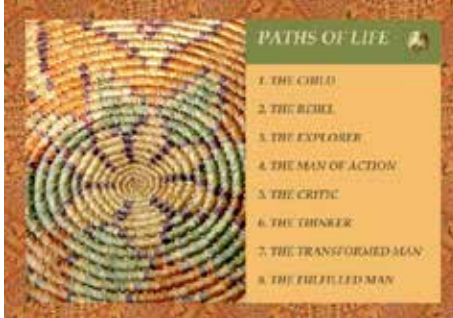

with the transcendent perspective of *life itself*, leads the players to the construction of the multidimensional, rich and personally meaningful life story accounts.

In a cooperative activity, which takes the form of a board game, the participants are led through the successive stages of human life: eight decades from the cradle to the grave (cf. their sequence, p. 10). While playing, the participants work with a range of stories following the paths of universal human experience in their remembered past, actual commitments and the imagined future, looking for the possibilities of eventually symbolizing and transcending them. The narrative base for the original game exercises described in *The Manual* has been collected in *The Book of Stories* composed of 222 narrations written by many authors representing diverse cultures and time periods. Some of the tasks to complete are illustrated with additional pictures and objects creating the whole “narrative stimuli”. The participants have to define by themselves the scope to which the particular story and exercise refers to in their own life by choosing either the so-called *hot path* (a deeper kind of work with their individual experience) or the *cold path* (a kind of work relatively not so close to their own life). The narrative character of the method manifests itself on two different, interconnected levels; simultaneously working with the particular biography – *life story* (“internal” narrative) and using some “external” narratives (e.g. *tales, fairy tales, myths, parables, novels or movies*). The players’ activities are a process of reading texts, listening to stories told by others, composing their own narratives and creating new, untold stories. Following the paths of universal human experience in the remembered past and the imagined future, participants learn – via play-like activities – psychological skills like using the broad context to perceive their actual activities, relations and problems, flexibly switching between diverse time frames as the most appropriate to the demands of the current behavioural setting and, finally, avoiding the over-use of some time perspectives while under-using others (cf. Table pp. 12-15). The other important purpose of the method is supporting the process of searching for the “flesh of transcendence” in the current, experience of the players. This seems to be an appropriate prevention against the trivialization of the “daily” experience (experienced often habitually as boring and/or banal) and it could be regarded as support for the psycho-existential meaning making process.

### **Selected illustrations of the deliberate tool**

The selected game cards below are presented according to their visual expression, their thematic content and the potential psychological functions facilitated by each of them.

**Tab. 2.** The illustration: some selected game cards by their graphic solutions

<p>a) the covered card with the title:</p>  <p>a)</p>	 <p>b)</p>
<p><b>b)</b> the periodization card with eight following stages of human life cycle (based on Mary &amp; Nordholt concept of the <i>inner myth scenarios</i>, 2004):</p> <p><i>THE CHILD</i> (aged 0-10);  <i>THE REBEL</i> (aged 10-20);  <i>THE EXPLORER</i> (aged 20-30);  <i>THE MAN OF ACTION</i> (aged 30-40);  <i>THE CRITIC</i> (aged 40-50);  <i>THE THINKER</i> (aged 50-60);  <i>THE TRANSFORMED MAN</i> (aged 60-70);  <i>THE FULFILLED MAN</i> (aged above 70)</p> <p><b>c)</b> the example of one of the games cards (from the <i>TRANSFORMED MAN</i> phase):</p>	
 <p>c) card number 68, entitled <i>TIME</i> (cf. pp. 197-198)</p>	

**Tab. 3.** The illustration: selected game cards by the content and potential psychological functions facilitated by them (in some relations to Zimbardo's time perspective concept, 2008)

the name and the number of the card	the content of the card	the potential psychological function facilitated by the card
41. THREE CHESTS * [integration] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix	looking for the interconnections and possible coherence between our past, present and future experiences symbolized by "three chests" containing our memories, current commitments and future dreams and expectations	* opening the spheres of different time contexts; * experiencing the "phase" character of the time flow and the separation strategies of the whole life continuum; * the mental integration of past, present and future perspectives; * pursuing integrity
42. TOO LATE? * [consciousness] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix	considering how to manage in everyday life decisions, discovering the value of something being "on time" rather than too late, being "on time" with important things, relations and values	* the delayed knowledge prevention; * applicability to the real life circumstances
47. WALKING BACKWARDS [cf. Zimbardo's concept: <i>Past-Negative</i> ]	the illustration of how the lack of forgiveness of some past experiences brings about many internal and interpersonal problems and blocks our actual or future actions and relationships	* practicing the acceptance of troubling and painful experiences ("wounds"); from the past; * "the past period closing" as a strategy for making space for some new things in life
50. THE NEW STAIRWAYS [cf. Zimbardo's concept: <i>Future</i> ]	discovering the new possibilities unavailable in the last parts of life, which might be open and available in its next parts	* opening for future possibilities; * gaining the hope that the future will not simply be a "reproduction" of the past only, but a period for new possibilities (in terms of quality and space)
52. THE MOMENTS OF BEING [cf. Zimbardo's concept: <i>Present-Hedonistic</i> and <i>Past-Positive</i> ]	recalling this life experiences, in which we were "flying with the world" and stayed "where we were supposed to stay" versus the boredom of some daily experiences and the senselessness of others	* intensification of the experience of the time flow and looking for its deeper understanding (the "essence"); * "capturing" the passing moment to experience it fully and feel the real joy of life
61. THE THREAD OF LIFE * [consciousness and integration] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix	considering the consequences of human need to "skip" life's unpleasant, painful events vs. the acceptance of the process of the flow of a life itself	* the acceptance of natural rhythm of time flow and the unpleasant experiences as the natural part of the life; * enhancing the skill of being more patient and not "in a hurry" all the time (according to the <i>Bible</i> words: "there is the time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven", <i>The Book of Ecclesiastes</i> , 3, 1-8)
62. MRS NIGHTINGALE * [cf. Zimbardo's concept: <i>Present-Fatalistic</i> ] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix	considering the consequences of the lack of acceptance of the signs of passing time in one's present stage of life (acting younger than one really is and searching for "youth elixirs" for the body)	* inducing the natural acceptance of the body and mental symptoms of growing older and, finally, of the time passing flow

<p>68. TIME * [integration] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix</p>	<p>examining important life plots across the time flow; harmonizing the patterns of spending everyday time and giving account of all the time within one’s life course; the prevention of over-using some of the perspectives when under-using others (searching for time balance)</p>	<p>* simultaneous experiencing and binding the different patterns of time experiencing: <i>the daily time, the time of life and the life itself</i>; * harmonizing the technical possibilities of “management of the time” skills with time contemplation and “being”</p>
<p>75. PUT IT TOGETHER * [integration] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix</p>	<p>putting together different plots of our life story in the meaningful pattern of the whole created by us; “switching over” one life story pattern to the other – practicing the distance skills</p>	<p>* practicing the integration of different life story plots (e.g. <i>love, friendship, suffering, life difficulties, activity, creativity or looking for the meaning</i>) into the coherent whole (“the own life”)</p>
<p>76. FOOTPRINTS ON THE EARTH * [cf. Zimbardo’s concept: <i>Future and Transcendent</i>] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix</p>	<p>considering the ways people can cross the boundaries of the human condition leaving behind irremovable traces forever; <i>the generativity dimension</i> of an individual life course in needs and actions</p>	<p>* managing the whole life review from the perspective of its end; * practicing the ability to overcome what is given in direct experience</p>
<p>77. EARTHLY &amp; HEAVENLY * [cf. Zimbardo’s concept: <i>Transcendent</i>] * see illustrative exercises in the appendix</p>	<p>recalling the ways people have for ages got used to the thought of their own <i>death</i>; longing for <i>after-death life</i> proofs; the possibilities to see “the flesh” of transcendence in the daily life experience</p>	<p>* practicing the skills of extending the life-review process above the individual earthly existence beyond “here and now” and over the periods “before birth and after death”</p>

## Conclusions

According to the principles of deepened education and psychological prevention, the issue of time experience and organization with reference to diverse age and problem groups – so early as to counteract the necessity to work with particular dimensions within a therapy – is undoubtedly worth undertaking. There are many possible ways of achieving this type of target set for practical psychology. The starting point for the realization process of this kind of task can become R. Schafer’s statement (1981, p. 17), referring to the idea of narrative psychology, that “[...] development of an individual can be determined by the change of questions to which he searches answers in his self-narration”. In this article, the author’s method of a narrative autobiographical game “*In Eighty Stories around the Human Life*”, is suggested as one of the potential tools of pro-developmental psychological work in this scope. The “narrative journeys in time and through time” aimed at recovering, applying and integrating dispersed elements of individual human biographies, are mostly supported in the way of multifaceted stimulation to think about self, taking the time category into account. This method allows for the necessity to inter-pervade dissimilar, often seen as mutually exclusive, patterns of time experiencing: comprehended in a broader biographical context of *the*

*time of life, the daily time, and the life itself* focused on possible interconnections between effective, measurable use of time and its reflective experiencing. The article presents selected original “narrative stimuli” for examining human lives in the time perspective context connecting Zimbardo’s *Past-Negative and Positive, Present-Hedonistic and Fatalistic, Future and Transcendent time perspectives* with *continuity, consciousness, integration* skills and their applicability to the real life circumstances. Philip Zimbardo’s concept that “[...] a balanced time perspective is not only the state but an ongoing process”, demands looking for the appropriate psychological solution that would allow receivers to not only practice this kind of attitude and skills during the educational/training activities, but to use them to stimulate the frequent (“habitual”) auto-reflection considering time dimension. The idea of play-like narrative “navigation inside the inner space and time” of individual lives seems to serve the balanced time perspective well. Evaluating tools of such an activity are still under the construction, but up to now, we have received enough positive reports encouraging the continuity of this kind of psychological enterprise. From this point of view *the psychology of time* meets the existentially-oriented *narrative psychology* in the potentially meaningful cooperation leading to the relatively new field of “applied psychology of time”.

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## Appendix

### Illustrative game exercises corresponding to some selected cards:

#### game card number 41 – THREE CHESTS

##### The hot path

*THREE CHESTS ACTIVITY – 1.* [based on: Lasocińska, K., & Stasiak, M. K. (2010)]. Imagine that there are three chests in front of you. One houses your past, the other your present and the third one your future. Study the way they look like.

*THE PAST: Come up to the first chest and try to open it. What can you see inside? Take a piece of paper and draw what you saw. Mark what you consider the most important.*

*THE PRESENT: Come up to the next chest, take the lid up, what can you see? Anything that was not in the previous chest? Perhaps some things are the same, some are missing. Take a piece of paper and draw what you see. Is there anything you would like to put in here?*

*THE FUTURE: What have you found in the third chest? Is there anything that you saw in the previous chests and that you would like to put here?*

Now that all the chests have been opened, say what has changed in their content and in yourself? How can you see your life now that all three chests are open?

MAKE A STORY OF YOUR OWN LIFE taking into consideration basic connections between the past, the present and the future. What makes your story different from the autobiographical stories of other people? What do the past, the present, and the future look like now?

##### The cold path

*THREE CHESTS ACTIVITY – 2.* Imagine a man in front of three opened chests. They house his past, present and future respectively. He studies the way they look. He is now telling you the story of his own life. Write it down and re-tell to the audience.

#### game card number 42 – TOO LATE?

##### The hot path

*“THE INTERVIEW” ACTIVITY.* Imagine that a young journalist wants to conduct an interview with you on the following subject: *WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT TOO LATE?*

- *What will you tell him? How will you counter the consequences of “belated knowledge” in the future?*
- *To what extent do you agree with the following words: “THE EXPERIENCE IS A COMB YOU GET FROM LIFE WHEN BALD”?*
- *In what type of personal experience have you managed to discover the value of something “in time” rather than too late? Tell about them.*

##### The cold path

Read B. Ferrero’s (1989) story *The Door to Happiness* about a mysterious disappearance of an old garden door, which had not been opened by the “hurry up” man. Imagine what might have been behind the door which never appeared once again and attracted this way the protagonists’ attention for so long.

- *Make up two different stories: one about „following the impulse” & making spontaneous discoveries within a new area of experience and the other one about postponing the discovery of the secrets of life for some other time.*
- *What, and for what reason, do people normally “leave for the time being”? How many of the activities and experiences can actually be realized “later”? What is it, in your opinion, that should not be left to be done later in life?*

<p><b>game card number 61 – THE THREAD OF LIFE</b></p> <p><u>The hot path</u>  <i>"A MAGIC THREAD" ACTIVITY – 1. Listen to a story A Magic Thread by B. Ferrero (2007).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Imagine, you have met an Old Woman from B. Ferrero's story. Similarly to the protagonist of the story, you get a box with a golden thread symbolizing the time of your life. Each time you pull it, it shortens the unpleasant, troublesome and painful time of life events and experiences of your life. You "jump" to the good time then... Are you going to use it? If so, in what circumstances? REMEMBER THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF GOING BACKWARDS (!).</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluate the potential gains and losses connected with jumping over certain life events.</i></li> </ul> <p><u>The cold path</u>  <i>A MAGIC THREAD ACTIVITY – 2. Listen to a story A Magic Thread by B. Ferrero (2007). Attach to the cardboard some colourful threads symbolizing the life of: A TEACHER/ A HAT -MAKER/ A BEDOUIN/ A HOUSEWIFE/ A CROCODILE.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consider – how are they different and what makes them similar?</i></li> <li>• <i>Think of the circumstances in which these characters could wish to pull the magic thread symbolizing their lifetime. What could they gain and what could they lose by doing it? Why?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>game card number 62 – MRS NIGHTINGALE</b></p> <p><i>"IN A MIRROR" ACTIVITY. Listen to a story of a mysterious disappearance of a woman named Mrs. Nightingale. Recall some other stories similar to the one told by K. Vopel (2001). Imagine why Mrs. Nightingale did not show up? Tell about the further discoveries of the story protagonist. Concern where the secret mixtures and wonder elixirs lead in these stories? (e.g. Alice in Wonderland). Try to answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Have you ever met a person who could not accept his or her present stage of life? What did he or she look and act like?</i></li> <li>• <i>Which signs of passing time, do you think, will be most difficult to accept for you? Will you use this kind of awareness now?</i></li> <li>• <i>Whom could you see, looking yourself, in a mirror?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>game card number 68 – TIME</b></p> <p><i>"THE LIFE LINE" ACTIVITY – 1. Sketch symbolically your life span (presenting it horizontally, vertically, diagonally or spirally) from the birthday till the death. Mark your present place. Try to answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How much time has passed? How much time is left? How have you used the time passed?</i></li> <li>• <i>Have you ever been in the same place before? Would you like to return here?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do you look forward and expect in the further part of your life?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>"THE TORTE OF TIME" ACTIVITY – 2. Sketch symbolically your daily time (presenting it in the circle mode &amp; divided into some separate "pieces"). Try to answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How much time and energy did you use to spend on the different daily activities?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are you satisfied with such a pattern? What kind of changes would you need (or dream about) in the potential reconstruction leading from your "real torte of time" to your own "ideal torte of time"?</i></li> </ul>

- *Is there something personally important to you, which you consider to be missing in your current “torte of time”: something – you “have no time” to realize and fulfill? Are there any activities which seemed to be not so personally important to you to keep them habitually in your daily “torte of time” continuously?*
- *How much of your real “torte of time” are you able to name: “this is my own time”? What does it mean to you?*

*“TIME INTERCONNECTIONS” ACTIVITY.* Now when these two sketches have been completed, try to combine them into the interconnected whole – searching an answer for following questions:

- *How much of the personally & biographically important parts from your “life line” is really present in your current “torte of time”?*
- *Which of your daily activities are not congruent with the broader perspective of your whole biography, the imaginary experienced entity of your life? Could you decide to move them outside the daily “torte of time” circle – preparing the clearer space for the personally important values, relations and activities, instead?*
- *Whom do you regard to be the decision-maker and the agent of realizing the personally valuable pattern of spending the time of your daily life and the life as the whole (biography)?*

#### **game card number 75 – PUT IT TOGETHER**

*THE WHOLE ACTIVITY.* Listen to the story about how many things can be made of a few pieces of wire and a piece of wood. Choose three out of the important (light) motifs of your life. Give them a name (e.g. LOVE–SUFFER–FIGHT–CREATIVITY) and put them together in a whole which could not be created without any of these elements.

- *Give it a name (title). A similar effect can be achieved by joining together a number of colorful paper clips, which gives an additional advantage of showing the links between the particular motifs: the elements of one colorful stand for the given motif, the motifs are clipped together at the sides by the crucial spots of the biography.*
- *Try to put the motifs of your life in a different way.*

#### **game card number 76 – FOOTPRINTS ON THE EARTH**

*THE CIRCLES ACTIVITY.* Think – how far, in your imagination, are your footprints on the earth to go? Draw the circles you will have left in the future on the cardboard. Tell the story about them.

#### **game card number 78 – EARTHLY & HEAVENLY**

##### *The hot path*

*“AT SAINT PETER’S DOOR” ACTIVITY* (based on exercise by Jacobs, 2004). Archangel Gabriel dips his pen in an ink pot, ready to inscribe three sentences of your greatest deeds in the big book. You crane over his shoulder and read... What could you recognize? How far his description is from your own view of your greatest deeds?

##### *The cold path*

*“THE SHORTEST BIOGRAPHY OF THE WORLD – MY OWN EPITAPH” ACTIVITY* (based on exercise by de Mello, 1984). Think of an imaginary protagonist who is surprised to discover that the epitaph put on his grave by his relatives differs much from his own vision of his life on earth. Say how these two differ. What might have caused the differences?

Stories & exercises references: \* de Mello, A. (1984). *Wellsprings. A Book of Spiritual Exercises*. India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand [Polish version: de Mello, A. (1990), *U źródeł*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM]. \* Ferrero, B. (1989). *Tutte storie per la catechesis, le omelie a la scuola di religione*. Torino: Editrice Elle-Di-Ci. [Polish version: Ferrero, B. (1998), *Historie. Katecheza w opowiadaniach*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie]. \* Ferrero, B. (2007). *365 piccole storie per l'anima*. Torino: Editrice Elle-Di-Ci. [Polish version: Ferrero, B. (2009), *365 krótkich opowiadań dla ducha*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie]. \* Jacobs, R. (2004). *What is your purpose?* Hodder & Stoughton General Division. [Polish version: Jacobs, R. (2005), *Jaki jest twój cel?* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Amber]. \* Lasocińska, K., & Stasiak, M. K. (2010), *Spróbuj inaczej. Scenariusze zajęć rozwijających umiejętności twórcze*. Łódź: AHE. \* Vopel, K. (2001). *Geschichtenwerkstatt. Erzählen und Verstehen*. Salzhausen: Iskopress. [Polish version: Vopel, K. (2003), *Sztuka opowiadania, sztuka słuchania. Praktyczne wskazówki i ćwiczenia*. Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność].