

DEFINITIONS OF SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

Self-transcendence refers to the direct experience of a fundamental connection, harmony, or unity with others and the world. The "self" which is transcended is the personality or ego-self, the collection of self-concepts, self-images, and roles which develops through one's interactions. Transpersonal approaches hold that this ego-self is not the same as one's true nature or essence and that self-transcendence opens one to the experience of this deeper nature.

The notion of self-transcendence is a key part of [psychologist Abraham] Maslow's thinking and the roots of transpersonal psychology. Toward the end of his career, Maslow's transpersonal interests led him to add a sixth level to his widely-known Hierarchy of Needs. This sixth level, a meta-need for self-transcendence and a motivation toward peak experiences, extends beyond the deficiency needs and the need for self-actualization. He found that such a need was present for some but not all self-actualizing persons. A sense of self-transcendence is a defining characteristic of mystical experiences.

(As described by Walsh, R. & Vaughan, F. (1993). *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision.*)

Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory measures self-transcendence as composed of three traits, as described by Jeffrey Kluger:

- Self-forgetfulness - the ability to become immersed in an experience;
- Transpersonal identification - a feeling of connectedness to a larger universe; and
- Mysticism - an openness to things not literally provable.