

Ordinary People Counseling

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In the 1980 film *Ordinary People*, different types of theories of counseling can be done on the main character Conrad. One of the main theories of counseling is psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis main goal in counseling is to make the unconscious conscious and to strengthen the ego (Corey, 2015). Using a psychoanalytic approach with Conrad, it will include discovering what is unconsciously occurring in his life. Using a psychoanalytic approach it will help gain insight into Conrad's mind by allowing Conrad to discuss what he is thinking with the therapist by different techniques. The therapist will have a sense of being anonymous. With a psychoanalysis approach, Conrad will participate in free association which is talking about whatever comes into mind as well as dream analysis which helps provide insight into dreams and the unconscious (Corey, 2015). During dream analysis Conrad will be able to talk about his dreams and what they can possibly mean. Conrad will also engage in interpretation which allows the therapist to help point out and explain the meaning of what Conrad may be experiencing. Conrad will be able to strengthen his ego which is best described as "the "executive" that governs, controls, and regulates the personality. As a "traffic cop," it mediates between the instincts and the surrounding environment. The ego controls consciousness and exercises censorship" (Corey, 2015). Conrad will be able to strengthen his ego by becoming aware of the ego-defense mechanisms which are ways individuals can distort their reality and help the person cope with the anxiety of whatever may be causing overwhelming feelings (Corey, 2015). An example of how Conrad may use an ego defense mechanism is denial which he shows by saying he is fine all the time instead of admitting he needs help. During the psychoanalytic counseling sessions, Conrad will also learn about the psychosocial stages which can provide insight into where Conrad may be facing a crisis if not resolved (Corey, 2015). Conrad will become more

aware and gain insight through a psychoanalytic approach in counseling.

Another counseling theory that can be used to counsel Conrad is Jungian therapy. Jungian therapy consists of helping clients recognize and achieve self-realization and wholeness (Tan, 2011) Jungian therapy has therapeutic goals of self-knowledge, reintegration, and individualization (Tan, 2011). Conrad will begin in the first stage of Jungian therapy which is confession (Tan, 2011). To start off Conrad will need to meet with the therapist weekly face to face to help develop a therapeutic relationship. The therapist will be accepting and empathic to help Conrad open up more during his sessions. The second stage is elucidation which is when the therapist will interpret the transference Conrad may have in therapy (Tan, 2011). The third stage is education which is when the therapist educates Conrad to become more self aware and connect more with society. In Jungian therapy, Conrad will discover and understand the archetypes in his life. Archetypes are best defined as “the images of universal experiences contained in the collective unconscious” (Corey, 2015). During counseling sessions, Conrad will learn and gain insight into the archetypes in his life such as the persona. The persona is an archetype that refers to how one presents themselves to the public (Tan, 2011). Conrad will learn through the Jungian counseling approach about the persona he presents himself to the world such as when he tells his family and friends that he is fine all the time. Through Jungian therapy Conrad will also learn about his personality and the levels of consciousness. Conrad will learn about his personality through gaining knowledge with the help of the therapist of what personality attitude he has whether it be extroverted or introverted that influences his socialization with the opposite gender. Jungian therapy aims to make the unconscious conscious as well as integrating the unconscious with the conscious to help the client during the process of individuation (Tan, 2011). Conrad will

become aware of the personal unconscious which is when “thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives that the ego has screened out of conscious awareness are stored below the level of consciousness” (Tan, 2011). The therapist will educate Conrad of unresolved conflicts he may have towards his mother through gaining awareness of the personal unconscious. Conrad will engage in different techniques during Jungian therapy such as active imagination which as well as dream analysis to help gain awareness of the repressed emotions he may possess. Conrad will benefit from Jungian therapy.

Another way to counsel Conrad is by Adlerian therapy. Adlerian therapy focuses and emphasizes on the client’s freedom to choose their life goals and purpose in life which will guide their life and lifestyle (Tan, 2011). Adlerian therapy consists of four phases that clients endure through the counseling process (Corey, 2015). Conrad will begin by building a therapeutic relationship with the therapist by having a person to person contact each week for several months which is supportive, educating, and collaborating which is essential in the counseling process. Conrad will become aware of his strengths as he builds his awareness in the phase (Corey, 2015). During the second phase Conrad will collaborate with the therapist and explore psychological dynamics by engaging in a lifestyle assessment. Conrad will complete a lifestyle assessment with the therapist to help gain insight into what is guiding his life. Conrad will tell the therapist his life style story and begin with his earliest memories and reconciliation with his family. Conrad will discuss how he was the youngest child in his family and how it was like being the youngest in his family. The therapist will be encouraging and supportive throughout the process. The therapist will also look into themes throughout Conrad's life and look out for basic mistakes that Conrad may be facing. Basic mistakes are negative and self-defeating aspects of an

individual lifestyle such as minimization or denial of one's worth which he may have about themselves (Tan, 2011). The next phase is providing insight and interpretation. The therapist will provide insight to Conrad and ponder questions and suggestions to him by using tentative and well-timed manner interpretations to help Conrad not become defensive (Tan, 2011). The last phase is facilitating reorientation and reeducation which includes helping the individual translate insights into actions (Tan, 2011). Conrad will engage in several techniques in this stage such as catching oneself. Catching oneself will help Conrad stop himself from engaging in negative behavior and to help change and replace the behavior before it happens (Tan, 2011). After completing all the four phases Conrad will be done with adlerian therapy.

Another counseling theory that can be used to help treat Conrad is person-centered therapy. One of the main goals of person-centered therapy is "to assist clients in achieving a greater degree of independence and integration so they can better cope with problems as they identify them" (Corey, 2015). Conrad will begin person-centered therapy by meeting with the therapist at the same time and day as he would like each week. The therapeutic relationship between Conrad and the therapist will be the center of effective counseling. This will be done by the therapist contributing to a growth promoting climate and by being congruence which is best described as being genuine with the client (Corey, 2015). The therapist will also need to be acceptant and caring towards Conrad and have a deep understanding of the problems he may be facing. The therapist will express congruence by being honest with Conrad such as sharing appropriate and helpful information about themselves that will help Conrad. The therapist will express unconditional positive regard towards Conrad by respecting him for who he is instead of looking at him as someone who needs a cure. Finally the therapist will express empathic

understanding by expressing an empathic attitude towards Conrad instead of reflecting Conrad's feelings or simply listening emphatically (Corey, 2015). The counseling session will focus on Conrad being responsible for his healing and growth instead of the client being an “authoritative expert” (Tan, 2011). Conrad will be responsible for being free to choose his own goals and direction throughout person-centered therapy. The therapist will not focus on techniques to help Conrad create change but will rather focus on being present and build the therapeutic relationship with Conrad to allow him to feel supportive, encouraged, heard, and respected. Conrad will benefit from person-centered therapy.

Another counseling theory that will benefit Conrad will be existential therapy. The main focus of existential therapy is to help clients experience their existence in an authentic, meaningful, and responsible way (Tan, 2011). Also, the main goal of existential therapy is to increase the client's awareness (Corey, 2015). Conrad will begin by going to the counseling session the same time and day each week and will begin in the initial phase. During the initial phase Conrad will discover and clarify his assumptions about their world and how he views it. Conrad will review his assumptions about living and dying, freedom, responsibility, and choice, isolation and loving which is intimacy, and meaning and meaninglessness. During the middle phase Conrad will closely examine the source and authority of his present value system (Corey, 2015). While in the middle phase will be able to speak more about the reality of death and speak more about his emotions about his brother's death. The therapist will help Conrad in this phase to help Conrad embrace the choice of embracing living life authentically while accepting the reality of death and grief. The therapist will also use confrontation to help Conrad take responsibility for his choices and actions. The therapist will use confrontation in a gentle and straightforward way

to express empathy and genuineness towards Conrad. The therapist will also help Conrad see his need for intimate friendships and relationships by being loving and caring while remaining the appropriate boundaries. In the final phase Conrad will live out what he has learned in existential therapy. Conrad will seek out building relationships with the women he has an interest in and not being afraid to reach out for help when he needs. Conrad will learn to be accountable and take responsibility for his choices and not blame others. Conrad will have the freedom to choose in order to create meaning in his life despite all the challenges that may occur such as conflict with his mother and grief over his brother's death. Conrad will be done with existential therapy when completing the final phase.

Another counseling theory that can be done to counsel Conrad is gestalt therapy. Gestalt therapy's main goal is for clients to expand their awareness of what they are currently experiencing or in the present moment (Corey, 2015). The therapist will start off by developing and strengthening a therapeutic relationship with Conrad. Conrad will meet with the therapist at the same time each week. The therapist will be accepting and non-judgemental towards Conrad as it begins to open up. Conrad will participate in several different techniques while being in gestalt therapy. Conrad will engage in experiments which will include role-playing with the therapist about how interacts with each person in his family such as his mother and father. Conrad will increase awareness and work towards resolving unfinished business through his role playing experiment. The role playing experiment will challenge Conrad but be done in a supportive manner. Conrad will also engage in experimental dream work which will cause Conrad to gain awareness of his dreams and what the dreams can represent. The experimental dream work will include four stages. The first stage will include Conrad talking about his dream.

The second stage will include Conrad talking about the dream in present tense. The third stage will include Conrad playing his dream as a director in a play. The last stage will include Conrad acting out his dream and playing every character that is in his dream by using “I” statements. This will help Conrad gain awareness of what he may have been blocking before in the past that is causing him distress. The therapist will use confrontation with Conrad in gestalt therapy. Confrontation will be done in a gentle but challenging way. Confrontation will allow for the therapist to point out discrepancies that Conrad may be feeling such as complaining about how his mother does not love him. Confrontation will allow Conrad to be aware of his inner feelings and how to handle them in a healthy and effective way. Conrad will benefit from gestalt therapy.

Another counseling theory that can benefit in counseling Conrad is reality therapy. Reality therapy focuses on present behavior instead of symptoms and has a belief that individuals are responsible for their behaviors and how they think and feel (Corey, 2015). The therapist will begin by building a healthy therapeutic relationship with Conrad. This will be done by having a therapeutic relationship built on empathy, honesty, and encouragement. The therapist will be using the WDEP system of reality therapy to counsel Conrad. The first stage is W which is where Conrad will explore his wants which will be based on the five basic human needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Conrad, 2015). In the next stage, the D stage, Conrad will be asked by the therapist on what he is currently doing to help clarify direction in his life. The next stage will be the E stage, where Conrad will be encouraged to self-evaluate himself. In this stage Conrad will be asked questions about whether or not his current behavior is bringing closer to the people in his life and if his current behavior is bringing him closer to where he wants to be in his life. In the final stage Conrad will be in the P stage

where he will be encouraged by the therapist to focus on planning and fulfill his wants and needs without causing harm to anyone. The therapist will use different types of therapeutic techniques and interventions with Conrad. The therapist will use confrontation with Conrad to help avoid making excuses since excuses will not be acceptable in reality therapy. Confrontation will be done in a caring and nonjudgmental manner. The therapist will challenge Conrad with confrontation when Conrad starts to make excuses. The therapist will also use role playing in reality therapy with Conrad. Role playing will be helpful for Conrad to help navigate the relationships he has in his life such as with his parents and friends. Role playing will help Conrad discover which relationships he has that may be an unsatisfactory present relationship which may be causing him distress in his life and work to make better choices. Conrad will benefit from reality therapy.

Behavioral therapy can also help benefit Conrad during his counseling sessions. Behavioral therapy focuses on creating new conditions for behaviors since the belief is that behavior is learned (Corey, 2015). Conrad will first begin behavioral therapy by developing a therapeutic relationship with the therapist. The therapist will have to show respect and genuine concern towards Conrad but the therapeutic relationship will not be the main focus during Conrad's counseling sessions. Conrad will engage in several different techniques in behavioral therapy. Conrad will engage in completing a behavioral assessment or also known as a functional assessment. The therapist will conduct a functional assessment on Conrad to help determine and assist on what he will like to work on in therapy. The functional assessment will help Conrad begin to work on his target problems and symptoms such as anger due to the conflict he has with his family following his older brother's death. The functional assessment will include specific

questions to help Conrad work on behavioral changes (Tan, 2011). The therapist will then obtain developmental history of Conrad and the behaviors that he may want to address. Then the therapist will help Conrad set his own goals he will like to obtain. Conrad will participate in social skills and assertiveness training to help him be able to express how he is feeling with other individuals more effectively. Conrad will learn the differences between passive, aggressive, and appropriately assertive behaviors and responses (Tan, 2011). The therapist will use modeling and instruction strategies to help Conrad be more assertive. Conrad will also engage in stress inoculation approach to relaxation training to help reduce any anger or anxiety he may be facing. This training will include deep breathing, calming self-talk, and pleasant imagery. Conrad will be done with behavioral therapy when he is able to attain his goals and is changing his problematic behaviors.

Another counseling theory that can help Conrad would be rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). REBT can help Conrad change and overcome self defeating thoughts. Conrad will begin REBT by beginning to develop a therapeutic relationship with the therapist who will be active and direct (Tan, 2011). The therapist will use different therapeutic techniques in REBT to help counsel Conrad. The therapist will use cognitive techniques to help Conrad with his irrational beliefs. The therapist will help Conrad dispute irrational beliefs by teaching the A-B-C-D-E model to help change his irrational beliefs. Conrad will learn through the A-B-C model about activating events, beliefs, and consequences that are causing him distress. Conrad will then learn how to dispute irrational beliefs and the effects of their irrational beliefs. Conrad will have cognitive homework to help put what he is learning into practice. The cognitive homework will include completing a daily A-B-C dairy that consists of the events that he has had

each week that caused him to have irrational beliefs and distress. This will help Conrad to note back and reflect to help reduce irrational beliefs. Another cognitive technique that the therapist will use to counsel Conrad will be emotive techniques. The therapist will counsel Conrad by using shame-attacking techniques. Shame-attacking techniques will help Conrad learn how to cope more effectively when facing scenarios that usually would cause him to feel shame or embarrassment. Conrad will also participate in rational emotive imagery to help change his irrational beliefs. Conrad will visualize negative experiences and learn how to change his irrational beliefs to help cope with negative circumstances in his life. Conrad will learn and benefit from rational emotive behavior therapy.

Another counseling theory that will help Conrad will be found in family systems therapy. Conrad and his mother and father will all be part of the counseling session in family systems therapy. The therapeutic relationship between the therapist and Conrad and his parents will be caring and respectful. The therapist will begin by conducting an assessment which includes a genogram to help gain information about the family. The therapist will then begin to learn the family's history and story through the lens of each family member. The therapist will use different therapeutic techniques and interventions to help counsel Conrad in family systems therapy. Through reframing, Conrad and his family will learn how to change the way they look at a situation or behavior. An example of this will include when Conrad's mother leaves the house, through reframing the family will learn how to look at this situation with a new more positive perspective. Another technique in family systems therapy that will be done to counsel Conrad will be enactment. Enactment is when the family role plays an example of the family interacting with one another (Tan, 2011). This will help the family learn and replace the

unhealthy patterns with more positive and constructive family interactions (Tan, 2011). Another technique that will be done will be circular questioning. Circular questioning includes asking the same questions to family members about an issue to help gain perspective on how each family member sees an issue (Tan, 2011). This will Conrad see and reflect how his parents view issues differently. Conrad and his family will then engage and participate in answering the miracle question. The miracle question will help the family break out of old negative problem-saturated ways of viewing their family problems and help create healthier and effective solutions to their family problems as well as learning to create new goals (Tan, 2011). Conrad will benefit from family systems therapy by having his parents in the counseling sessions.

Another counseling theory that can help Conrad will be feminist therapy. Through feminist therapy Conrad will learn about the differences of men and women and the role he plays as a man in society. One of the main goals on feminist therapy is to help clients become aware of their gender-role socialization and become active agents on their behalf and the behalf of others (Corey, 2015). Conrad will begin by building a therapeutic relationship with the therapist which will be based on trust and empathy. Conrad will start exploring the way on how being a male has caused him limitations and privileges. The goal would be to help Conrad discover how being a male has caused certain limitations such as not being able to discuss much about how he is feeling due to the mental stigma surrounding males. In feminist therapy Conrad will be able to express how he is feeling and how these feelings are impacting the areas of his life such as school and with his family. The therapist will be able to use gender-role intervention with Conrad during feminist therapy. Gender-role intervention will allow Conrad to learn and discover society's expectations for men and can provide examples such as men not expressing so

much emotions and being more aggressive. During gender-role intervention Conrad will learn about what society has caused him to think as a man should be and learn on ways to challenge these beliefs and expectations. Conrad will also be able to learn how he has male privileges and how he can help be a source of social action and change. Conrad will be able to learn about women's limitations and how he can help women feel empowered and safe through the technique of social action. Conrad can be encouraged to volunteer at certain events to promote social action such as volunteering a rape crisis center. The goal for Conrad will be to help know his limitations and privileges to help empower him to be a source of social action and change. Conrad will benefit from feminist therapy.

There are many theories that can help Conrad as well as certain theories that will not be as effective. The most effective theory that will benefit Conrad is psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis will be effective in counseling theory since many of Conrad symptoms stem from the past events in his life. Conrad is also in denial which is something psychoanalysis works on in therapy with the concept of defense mechanisms. Psychoanalysis is most effective because it works to make the unconscious conscious which is something that Conrad will need to work on in order to work through the symptoms he is processing such as denial that he is ok after attempting suicide. Psychoanalysis would be the most effective counseling theory to counsel Conrad as many of Conrad's presenting symptoms can be worked on in psychoanalysis. The least effective theory to counsel Conrad is feminist therapy. Feminist therapy can help many women feel empowered and encouraged. Conrad does not struggle much about the challenges that a woman faces with his symptoms. Conrad symptoms do not include much of gender issues and are mostly caused due to the lasting effects of the death of his brother. Conrad does not struggle with being limited due to

his gender and has many privileges being a man. Conrad will not be able to work much of his presenting symptoms in feminist therapy. Conrad has symptoms such as anger and grief following the death of his brother which are symptoms he needs to work on since it has a negative impact on his daily living. Feminist therapy will not be as effective as psychoanalysis due to the different techniques that each counseling theory utilizes. Conrad will benefit from learning about the past and how it impacts his life in the present. Psychoanalysis works on the past and the main goal is to make the unconscious conscious which is why psychoanalysis is the most effective therapy for Conrad (Corey, 2015). Feminist therapy will be the least effective therapy for Conrad while psychoanalysis will be the most effective.

References

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