

Jason Ronda

Psychotherapy Unit 1

1. Read the section titled "Overview of Contemporary Counseling Methods". What do you think of these? Make a comment on each and also select the one you most agree with. Why? Also select the one you most disagree with. Why?

Psychoanalytic theory is something I've been curious about. It is one of the oldest forms of psychotherapy, and helped people develop different methods. The basics of it is that it focuses on unconscious factors that somehow motivate behavior and that there is an emphasis on the earlier years of life. One technique is called free association, and it entails the client to speak about whatever comes to their mind, and the psychoanalyst tries to discern themes and/or patterns in that to reveal subconscious beliefs. However, I'm pretty sure that it is also one of the least effective methods; I've read somewhere that psychoanalysis is supposedly no better than no therapy whatsoever. However, there are things that people agree on with the theory, such as how childhood experiences lay the foundation for adult personality and how a therapist should be discerning patterns in client behaviors.

I like the idea behind Adlerian therapy. It sounds like a really good start when your client wants help with being more productive and having a purpose in life, while also being more invested in the people around them. I remember reading part of it a while ago where the therapist tries to interpret some of the behavior and then make behavioral changes in their life. It sounds like a great method when someone feels lost, wants to do more with their life, and wants meaning in their life, but I doubt this can do anything with mental illnesses such as anxiety.

Existential therapy sounds like it would be effective against apathy syndrome, depression, and maybe those who are going through an existential crisis. The experience sounds unique from client to client, probably involving them understanding that they don't need to be the most important thing in the universe or make an impact on everyone, they just need to impact the people they love and the people around them. The patient learns that they are free to make their own choices and are not victims of circumstance.

Based on the short paragraph, person centered therapy does not sound like much compared to the other methods. The definition on the table states that it gives responsibility to the client in dealing with problems and concerns. I don't think the method itself is weak, it probably has a lot of nuance. It's just that the definition sounds weak in comparison to the definition of adlerian therapy.

I don't know why, but I think Gestalt therapy is an interesting method. I believe I used some of these techniques on myself, albeit in a crude way, when I was anxious about my future. I was able to learn how to be aware of the present, it deemphasizes the past and future, and gives them more of an opportunity to appreciate what is around them.

Behavioral therapy sounds like it only has a surface level value. Based on the short paragraph, it sounds like it wants to solve behavioral problems via conditioning, as if you were trying to change one's reaction to stimuli. While I do believe that is helpful, it definitely needs to be mixed with another method as it doesn't address the underlying reasoning for the behavior.

The one I feel is the best is the one on cognitive behavioral therapy, or at least I understand it the most, but this is because I've read up on it elsewhere. A large aspect of CBT is that psychological problems are based on faulty ways of thinking, faulty learned patterns of

behavior, and, if they are willing to learn better ways to cope, they can relieve themselves of their symptoms. I like the fact it ties together those cognitive distortions and focuses on challenging them, thus making it easier to respond to. This method is effective with treating anxiety and depression. I agree with this one the most based on how it functions.

Based on first impressions, choice therapy/reality therapy sounds similar to bringing someone back to earth. It doesn't sound like it has anything to do with what we normally associate with therapy, such as the unconscious mind, and talking about past experiences. This is probably also mixed with a method that does. This method also sounds similar to other methods as there is a focus on the patient making their own choices, but more of an emphasis on them being more effective in meeting their own needs rather than about how they have their own sense of freedom to do what they want and have their own responsibility.

Feminist theory sounds like it is very specific. Like the target for it is women and women's rights. There's a lot of potential for this to be about political problems too. I'm not too sure about it, but I'd like to read more about it.

Based on the table, postmodern approaches seem to not much in terms of organization and more along the lines of several different skills to use on a patient, so to speak. I'm not sure why they aren't each their own thing though, but my best guess would be that they are newer and don't go too far in depth.

I'm actually a fan of family systems therapy, other than CBT, this is another method I study in my free time. To paraphrase what I heard so far, this method is about treating a family as a whole system with their own dynamic. One could treat a single person, but if they go home and meet with a family member that reacts to them negatively, they may regress. So now you

want to talk to that family member, and it turns out the entire family has a problem. It's like treating a family as a whole and helping them all heal as a unit, including the dynamics between them.

2. What do you think of Stan? Without reading ahead, what initial thoughts do you have about him? Don't worry about being "right" or "wrong". Just reveal your initial thoughts and feelings about Stan. How might you "counsel" him? What are some issues you think are very important for Sam to deal with? What particular spiritual issues, if any, do you see Sam struggling with?

First thing that comes to mind is that Stan has an alcohol problem. According to him, he drinks when he is nervous, he drinks when he socializes, and he regretfully admits that he drinks when he's okay. While drinking when you're socializing is okay when it's controlled, and even when he's nervous. While drinking when you're socializing is technically okay in moderation, and drinking while he's not feeling anxious is also okay, as long as it's in moderation, drinking just because he's nervous and wants to calm himself down is not okay. He's using the depressant aspects of alcohol to calm his nerves, he already sounds like he's halfway dependent on it for social situations.

Another aspect that I find troubling is that he has what sounds like general anxiety disorder and perhaps depression. He claims that he has trouble speaking to others, and he has trouble speaking to women. Him having trouble speaking to others may be indicative that he has social anxiety. He says he's afraid of women. Perhaps he feels insecure of being rejected, put to their standards, being interpreted as a creep, or some combination of those thoughts. The most alarming thing he states is that he thinks about suicide a lot, even thinking about those who would be upset if he did. Thoughts of suicide should not be taken lightly and must be brought to

immediate attention, with quick being able to get emergency help, especially if he currently has thoughts of proceeding. Assuring that he's safe and is not going to try something dangerous should be the highest priority.

I'm guessing he also has self esteem problems. He also feels guilty that he hasn't met the potential he thinks he has; he feels like he wasted his life and is ashamed for being in college late in life as he's only going to college now, at age 35, and not the same age as everyone else.

Overall, I do not think that Stan is a bad person, he's just someone who feels a bit lost and overwhelmed with the situation he's been given. He does sound like he's ready for a change in his life. Major problems that have to be addressed would be his alcohol use, his suicidal thoughts, his self esteem issues. The immediate issue of his safety and suicidal thoughts have to be addressed first. I'd try methods such as person-centered therapy so we can focus on him and he could speak everything on his mind, and I would also try cognitive behavioral therapy to clear the distortions that he clearly has about himself and the world around him. Spiritual issues he has include depression, anxiety, and self esteem issues.

3. (If you are using an older textbook that does not discuss Gwen, please complete a third essay from the "Part 2" section below). What do you think of Gwen? Without reading ahead, what initial thoughts do you have about her? Don't worry about being "right" or "wrong". Just reveal your initial thoughts and feelings about Gwen. How might you "counsel" him? What are some issues you think are very important for Gwen to deal with? What particular spiritual issues, if any, do you see Gwen struggling with?

At first glance, Gwen sounds like an amazing person for being able to get through all of this without help for so long. She sounds strong to go through with all of this stress and even

stronger for seeking help when she knows she needs it. Being so accomplished but being held back by arbitrary reasons like race and gender can be so disheartening as she states she's the only one actually standing up for it. She definitely sounds overworked, like she hasn't had a real break in a long time, she's been taking care of everyone in her life and has a demanding job, it's a miracle she hasn't broken down earlier from the stress.

Major concerns include her having a history and current feelings of anxiety and depression, fibromyalgia, feelings of stress and isolation, and a history of sexual abuse. Fibromyalgia is a chronic disorder that causes tenderness, pain, fatigue, headaches, etc. While it can be treated with drugs, such as gabapentin, it can be caused by emotional stress or trauma, which she has been exposed to. She sounds very stressed out by the state of her life; She's been a worker for a very long time, she's taken care of her siblings, her own children who are way past adulthood, and her own elderly mother. She sounds like she's been working nonstop without a real break. It also sounds like she doesn't feel very much appreciated as she doesn't really mention her kids, her mother, or anyone else that depends on her despite the fact she states that she is feeling being a provider to her adult children, being the one helping them with bills and is on a nonstop work. She also sounds discouraged when she talks about how she had to work harder than everyone else to prove them wrong only for her to feel worn down because of it. Part of me believes that has something to do with her self esteem; she didn't have to work harder than everyone, and it sounds like she doesn't feel so accomplished despite actually pulling off what she set out to do. There's also the aspect that she feels numb, losing motivation in doing things, and just working on autopilot. She ends on an uplifting note that she wants to get better and that her goal is to be less stressed out with a better work/life balance.

I would want to counsel her based on her stress, coping mechanisms, how to relieve that stress, and her goal of having a positive work/life balance. I would probably use choice therapy when addressing her trying to find the most effective means of meeting her goals. I would use some postmodern approaches because the approach maintains that the client is in control of their life, which I think Gwen needs to be reminded about. I would also use person-centered therapy because I do have faith that she will know what to do with her dealing with her concerns while also giving her free reign to talk her heart out about what stresses her out. The last method I would implement would be family systems therapy, as her testimony implies that she is the one supporting her family, but her family is not supporting her in turn. For example: she states that she's paying for her children's bills, but it doesn't state that they're giving her anything back. I would like to see if their family dynamic can be improved to help her alleviate some of her stress.

4. Self-Inventory of Major Concerns as a Beginning Counselor

Much of Chapter 2 in our textbook (which we will read next week) deals with common concerns facing beginning counselors. The following questionnaire is built from the statements often overheard in supervision sessions with counselor interns (and often from experienced professionals in training workshops).

Apply each statement to yourself, and determine to what degree this is a concern you face as you think about beginning to counsel others.

Use the following scale:

1 = This is rarely a concern of mine.

2 = This is a concern I sometimes have.

3 = This matter concerns me quite often.

4 = This issue almost always concerns me.

2 1. I am concerned that my anxiety will keep me immobilized, and that I will be very passive as a counselor, lest I make mistakes.

- _1_ 2. I fear that I will be so concerned about being appropriate that I will forget to be myself.
- _2_ 3. I might say too much about myself, and in doing so I will burden the client and also take the focus off of him or her and put it on myself.
- _1_ 4. I think that I should be pretty near perfect, and that if I blunder I could really mess up my client.
- _2_ 5. I wonder about how honest I should be with a client.
- _1_ 6. I will feel threatened during moments of silence, thinking that I am expected to do or say something.
- _1_ 7. It will be difficult for me to deal with demanding clients.
- _3_ 8. I will feel helpless with clients who are not committed to working or with 31 involuntary clients.
- _1_ 9. I will probably demand instant results as a way of avoiding getting discouraged.
- _3_ 10. I have an expectation that I should be able to help every client.
- _1_ 11. I anticipate I will worry a lot about whether I am intervening appropriately.
- _1_ 12. I worry that I might over-identify with certain clients to the extent that I will take their problems on as my own.
- _1_ 13. I think that I might be inclined to give too much advice.
- _2_ 14. I can see myself trying to persuade clients to value what I value.
- _2_ 15. I have trouble in deciding how much responsibility is mine and how much is my client's.
- _3_ 16. I have real doubts about my ability to help someone who is in a crisis.
- _1_ 17. I worry that I lack the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of clients from diverse cultures.
- _1_ 18. A concern of mine is that I will get burned out.
- _1_ 19. I am concerned about giving everything I have and then not getting any appreciation in return.
- _2_ 20. I wonder if I can do what I believe is important as a counselor and still work within the system.

Now write a brief paragraph or 2 on what conclusions you might come to based up your "scores". Don't worry about being right or wrong, just reflect on your "fears" and areas where you may feel more confident.

Based on my scores I feel confident in a multitude of areas, but that is only because I know myself well enough and I know how to keep my expectations maintained. I know that I will do my best in giving my clients the best I can give them, but I know my clients will do things at their own pace, and that might mean I won't be appreciated all the time, for what I try to do. If I pass this class and hopefully get into the MFT program here, then I will probably learn enough to actually be able to help people, hopefully enough to intervene properly, and help them get out of unpleasant situations. I know some aspects of cultures, and while I'm not a master at any, I know enough to be polite and am more than willing to know more to make a client feel comfortable. I know I can't force my client to see the way I want or value the things I do, I will try showing them other ways of thinking and hopefully reveal something profound along the way.

That being said, I know that I'm not too confident in other areas as well. I know if a client is not committed to doing the work I put out for them, they aren't going to heal. It's not like we can force them to change, nor can we just give them direct answers, but they won't be getting results unless they actually want to do it. I had an issue where my anxiety actually did cause me to stop what I was doing and I essentially froze on the spot, but I have been working on it and it happens much less frequently, but it's still an issue. At my current state, I know I'm not too much help to those in a crisis, but I want to be better and actually have that ability, have the ability to heal people.

7. Values pertaining to a client who is intolerant of others

Charles is a 75 year-old white male who was encouraged by his daughter to seek counseling after his wife of many years filed for divorce. His daughter felt that Charles could benefit from the support of a counselor and gain some insight into his behaviors that caused friction in his marriage. Shortly after meeting you (his new counselor), Charles begins to share his sexist and racist views about people, including his neighbors and ex-wife's friends. He seems oblivious to the possibility that these behaviors may have contributed to his wife's decision to divorce him.

- How would you approach this case?
- How would you react to Charles's intolerant and discriminatory views?
- How would your own feelings and values impact your ability to work with Charles therapeutically?

First, I would like to make it clear that going to therapy will not guarantee that his wife will rescind filing for divorce, nor is it a guarantee that it will bring her back to him. This will all be about personal growth, and insight, but I can't change his soon-to-be ex-wife's mind, she might change her decision herself, but I guarantee nothing.

Next, I would try to get to know him better to gauge how badly he treats people, then get to the bottom of where this cognitive distortion came from. He obviously had to get these views somewhere; did he learn them from people he loved? Does he think that because the people he loved were good people, it means that he thinks the racist and discriminatory behavior he learned from them is not bad either? Is there a reason for it? The first method that came to my mind would be Cognitive behavioral therapy as I'd like to challenge some of his more discriminatory thoughts and behaviors. We would dissect his behavior and thoughts together and see if we can challenge him if it really makes sense to him to be doing that. He'd hopefully have an epiphany about something he's doing. I believe it would be easier to confront if it was challenged that way.

Personally, I wouldn't like it if a client like Charles was intolerant and had discriminatory views; I've had many experiences where I was judged for reasons outside of my control. Those

experiences helped shape who I am today, but it wasn't pleasant, nor would I really like going through such experiences again if I can avoid it. That being said, I don't hate him for it. It wouldn't stop me from trying to help him. Therapists are supposed to help people, as long as he is willing, I'm going to help him. I won't get it personal unless he makes it personal, nor would I let his words get to me personally. If I don't feel like he's making any progress, however, I could probably recommend he find someone else who he's more likely to listen to. I'm a Filipino, and I'm assuming Charles is white based on the context. If he's not willing to listen to me based on my race, then I'd highly recommend that he find someone else. I would try to keep my feelings honest, but not let it get in the way of me trying to help him. I want him to change for the better, I want him to heal, and if it would mean that I get hurt a bit along the way in that journey, then so be it.

9. A woman who wants her marriage and her affair

Loretta and Bart come to you for marriage counseling. In the first session you see them as a couple. Loretta says that she can't keep going on the way they have been for the past several years. She tells you that she would very much like to work out a new relationship with him. He says that he does not want a divorce and is willing to give counseling his "best shot." Loretta comes to the following session alone because Bart had to work overtime. She tells you that she has been having an affair for two years and hasn't yet mustered up the courage to leave Bart for this other man, who is single and is pressuring her to make a decision. She relates that she feels very discouraged about the possibility of anything changing for the better in her marriage. She would, however, like to come in for some sessions with Bart because she doesn't want to hurt him.

- What would you be inclined to say to Loretta based on what she has told you privately?
- Would you be willing to work with Loretta if her aim was to continue her affair and keep her marriage? Why or why not?
- How would your views on extramarital affairs influence the interventions you made with Loretta and Bart?
- Would you encourage Loretta to divulge what she had told you privately in a later session with Bart? Why or why not?
- Would the element of "the other man" pressuring Loretta to make a decision have a bearing on your intervention in this case?

Based on what she has told me, it sounds like she has already more or less made her mind about her new partner, but is still holding some attachment to her husband. Loretta states that wants to have her affair partner, but she doesn't want to leave her husband. That sounds not only contradictory, but like it will end horribly. I would try to divulge more information out of the situation first before helping her with anything, there are too many variables in play that she has not revealed. Because it's an early session, I don't know her, her husband, or her affair partner that well, nor do I know anything of their dynamics. I need to know more if I am truly going to help them.

My views on extramarital affairs are that the marriage should end before getting into a new relationship, and even then, both parties of divorce should refrain from getting into new relationships right out of the gate. A divorce is never truly clean, but it is monumentally worse when there is an affair in the middle of it.

I'm not sure if I'm willing to help her unless I get more information because her two goals are contradictory: she wants to mend the relationship with her husband so he isn't hurt, she doesn't want to hurt him, but she wants to build up the courage to leave him for her affair partner. These goals do not align. If I were to proceed with her I'd need to know what she really wants. Her seeking an affair partner indicates that there was something from her marriage that she was missing, that she was craving and she got it from the affair partner.

Due to the complexity of the situation, I'd recommend that she divulge everything to me, before she comes to a decision about revealing the existence of her affair partner. What does she want? What will make her happy? What will make her husband happy? What will make the affair partner happy? What were the circumstances that led to this affair? What are the dynamics of everyone involved? Can anything here be salvaged or would it be better to encourage cutting

some relationships off? How invested is she in this affair partner? There is too much information that needs to be divulged.

Now the affair partner himself is someone I'm suspicious of: is he really in love with her, is he being manipulated by her, or is he manipulating her himself. The fact that he's pressuring her to leave her husband implies there is some form of manipulation from at least one side, be it him urging her to leave him quickly or her stringing him along because he is providing a need that she is yearning for. She's not only hiding the fact that her affair partner exists, but she is also not being honest to everyone, the therapist included. I honestly don't like where this is going, but if I'm going to help, then I have to see this through.