

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Catherina Park
January 31, 2023

Unit 1 Essay Question #1

It is encouraging to see that there are so many different counseling models to choose from – from the psychodynamic, experiential and relationship to cognitive behavioral approaches and systems and postmodern approaches. The psychoanalytic theory explores the unconscious parts of our mind that motivate our behaviors, while the Adlerian approach focuses on the individual's agency and responsibility to create growth and change. The existential method and person-centered therapy are similar in that they both stress the importance of individual experience, responsibility, freedom, and choice. Gestalt therapy focuses on the experiential nature of clients where the body and mind are integrated in dealing with the issues the client may be facing. Behavioral therapy approaches therapy as a growth process, where it targets specific behaviors of the client. Cognitive behavior therapy explores how our thoughts influence our behavior. Similarly, choice theory/reality therapy focuses on the individual's responsibility over their problems or actions. Feminist therapy focuses on the psychological effects of the devaluing of the status of women on their identity, self-worth, and emotional well-being. The Postmodern approaches such as the solution-focused brief therapy and narrative therapy believe that the client is the expert of his/her experiences and that these experiences are socially constructed. Finally, the Family systems therapy believes that the family is an integral part of the client's growth and change.

While I appreciate the various types of counseling methods, I believe that this discipline is still evolving and growing. I also believe that a lot of these theories were formed as a response to pre existing theories, and therefore can and should build upon one another. That said, I find a

combination of the psychoanalytic, behavior, existential and postmodern approaches to be quite attractive as it blends the social, subconscious, and behavioral influences in how a client experiences the world, his/her life, and others around him/her. The human mind is so complex that treatment approaches can't be reduced to focus solely on individual agency or choice, or the environment, for instance. It needs to look at the myriad of factors that can influence the emotional, mental, experiential aspects of a whole person. A comprehensive therapy approach would consider what the client thinks, feels, and does.

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Unit 1 Essay Question #2

Stan suffers from low self-esteem, suicidal ideations, depression and anxiety, as well as self-loathing and hopelessness. While he expresses a desire to change and grow, he seems to suffer from debilitating anxiety from time to time especially when it comes to social environments and intimate relationships with women. He did not grow up in a loving, nurturing environment. In fact, healthy forms of self-assessment and communication were not modeled to him, so he seems to have internalized the abuse that his parents expressed to him growing up, which then manifested in his own dysfunctional marriage. In other words, he believes what his parents and ex-wife say about his lack of worth or value. He wants to aspire to be more confident, self-assured, positive, and self-sufficient taking ownership of his life, work and mental health. However, he becomes overwhelmed by anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness and despair. Conversely, he knows what good, healthy modeling and mentorship looks like as evidenced by the youth camp supervisor who encouraged him to go back to school and take positive control over his life.

As it relates to his faith, I would ask him how he identifies these feelings of self-loathing and despair with his faith. I would ask him who defines his self-worth? How does God see him? What or who is his hope and meaning in life? Does He believe that there's a sovereign God who made him, knows him intimately (including his struggles) and loves him nonetheless?

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Unit 1 Essay Question #3

Gwen is overwhelmed with life. She comes into counseling with a lot of stress, which manifests in feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety and depression. Not only does she suffer from physical pain from her fibromyalgia and chronic lack of sleep, but she also carries the pressures of a demanding and exhausting job, while supporting her mother who suffers from dementia, and at times, her grown children. In addition, she carries the burden and trauma of a sexual assault in her childhood years.

As it relates to receiving help, she seems aware of her need for it – that she is drowning in fatigue and stress and wants a balanced life that isn't consumed by tension and irritation. She says that she is ready to “unload her stressors.” The first thing I would do is help this client assess what, in her life, is within her control and what isn't. She's presently overwhelmed by competing pressures in her life, most of which are out of her control. But, I would like to help explore what she can/should control? The goal would be to tackle one thing at a time, one day at a time. Maybe Gwen needs medication to help with her pain and allow her to sleep. She also carries an inordinate amount of burden and pressure to take care of everyone all the time. How does she set healthy boundaries for herself? How much of her burdens is she entrusting to God? How often is she seeking His peace and guidance? Does she truly believe that God is with her and that He wants the best for her? Part of this journey would hopefully entail reminding her who God is and whose she is in Him. I would start there.

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Unit 1 Essay Question #4

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

 1 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.

 1 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.

 2 7. It will be difficult for me to deal with demanding clients.

 1 8. I will feel helpless with clients who are not committed to working or with 31 involuntary clients.

 2 9. I will probably demand instant results as a way of avoiding getting discouraged.

 2 10. I have an expectation that I should be able to help every client.

 2 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.

 2 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.

 1 15. I have trouble in deciding how much responsibility is mine and how much is my client's.

 1 16. I have real doubts about my ability to help someone who is in a crisis.

 2 17. I worry that I lack the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of clients from diverse cultures.

 2 18. A concern of mine is that I will get burned out.

2 19. I am concerned about giving everything I have and then not getting any appreciation in return.

1 20. I wonder if I can do what I believe is important as a counselor and still work within the system.

I find this survey interesting in that for some of these questions, I could answer in the affirmative at some point in my counseling career. One of the healthy attributes of a good counselor is to see that our mindsets are in flux, that the human experience whether it's a counselor or client is in a continuum. It could flow in and out of certain areas. In that sense, I could imagine myself being in and out of periods of self-doubt, burnout and issues of healthy boundary setting. One of the outstanding attributes of a successful counselor is empathy – we have to learn how to walk in the shoes of our clients to help guide them in a way that allows them to heal and grow. This requires regular opportunities of self- assessment and self-awareness along with humility. Counselors need to be open-minded and open-handed about their own growth.

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Unit 1 Essay Question #5 and #6

#5

In the initial meeting with Brenda, I would ask some questions for her to reflect on as well as to clarify. I would ask her to explain her faith to me. I would then ask her to explain her conflict with her parents and how her faith speaks into/informs this conflict. I would ask her what it means to have faith independent of her parents? I would ask her what it means to have freedom? What would freedom look like in her life? What would her parents say it is? And what does her faith say it is? If Brenda is willing, I would speak to her about the gospel narrative – that there is a sovereign God of the universe who created this world (including us) to flourish according to His perfect design. But because of our rebellion to go our own way, there is brokenness in the world. The only way to reconcile that brokenness is to have Jesus bridge that separation through the sacrifice of his own life. And that if we accept our inability to bridge that gap on our own and that we are in need of the mercy that is only found in Jesus, we can truly be reconciled to God. This also includes the promise that we are adopted into His kingdom, which includes eternity with Him in heaven, but also His saving grace, power, strength and peace here on earth. I would end by saying that we are only ever free and complete when we depend on Him alone, not in our own merit or strength or the merit or strength of anyone else in this world, including her parents. In light of this gospel message, I would go back and answer each of her questions again together.

#6

First off, I can see that Melinda is very troubled and conflicted about whether or not she should have an abortion. I would speak into her emotional struggles with compassion and empathy. As a mother, it can't be easy to make this decision. She is clearly tired of the mental stress of trying to improve her life when there are so many obstacles in her life. As I explore these burdens with her, I would try to get to the heart of the matter. What does it mean to have an abortion for her? How does this either affirm or contradict her moral and religious values? I would try to tease out how she truly feels about what it means to have an abortion and what it means to not have one. Getting to the heart of what she believes is an important first step to inform and guide her next steps.

I don't think my personal opinion about her decision matters either way because she has to make the decision that is motivated by who she is and what she believes. It would be disingenuous of me to guide her in a certain direction based on my personal beliefs. We all have decisions we must make and deal with the consequences of those actions. That's what having free choice and agency means. However, I would help her flesh out what the implications may be for either decision based on her emotional, mental, spiritual well-being. Practically, I would also suggest alternative options to an abortion and what that may entail. I would hope that my counsel to her would be one of honesty, compassion and authenticity.