

Ordinary People – Psychoanalysis

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Psychoanalytic therapy, introduced by Sigmund Freud, has a primary goal of delving into an individual's unconscious and subconscious thoughts in order to solve root problems. The purpose of this theory is to figure out a person's repressed thoughts and emotions in order to break down the causes and find a solution. Corey (2017) states in the fourth chapter of his textbook, how Freud explains the structure of personality: the id, the ego and the superego. The id is ruled by pleasure, the ego is ruled by reality and the superego is ruled by morals. This is an important aspect to the psychoanalytic theory due to the fact that this therapeutic process seeks to strengthen the ego so that behavior is based on reality (Corey, 2017).

A concept that applies to all theories in psychology, but especially psychoanalytic, is transference and countertransference. These terms are related to the way the client views their counselor/therapist and how the counselor/therapist views their client. These personal views can greatly affect the relationship between the two parties.

In the movie, *Ordinary People*, the main character Conrad shows a slew of symptoms that are worthy of noting. These symptoms include irregular sleeping patterns, flashbacks, thoughts of suicide and death in general, helplessness and an overall depressed mood. Conrad initiates going to see Dr. Berger for help, although hesitant at first, because he claims to seek better control of himself and his emotions. The psychoanalytic therapeutic method would be used in order to aid Conrad in having a better understanding on why he feels out of control of his life and what he can do in order to feel more in control. Conrad's frequent flashbacks and sleep disturbances have a lot to do with his older brother's passing in a boating tragedy. If I played the role of Dr. Berger, the two main techniques I would use to help Conrad through his journey would be free association and dream analysis (interpretation). Using these two techniques, I would come to find out that the primary reason Conrad feels so out of control is due to the fact

that he believes he was personally at fault for his brother's death; that he wasn't strong enough to hold the break for the boat during the storm and in turn was the reason for his brother's demise.

Free association is a brilliant technique that is still very popular amongst psychologists today because it requires little responses from the therapist while the client speaks their mind freely, no matter what they're thinking. The therapist acts as a lead, with minimal questions asked, if any, and analyses the thought patterns and emotions of the client as they speak their mind. Dream analysis is quite straightforward in the fact that the therapist will have their client speak about or journal their dreams in order to analyze the meaning behind the scenarios. These scenarios are more often than not unconscious mental activity.

Reference

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (10th ed.)*. Cengage Learning.

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary People* (Film). Paramount Pictures.