

Psy444: Psychotherapy
Catherina Park
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Unit 2 Essay Questions for Chapters 2&3

#1 The journey that a client chooses to take with his/her therapist is an intimate one. It requires safety, authenticity and trust. Without these foundational characteristics, it cannot be successful. How can a client open him/herself up to the possibility of change and growth if they don't feel comfortable and safe? How can a therapist ask of a client to do what he/she isn't willing to do him/herself? We, as therapists, need to first model what it means to be honest and authentic before we set these expectations on our clients. This means admitting at the outset that this a collaborative effort where client and therapist are learning and growing together – that the therapist doesn't necessarily have the answers to problems, and that when we put our most honest, authentic selves before one another is when growth and change can occur.

Sometimes, therapists believe that they have to “act” professionally and therefore can seem aloof and closed off. When this happens, clients have a difficult time opening up, which can be detrimental to the health and growth of the therapeutic relationship and no amount of therapeutic techniques can make up for that. “It is not theories and techniques that heal the suffering client but the human dimension of therapy and the ‘meetings’ that occur between therapist and client as they work together.” (Corey, 19)

#3 I believe it is hugely beneficial for therapists who counsel clients to have first-hand experience of counseling themselves. The vantage point of someone who has personally experienced counseling can't be replicated any other way. It creates empathy, compassion and a critical lens as to which theories work best in practice and which do not. This also creates a supportive environment for clients who may have anxiety about receiving counseling for the first

time. It could be reassuring for a client to know that the therapist has been on the other side receiving care. As the old saying goes, it takes one to know one! As to the benefits for the counselor, receiving therapy allows them to be open-minded to see their own areas of growth and how it can inform how patient and understanding they should be with their clients. It prevents a level of superiority therapists may have toward their client and it allows them to always be open to learning and growing through their own therapeutic journey.

#8 I can't stress enough the importance of the connection that occurs when people feel safe, seen and known by another person. This applies to every human interaction and the relationship between a therapist and his/her client is no exception. This doesn't happen in all instances, and I don't even believe it's a necessity, but something special happens when you experience authentic connection with another person, and I hope I experience this with my clients. It's hard enough to approach a stranger and reveal aspects about yourself that you yourself have difficulty articulating or even admitting. If I didn't feel safe and comfortable to do so would be torturous. So, the most important attributes of a good counselor is someone who possesses warmth, a genuine desire to learn and grow in the therapeutic relationship, and someone who can provide sound advice without becoming overly didactic or authoritative. I would love to hear the clinical aspects of what I am experiencing as a client from a counselor who genuinely wants my healing and growth. You cannot fake empathy and compassion. I want my counselor to be knowledgeable about some of the approaches to my care without being rigid or didactic about them. I want to sense a genuine partnership with a professional who can help guide me so that I can be empowered to create change for myself.

#15 Change is a necessary part of growth for any individual, yet it seems to be so difficult to achieve. It's partly because change requires stepping out in faith, taking risks, moving into new

and uncomfortable places and people seem to struggle with the level of fear they have about change. The first important step toward being open to change and growth is to first admit the need for it. This may be the most difficult part of it as it requires a heart change, which I believe only God can do. One has to accept the need for it and then be open to taking the necessary steps toward achieving it. It starts and ends with the individual with lots of support from family, friends, therapist in the middle. This is where I believe a faith system like Christianity is hugely helpful. If you recognize your need of a savior and that apart from Him there's no way we can make changes for the better, than it's easier to begin the necessary steps toward change. Acceptance for the need for change is a humbling first step. Then you need to chart a course toward making these changes actionable and achievable. This is where a therapist can be beneficial in goal-setting, affirming and correcting, managing expectations and holding the client accountable. Personally, this process just outlined was a difficult journey for me, but I am now in a position and continually seek paths toward change. Once you taste and reap the benefits of how good change can reorder your entire life for the better, it's easier to try and try again.

#16 If you explore the complex nature of the human experience, you will see that there are many variables that play into how one person views and experiences the world. The environment they were born into and the social, cultural cues and norms that shaped them play a huge role in how one views oneself, one's family, community and the world. This shapes how one acts and interacts with others, how one expresses him/herself and how one resolves conflicts. For this reason, it is important for the therapist to view each client with the social, cultural and environmental lens especially at the initial phase of diagnosis. If we apply or impose our unique cultural lens to a client whose background and experience may be different from our own would be a huge disservice to the client and their therapeutic progress. For instance, we cannot assume

and assert our western view of individuality to a shame and honor culture and then diagnose and treat this client with the assumption that he/she lacks confidence or self-assurance. This could have tragic consequences. The contextual nuances around how our client is shaped by his/her culture and background is an important aspect to consider and diagnose at the outset of client care.

#19 The inherent nature of a healthy therapeutic relationship is one characterized by intimacy, rapport, trust, honesty and authenticity. This means that there can be a friendly nature between therapist and client, so it can't be devoid of warmth and affection. Does that mean that on some level, the therapist is emotionally and relationally nourished through the relationship? Yes! That's inevitable. However, if the balance of appropriate client/professional boundaries is skewed, then unhealthy, unprofessional co-dependencies can occur. If I find that my identity as a professional or even as a person is met through this relationship, then something has gone awry. This can cloud my judgement and ultimately sabotage the growth, healing and health of my client. I think the therapist has to have a recurrent rhythm of self-assessment and evaluation where he/she asks whose needs are being met in this relationship, and if our needs are being met at the expense of our client's needs. We must remember that we can be friendly with our clients but they are not our friends, and that professional boundaries must be kept for the sake of the client and therapist.

#20 I would first assuage my client by telling him/her that it is my professional and ethical duty to maintain confidentiality. The most important part of a client/counselor relationship is trust. And trust can only happen if both parties feel safe. How can one feel safe if one can't be honest and forthcoming with some of the hardest things about oneself? Once I communicate and establish these codes of confidentiality, I would then be upfront and honest about some of the

rare exceptions, one of which is being able to share some pertinent information to my supervisor for training purposes. Also, in the event of a situation where the abuse of a child, elderly or dependent adult is involved, or if there's danger involving the client, then I am required by law to report these incidents and break confidentiality.

#29 I think understanding the framework for why there are guidelines is a helpful first step to executing healthy guidelines. The "whys" must always precede the "what's." Good guidelines are guard rails meant to protect the client and therapist. It sets clear expectations for how each party should conduct oneself so that a safe and productive environment can exist where clients can focus on the hard work of healing and growth. It also creates a clearly defined framework for the counselor to self-assess/self-monitor. These may include comparing whether one's personal set of values and ethics are consistent with those of the existing guidelines. Another would be evaluate potential issues or impact of established guidelines for your particular situation. Finally, it also helps assess potential consequences or implications for a certain course of action or decision.