

Ordinary People Paper

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Abstract

The student will utilize the foundations and theories of the eleven psychotherapy approaches and apply to Conrad, the protagonist in the 1980's classic film *Ordinary People*. These theories include *Psychoanalytic therapy, Jungian therapy, Adlerian therapy, Behavior therapy, Cognitive-Behavioral therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior therapy, Person-Centered therapy, Existential therapy, Gestalt therapy, Reality therapy, and Family Systems therapy*. Each theory has its own specialty and traits in terms of approaching the client's struggles.

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The student will manifest the core of each theories principles and apply onto Conrad's case. Conrad is a an alienated high school student who has just been released home from the psychiatric hospital for his suicide attempt as a result of difficulty forgiving himself for his older brother's death. The film takes the time to depict the struggles and tensions that the parents and Conrad are going through with each other and with those around them. The ongoing appointments with Dr. Berger, the private psychiatrist of Conrad's, develops throughout the film. It can be observed that the duo builds a relationship over time, and Conrad gradually unfolds his emotions ultimately to a cathartic level. The climax of the film occurs when he finally emotionally reveals the details of his brother's death.

Discussion

Psychoanalytic Therapy

If this author were a counselor using a Psychoanalytic therapy approach, he would have conducted the therapy revolving around free association to identify the unconscious elements, and allowed transference to develop, while remaining as anonymous and neutral as possible. He would have also focused on Conrad's childhood experiences and paid particular attention to any defense mechanisms Conrad may be employing, as follows:

- The counselor would have begun the therapy by asking "What comes to mind" (Tan, 2011, p. 51) to induce free association. Conrad might begin with his current life and his wish to be more in control. The counselor may have remained quiet, allowing free association to continue taking place. Conrad might eventually transference his tension with mother, and struggles in forgiving himself for his brother's death.
- The counselor would have directed Conrad to talk about his childhood or past experiences, "What effects did your relationship with your mother and father have on you" (Corey, 2021, p. 86) whereas Conrad might reveal his brother's achievements as well as their mother's favoritism toward him.
- The counselor would have then asked Conrad to elaborate his feelings and emotions toward his relationships with his father and mother, and the boating accident, "What else comes to mind now? What other feelings, thoughts, or experiences" (Tan, 2011, p. 51). Conrad would have shared that he thinks he should have been the one that died.
- The counselor would have interpreted the transference to Conrad and concluded that Conrad has been coping with the boating accident using *repression*, concealing his feelings of guilt as a defense mechanism against Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Jungian Therapy

If the author were a counselor using a Jungian therapy approach, he would have conducted the therapy in an empathic and respectful manner. He would have focused on recognizing Conrad's shadow, as well as potential to individuation, and assisting Conrad to better connect with society:

- After the establishment of a warm and accepting relationship, the counselor would ask Conrad to share his feelings, or anything that has been bothering him. Conrad would have shared his alienation from the community, may have opened-up his struggles with his mother's favoritism toward his brother Buck.
- The counselor would have acknowledged Conrad's potential in developing a sense of self-actualization, and his ability to present persona in different settings. The counselor may have provided further information about the use of persona in the attempt of helping Conrad better blend in different situations and people.
- The counselor would have asked Conrad to elaborate his past experiences in the childhood and within the family, to gain understanding of the family dynamics.
- The counselor would have asked Conrad to share his feelings about Buck's achievements, and his mother's favoritism, and then validated those feelings.
- The counselor would have concluded that Conrad may have been an introvert that tends to internalize emotions and problems. The counselor would also have concluded that jealousy is a universal human trait, and that Conrad may have to change the way he presents himself with his mother.

Adlerian Therapy

If the author were a counselor using an Adlerian therapy approach, he would have begun the therapy from forming a warm and supportive relationship, learning about his early recollections, and asked *The Question* and encouraged Conrad to recognize his freedom of choosing a new life goal:

- The counselor would have examined Conrad's personality by digging into his past by asking about his earliest recollections. Conrad would have shared about witnessing all the achievements his brother Buck had attained and receiving attention from his mother since he was a child. With a careful approach and dependent on Conrad's readiness, he might share more details of the boating accident and his complex feelings and guilt toward his brother's death.
- To gain more insight into Conrad's lifestyle and social relationships, the counselor would have asked about Conrad's birth order and learned that he is the younger of the two brothers. "the second child (who must share attention with another child, often with some competitive struggle)..." (Tan, 2011, p. 64). The counselor may assert that Conrad has been trying to chase Buck's shadow, hence setting high standards and walking a path of someone else's.
- The Adlerian counselor would approach with the question "What would you be doing more if Buck was still alive", and encouraged Conrad that he has the freedom and power to choose a new life goal for himself, and that he does not necessarily have to follow his older brother.

Conclusion

References

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