

Ordinary People Paper

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February 14, 2023

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to propose 12 different ways of counseling Conrad, according to the main 12 theories of counseling. Throughout this paper the reader will have the opportunity to learn about more conventional therapy styles such as the Psychoanalytic one, and also more modern ones such as the Reality Therapy. While reading the paper the reader will realize there are many different ways of approaching counseling, and Conrad will be used as an example of how different approaches can affect a specific case. There is no better or worse type of therapy, but instead different goals and ways of approaching a client.

Ordinary People Paper

This paper is written using the reference of Conrad, the main character of *Ordinary People (1980)*. Conrad seeks counseling after attempting suicide and having spent several months in the hospital recovering. Later in the movie, the viewer can learn that his older brother had died, and the viewer can also observe a tense and complicated relationship between Conrad and his mother. Furthermore, the viewer can perceive a sense of guiltiness about his brother's death, and all the other tragedies that have happened around him. In the movie, a specific style of counseling is observed. However, the goal of this paper is to propose 12 different approaches of counselling for Conrad. Each style proposes different counselor-client relationships, different goals, different approaches and explanations for Conrad's suffering, and most importantly different proposals for his recovery.

Discussion

Psychoanalytic Therapy

If this author were a counselor using the traditional psychoanalytic theory, perhaps she would have focused on Conrad's past experiences, trauma, and bringing to light unconscious thoughts. The therapy sessions would take place 4 times a week, and the therapeutic relationship would last years. This counselor would have used techniques such as the followings:

- She would have kept a neutral and anonymous stance. She would have also been challenging and would have pushed Conrad (Tan, 2011, p. 47). Perhaps in the instances that Conrad said "uhm I don't know", after a question was asked by her, this counselor would push Conrad with the intention of understanding what is going on in his mind.
- To understand what Conrad is going through, this counselor would have tried to understand his unconscious thoughts and bring them to consciousness. To do so, she would have used techniques such as dream analysis and free association. By talking about his dreams, such as the one where he was hanging on the boat and everybody else kept falling, the counselor would have understood how those unconscious thoughts relate to his fears and disruptions. As mentioned, another technique that she could have used with Conrad is "Free Association". By the use of this technique, this counselor could bring up words related to his brother, or his mother, and see what he relates them with. The analyst listens especially for hidden meanings in the client's free associations, such as Freudian slips.
- This counselor would have used the technique of transference. Transference occurs when the client unconsciously relates to the analyst as if he or she were a parental figure from the client's earlier life. This would be beneficial if Conrad would see counselor as his mother, and that way project his feelings towards his mother into this therapist.

Jungian Therapy

If this author were a counselor using the Jungian therapy, perhaps she would have looked to achieve the individuation of Conrad and would have tried to develop a deeper meaning in his life. To do so, this counselor would have used the following four techniques throughout their journey together (Douglas 2008, 122-23):

- *Confession*: this counselor would have listened to Conrad in a warm, accepting, and empathic way so that he could open up. This would have created a safe space for him to share his feelings and secrets. This safe space would have maybe given the space for Conrad to share how he is feeling in regards of the death of his brother, or even his relationship with his mom.
- *Elucidation*: this process would have allowed this therapist to interpret the transference relationship between Conrad and her. This way, she would have had the chance to gain insight about his childhood origins, dreams, and fantasies. The counselor could then explore how Conrad felt growing up specially in regard to his mother which seems to be a delicate topic.
- *Education*: this therapist would have perhaps proposed an approach where Conrad gets more connected to the society. Conrad was struggling to reconnect with his friends, and maybe she would have encouraged him to find new connections and purposes.
- *Transformation*: finally, this therapist would have worked on the transference-countertransference. This is about experiencing deeper actualization or individuation into a more mature, balanced, and whole unique person.

Adlerian Therapy

If this author were a counselor using the Adlerian therapy, perhaps she would have proposed an individual psychology by implementing a few techniques to fight the feeling of inferiority Conrad was suffering from:

- This Adlerian therapist would have been active and directive, but also very empathic, supportive, and encouraging.
- To understand Conrad's suffering, this counselor would have wondered about the relationship with his brother and how being the second child influenced him regarding the feeling of inferiority. This therapist would have tried to connect such feeling of inferiority to the lack of connection to his mother. In order to do so, the counselor would have carried assessment where she could have evaluated Conrad's relationships, birth order, early recollections, or memories.
- This therapist would have implemented questions such as: "what would be different if you were well?". This question would have allowed Conrad to share what he would have liked his life to look like. And with that, the counselor would have perhaps encouraged him to seek that change of life.

Conclusion

There are as many ways of treating with clients, as many theories of counseling in the world. Some theories could work with some specific clients, and some with others. However, thanks to this paper readers were able to see that there is no right or wrong, and that Conrad could have benefited from all the 12 theories on way or the other. Some type of therapies would have required a longer time in therapy, and others would have been looking for an immediate change in his lifestyle. Furthermore, each therapy proposed a different counselor-Conrad relationship, as well as different goals and ways to approach them.

References

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