Ordinary People

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Introduction

The movie “Ordinary People” introduces an upper-middle-class family living in the suburbs and dealing with emotional and psychological turmoil due to the unexpected death of their elder Son and older brother Buck, during a boat accident. The main character Conrad playing Buck’s younger brother was with him during the boating accident and watched his brother give up and submit to drowning. Conrad is in emotional and psychological turmoil, cannot regulate his emotions, was hospitalized for a suicide attempt, deals with fear, and blames himself for his brother’s demise. His Father, Calvin, appears to be responsible and forgiving, working towards solutions between Conrad and his mother, Beth, while coming to terms with the possible demise of his marriage due to the lack of love and comfort Beth is unwilling to give Conrad. Amid their grief, the mother appears cold-hearted, indifferent toward her son Conrad and struggling with her pain and uncertainty concerning her family’s future. Her recourse is to edge Conrad out of their affairs, put distance between them, and control how society sees the family after the dreadful tragedy.

Discussion

Adlerian Therapy

This theory focuses on the client's strengths, assets, and psychological and emotional abilities. It's rooted in "lifestyle, social interest, and intentional behavior, examining feelings of inferiority, superiority, goal direction, birth order, and fictional finalism," which is the future goal that a person aspires to achieve, Tan (2011). The counselor needs to continue to engage the client in reflective conversation by leading them into a series of questions that may produce a deeper or more aggressive response. The counselor could ask Conrad about his relationship with Buck before the accident. Has Buck ever shared moments of intimate conversation with you concerning any fears, doubts, failures, or feelings of inferiority or superiority while growing up? Was there ever a moment when Buck discussed his relationship with his mother and whether he felt loved, needed, or inferior to him? The counselor could use these questions to gain insight into whether Conrad had an insight into any weaknesses that Buck might have had to build a foundation of strength in Conrad.

The counselor could also use the "Push Button Technique," which is geared to cause a reaction in Conrad to teach him how to create the feelings he desires and to control specific frames of thought that may be displeasing and cause anger, pain, and resentment. With this technique, Conrad would be asked to remember an unpleasant event that he experienced and connect with that feeling which may produce a sense of anger, pain, or rage, and then connect with a pleasant memory that may have the ability to create a calm, relaxed nature, less anxiety, and positivity so he can recognize his ability to control his emotions and his thoughts, and the choices he makes in life (Tan, 2011., p.71). This technique may also help foundational building.

Psychoanalytic Therapy

Conrad, who plays Buck's younger brother, is having various disturbing dreams that are in direct correlation with the boat accident that caused Buck's life, so now, the Counselor may introduce dream analysis therapy into the visits with Conrad, which involves trying to unlock repressed feelings that can be expressed in an individual's dreams. This therapy aims to bring the" unconscious nature into the conscious nature and help the individual become less controlled by the biological drives and impulses of the superego; because unconscious thoughts and feelings need clarity so that the individual can understand how to deal with their thoughts and feelings" realistically, according to Freud, Tan (2011). The therapist would look for fears, hidden motives, desires, and symbolic events or images as they appear in the dream. A series of tests that show pictures, words, or scenes to help reveal what has been repressed in the unconscious may be helpful.

The Counselor must assess that Conrad has post-traumatic stress disorder and ask questions concerning his eating habits, sleep function, socialization, family dynamics, panic attacks, flashbacks, prolonged psychological distress, extreme bouts of rage, and an inability to express positive emotions. Some techniques the Counselor could use with Conrad are yoga, meditation, art as therapy, expression, and group therapy. There is also eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy, which works together to help repair any mental injury associated with the traumatic memory (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, 2017). The Counselor should ask Conrad what he is learning about himself now that he didn't know before and allow him to process this thought while practicing self-worth and accepting what he can't change. Possibly Conrad can learn to live in the present more fully.

Jungian Therapy

Jungian therapy implements confession, which helps the client to release secrets, and unconscious and conscious thoughts and feelings that might have been repressed. “This therapy specializes in assisting the individual in becoming whole by introducing techniques that connect the unconscious with the conscious. Hence, they become one unique person, called the individuation of the client.” (Tan, 2011., p. 89-90). The counselor would allow the client to develop personal and individual meaning in their life with new aspirations for their future. The Counselor would engage Conrad in conversation concerning the relationship with his mother and how he sees that relationship six months from now. Role-playing might help use reflection and open-ended questions, so Conrad can take the time to consider his thoughts, control his emotions, take responsibility for forgiving, and try connecting with his mother psychologically and emotionally before actually seeing her. During role-play, “Conrad may experience a transference of different aspects of himself onto the counselor. Visa-versa, the counselor projecting onto Conrad, which can help to build a closer relationship with the counselor,” but the experience must be acknowledged and spoken about in detail so that Conrad can develop a clearer perception of the therapist’s role in helping him to recognize his projections, resolve his issues, and have a better chance at creating a better life for himself (Tan, 2011).

This therapy should have long-term effects on Conrad’s life if he applies the tools given and takes the time to analyze his thoughts before his actions while remaining calm, responsible, and strong in his convictions concerning control over his emotions. Accepting the things we cannot change and being okay with it isn’t easy, but it’s a stepping stone to maturity, healing, and finding an inner peace that comes from above if we only relax, relate, and release.

Conclusion

Looking at Adlerian Theory, I took a closer look at the fictional finalism and Alfred's belief that "human beings are strongly motivated by their ideals and goals that are realized or unattainable, that we create for ourselves are more influenced future possibility" Tan (2011). I believe there is some truth to this concept because the Bible tells us in Romans 4:17, "the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not" speaks of incredible hope and faith that one believes is possible to call things into existence believing that it will manifest even though you don't see it yet. We are called to "live in faith, walk in faith, speak in faith, prophecy in faith, believing that we shall have whatsoever we pray for" (Nelson, 2017).

Through mental health counseling, we are calling into existence a better understanding of the mindset of those suffering from psychological turmoil, stress, and despair. The Adlerian, Psychoanalytic, and Jungian theories are our stepping stones toward advancing the mindset of the people we will encounter. We must learn how to recognize the distortions in thinking that create harmful situations and re-evaluate some of these theories as we apply them to the clients of today's mental health counselors.

References

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