

Ordinary People Paper: The Person-Centered Theory

Keith Baker

Alliance Graduate School for Counseling, Alliance University

GCN: 502 Theories and Foundations of Counseling

Dr. George J. Ramos

February 21st, 2023

Ordinary People Paper: The Person-Centered Theory

The person-centered theory of counseling is founded in the framework of being a non-directive form of talk therapy. In this approach, the client works as an equal partner in the therapeutic process, while the therapist refrains from offering solutions or suggestions (Cherry, 2022). In addition, Rogers theorized that people have an innate desire to fulfill their potential and become the best they can be. This form of therapy was intended for clients to fulfill that potential by relying on their own strength to change (Cherry, 2022). According to the textbook, in order for a therapist to assist clients with the promotion of growth and trajectory of meeting their capability, the therapist must possess the traits of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathetic understanding (Corey, 2016, p. 170). According to the article, the application of the three techniques of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathetic understanding allows therapists to help clients grow psychologically, become more self-aware, and change their behaviors. (Cherry, 2022). In terms of congruence, the therapist acts in accordance with their own thoughts and feelings, allowing them to share openly and honestly (Cherry, 2022). To do so requires self-awareness and a realistic understanding of how internal experiences interact with external experiences. In terms of unconditional positive regard, therapists do so by displaying support and acceptance for who you are no matter your experience. Lastly, the practice of empathy during the session is reflected in the therapist acting as a mirror of your feelings and thoughts (Cherry, 2022).

According to Roger if a therapist is able to convey these attributes, individuals will become decreasingly defensive and behave in a more prosocial constructive way (Corey, 2016, p. 170). Furthermore, Roger believed that the goal of therapy was to aid clients in

achieving a higher degree of independence and integration so they can better manage problems as they identify them. In other words, facilitate personality changes in clients (Corey, 2016, p. 171).

In terms of mental health disorders, person-centered therapy shows effectiveness in treating anxiety disorders, personality disorders, psychosomatic disorders, and interpersonal problems. (Corey, 2016, p. 178). In accordance with the textbook, anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive fear of or apprehension about real or perceived threats, that lead to altered behavior and often physical symptoms such as increased heart rate or muscle tension. In reference to personality disorders, they are characterized by pervasive, enduring patterns of thinking, perceiving, reacting, and relating that cause significant distress or functional impairment. As a counselor using this approach, the goal is to create the necessary conditions for the client to change (Cherry, 2022). This includes creating an environment that is comfortable, non-judgmental, and empathetic.

As I examined the main character Conrad in the film *Ordinary People*, he appeared to be a high school kid that continued to display ongoing symptoms of anxiety, low- self-esteem, worry, agitation, and disturbance when around people. These symptoms were highlighted in his hostility, inattention, aggression, and self-harming practices throughout the film. The film was able to capture these symptoms and behaviors in several instances toward his mother, swim teammates, father, and psychiatrist. In the case of crisis interventions, person-centered counselors have a positive effect on helping individuals that are dealing with a crisis event bases on the attitudes indicated in the textbook (Corey, 2016, p. 179).

Conrad expresses having memories in the form of dreams that were unpleasant in multiple sessions. He continued to express how his memories of his brother's death caused his distress and intrusive thoughts. As his psychiatrist, this would prompt me to engage in providing Conrad with positive affirmation, along with allowing him to accept himself for who he is. In one of his sessions in the film, he expresses his ongoing recollection of the boat accident. When he verbalizes how his brother was "screwing around in the thunderstorm" (Redford, 1980, 1:38:59), I would be able to validate his feelings of anger, loneliness, frustration, and disappointment for the event that took place. of his brother's actions with the love and admiration he displayed by continuing to be a part of the swimming team in his high school. Additionally, in the film, Conrad meets with his psychiatrist and discusses his ongoing feud with his mother. During the session, Dr. Burger encourages Conrad to "forgive your mom and yourself" (Redford, 1980, 1:09:24). As a counselor applying the person-centered theory to his therapeutic session, my self-awareness would allow me to understand the dynamic of his being disconnected from his mother and how his relationship of triangulation continued to be a challenge to the function of his family.

In my opinion, the application of this theory would be useful in terms of the interventions that are theorized as the necessary attitudes towards positive change in the personality of clients. In addition, I believe that this theory does an in-depth analysis of diversifying how to enhance individuals with growth. Furthermore, when clients are dealing with suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, and interpersonal relationships like Conrad, increasing the motivation of the person by highlighting the positive progress is essential at the adolescent age.

Reference

1. Cherry, K. (2022, November 14). *What is Client-Centered Therapy?* Very Well Mind.
<https://www.verywellmind.com/client-centered-therapy-2795999#toc-techniques>
2. Corey, G. (2016). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. 10th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning US.
3. Redford, R. (1980). *Ordinary People*. Wildwood Enterprise.