

Person-Centered Therapy and Ordinary People

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The Person-centered theory is a client-centered therapeutic approach based on the theories and work of Carl Rogers in the 1940s. Carl Rogers was an American psychologist who believed in a non-directive, empathetic approach to therapy. Carl Rogers believed that people are the best experts of their own lives and experiences. Person-centered therapy was a contrast to the practice of other therapeutic approaches at the time, such as psychoanalysis and behaviorism. The person-centered theory places an emphasis on a person's uniqueness and own ability for growth and change. The Person-centered theory is based on a holistic and phenomenological approach to therapy. It emphasizes the importance of trusting a person's potential for self-discovery and is based on the belief that humans innately gravitate towards self-actualization. Self-actualization is the idea that everyone has ability to find the best solutions for themselves and are also able to make the necessary changes in their lives. This form of therapy involves the therapist following the client's lead and not direction discussion. The person-centered theory focuses "unconditional positive regard" which entails that the therapist is being non-judgmental, accepting and empathetic towards the client. Unconditional positive regard provides the environment in which the client can make decisions independently and discover solutions within themselves. This approach challenges the idea of counselors knowing what's best for the clients and problems/issues needing to be solved by the therapist. This approach focuses on the qualities the therapist must have, therapeutic relationships and fostering "a growth-promoting" environment. Some required qualities a person-centered therapist must have are genuineness, congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathetic understanding. These qualities help create a safe, growth promoting climate that allows the client to use self-direction, improve their self-esteem and increase their self-reliance. Carl Rogers theories are influential in modern psychotherapy and have helped pave the way for other humanistic approaches and techniques.

In the film, *Ordinary People*, Conrad feels like he has no control over his life and agrees to see the psychologist, Dr. Bergers. Throughout the film, I recognized that Conrad has a deep desire to be seen. I believe that Conrad would benefit from person-centered form of therapy. Using a non-directive approach would allow Conrad to speak freely and choose how to proceed in therapy thus giving him a sense of control. This approach will benefit Conrad as he believes he has no control over his own life. By showing Conrad unconditional positive regard, I can create a safe and nurturing environment for growth promoting. Being that Conrad, feels as if his mother doesn't accept him, it is important as therapist to show acceptance and understanding towards him. As a therapist, it is important for me to actively listen and empathize with Conrad while accepting all of his feelings and experiences. It's important for me to connect emotionally to Conrad's subjective world. Through self-actualization, Conrad will be able to face his past and address his feelings about his parents. We see this happen in the film when he realizes that he was competing for his mother's affection and attention. Through the use of open questions, paraphrases and reflections, we will be able to explore Conrad's feelings of guilt regarding his brother's death, the views he has about himself and the feelings he has towards his parents. Self-actualization and having a sense of control throughout the therapeutic process will allow Conrad to become more confident in the choices he makes. As he becomes more conscious of his thinking process, Conrad will be able to identify destructive thinking patterns and adopt new helpful ones. Although I believe that Conrad will benefit from person-centered therapy, I think that in order for it to be successful, the therapist has to be a bit more involved. This approach is not applicable for all situations. Person-centered therapy has great benefits but it is not successful if the client doesn't want to communicate. Clients must be able to speak openly about their

feelings. There is also no direct technique to help clients solve issues and it relies heavily on the client's ability to self-actualize.

References:

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