

**Ordinary People: Person-Centered Approach**

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Person-centered therapy is based on the philosophy of human nature that postulates an innate necessity to achieve self-actualization. Carl Rogers held on to the notion that we structure ourselves according to our perceptions of reality and that individuals have the capacity to self direct and promote constructive personal change. Change can only take place if a congruent therapist comes into contact with a client exhibiting feelings of anxiety or incongruency. In order for clients to reap the benefits of this approach, it is important for the therapist to establish a genuine, accepting, and understanding relationship with the client. This will encourage the client to lower their defenses in order to accept and integrate aspects of their behavior that have been denied or distorted. This approach stresses that the attitudes of the therapist supersede any knowledge, theory, or techniques utilized. The approach places the responsibility for the direction of therapy on the client. The client is viewed as the expert in his or her life and is responsible for facilitating their own goals and events.

In the film *Ordinary People*, Conrad came to doctor Burger in a state of anxiety and incongruence. During the initial stages of therapy, Conrad expressed to Dr. Burger that his reason for coming to therapy was so that he could gain back control so that the people around him could stop worrying about him. Conrad expressed feeling hopeless and powerless. In the initial stages of the therapeutic process, Conrad was concerned about needing certain expectations as the surviving child. He felt pressured to be OK and proceed with life after his brother's loss as if nothing happened, just like his parents and the community attempted to do.

The first technique I would use to treat Conrad is Expressive Art Therapy. The creative process in this kind of therapy would be transformative and healing for Conrad. Allowing

Conrad to get involved in activities like meditation, art and journaling would help promote greater healing. This technique also promotes self-awareness, self-understanding and insight which would help Conrad dive deeper into his feelings of grief, anger and pain as it pertains to the tragic loss of his brother and how it affected him. This technique would also help Conrad to discover any positive feelings present in his life that he could perhaps build upon to continue his healing process.

I would encourage Conrad to get involved in a crisis intervention program. The person-centered approach would be especially effective in this instance. This would give Conrad the opportunity to feel heard and fully express himself which is something he isn't necessarily allowed to do in his environment. Sensitive listening, hearing and understanding would be necessary for Conrad. Because Conrad has a history of self-harming, I believe immersing himself in a crisis intervention program to utilize its services would be appropriate for the prevention of future incidents. Conrad wouldn't have to necessarily wait to be in a crisis to utilize these services.

I believe this approach would be helpful as it is a non-directive approach. In the case of Conrad, we have an individual that feels unseen and unheard by the people in his environment. Because this approach allows the client to be the expert towards their own treatment process, it could create the autonomy and "control" Conrad is looking for. This approach focuses on the therapist providing a safe, accepting, warm, empathic and open environment. When clients feel safe in a therapeutic environment, they exhibit a willingness to explore deep within themselves. This in turn facilitates growth and personal self healing.

## References

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- (1980). *Ordinary People*. USA. Retrieved February 14, 2023.