

Ordinary People: Person-Centered Therapy

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Person-Centered Theory is a counseling approach accredited to Carl Rogers who was a spokesperson for humanistic psychology. The development of person-centered approach spanned over multiple decades. Roger's original approach in 1940's was known as nondirective counseling. During this time Roger's emphasized the focus on clients reflecting and clarifying the clients' verbal communication and what it meant. This was a radical approach that varied from the directive and interpretive approach to counseling during that era that often included counselor to provide directions, advice, teaching, suggestions, diagnosis and interpretations. To Rogers, these practices were prejudicial and misused because it was based on the counselor's awareness.

In the 1950s Rogers' theory evolved into what he considered Client-Centered Therapy which differed from the non-directed methods. It placed emphasis on the client's lived experiences instead and led by the counselors. For three decades starting towards the late 1950s, we began collecting data to support his hypothesis about becoming one's true self. During that time, he also studied the client-therapist relationship and how it can impact a client's personality.

As a result of Rogers' decade study, person-centered therapy was developed in the 1980s. This form of theory considered the source of successful therapy was the client. Rogers believed the client had the ability to achieve a greater independence with assistance from a therapist, to learn how to cope with their self-identified problems.

Using facilitation, the therapist is able to help the client achieve self-actualization after ridding themselves of the facade they developed through their lived experiences. The therapist

does not provide goals. The goal of therapy is created by the client. The therapist facilitates the session with the capacity to provide clarity to the goals that clients create.

In order for a therapist to be an instrument of change, they are required to have an attitude of empathy with their client. The attitude of a therapist is more impactful than their technique or theories. They should be genuine and in a state of congruence and display unconditional positive regards to the client. Communication from the counselor should be limited and the focus should be to listen to the client.

I believe that Dr. Berger did use a form of person-centered therapy. He mostly listened to Conrad with limited interjections of his personal opinions and beliefs. Although he facilitated the therapy sessions, he let Conrad decide his own goals and did not set any goals for him. He fostered a growth producing environment for Conrad. As the movie played out, Conrad started to identify with his authentic self and started to remove the facades he had as a result of his home and school environment.

For this form of therapy, I will react similar to how Dr. Berger conducted his therapy sessions. The only thing I would have done different were, I avoid the few times he advised Conrad to express his feelings to others. I would have challenged Conrad in a positive way until he was able to sort through his feelings and decide on how he would respond.

I do believe this is a theory that would be successful for Conrad. Not having the best relationship with his mother made him feel like he was not valued. His approach to therapy would give him the opportunity to express himself in a safe environment and be heard. In this space he would have the opportunity to take ownership of his experiences and learn how to navigate through his daily life.

References

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