

**Ordinary People – Existential Therapy**

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Existential therapy, according to Corey (2017), is more of a philosophical approach that can aid a therapist/counselor in their practice relating to the nature of being human. This consists of asking questions central around love, loneliness, creativity, anxiety, life meaning, etc. There are six basic dimensions of the human condition according to Corey (2017) and they include: the capacity for self-awareness, tensions between freedom and responsibility, creation of identity, the search for meaning, accepting anxiety as part of life and last but not least, awareness of death. Existential therapy, as a whole, focuses primarily on the individual rather than the individuals' symptoms. This form of therapy also aims to increase self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-understanding in the therapists' clients. It is often viewed as a pessimistic approach due to its focus on anxiety and loneliness and so forth, but in reality, these are topics are necessary to speak about for clients who are struggling.

In the movie *Ordinary People*, existential therapy may help Conrad in multiple areas of his life. For example, speaking about Conrad's feelings relating to feeling lonely, feeling anxious, facing conflict with his parents, especially his mother and death. It is clear throughout the movie that Conrad struggles with existential anxiety to an extent because of symptoms such as withdrawing from socialization, difficulty making decisions and especially feeling like his life is a struggle.

If I were Dr. Berger helping Conrad with his symptoms using existential therapy, I would aid Conrad in identifying his thoughts and feelings, exploring and examining why he feels those ways and where those feelings are coming from and then applying what is learning in therapy to his everyday life. I would also use logotherapy in order to help Conrad find a deeper meaning in his life. As humans, we all seek to figure out what it means to feel fulfilled and what it takes to feel fulfilled.

## Reference

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (10<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Cengage Learning.

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary People* (Film). Paramount Pictures.