

Existential Therapy

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Theories and Foundation

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Existential Psychotherapy is more of a philosophical approach, and it focuses on the existence of human nature and their connections to the meaning of life. Some questions that someone practicing this modality will ask their clients would be “Why am I here, or what gives my life purpose”. This type of therapy wants to bring awareness to a client a have them see the connection between the freedom of life and the responsibilities we have as humans. This type of psychotherapy sheds light into the realities of life and how we on borrowed time but we have the choice to make decisions or not. It also tries to show the client that we need to find meaning or purpose in life. It normalizes anxiety as part of our everyday life which a lot of people are unaware of or try to live anxiety free and it explains that death its part of life. The goal of existential therapy is to help clients be more present and understand that they have a say or responsibility for how they are currently living.

Looking at Conrad through the lens of this theory, we can see how not accepting that death part of life made his symptoms worst. He kept holding on to the fact that this brother died and blamed himself for it. I like how Dr. burger replied to him in a session to his question of why did his brother let go and died as “maybe he was tired, so he let go” in reference to the fact that it was his brothers decision to let go not Conrads decision to make. This theory also explains how Conrad did not have some of the questions that are asked in this modality answered like why he was living or what gave his life purpose. Conrad was not present in his current life and not being present affected other relationships he had like his relationship with his parents.

If I was Dr. Burger, I would use this modality try to bring awareness to Conrad by asking him these deep questions with the goal of having him do some introspection and assist him with the conclusion that death is part of life but we can still make decisions that will affect how we live today. I would work with Conrad to try and find meaning for his life and the things he does

on a day-to-day bases. Example would be his relationship with the girl he really likes. When Conrad spent time with her, it was meaningful to him and I can use that to help him be more present in his life.

I think this type of therapy and approach could be beneficial with a client like Conrad. But I would caution on the fact that the literature explained that this is not a technical modality. With that being said, it depends a lot on the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the client and if that connection is not there, I can see how a client would not fully engage in this type of philosophical approach. If the therapist has a deep connection with the client then yes, but if the client does not connect with the therapist, since its not technical, I can see this modality hindering the healing process for a client.

References:

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