

Ordinary People: Existential Therapy

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Existential Therapy is not a defined model or style of therapy, but is described by Gerald (2015) as a philosophical approach to a therapeutic practice. It focuses on themes of morality and the freedom clients have to choose their attitudes towards their responsibility, anxiety, and other struggles that occur as a result of life's complexities.

The existential movement stemmed from a philosophical view points of the meaning of being human, and understanding human nature and behaviors. This movement was a way to help people navigate through dilemmas, isolation, feelings of worthlessness and alienation and to reassure them of their significance of their existence. Through six different dimensions of the existential approach, a therapist is able to assist clients with creating a meaningful view on circumstances of life and their power within the human existence to design their own destiny.

Existential therapy will assist people with increasing their capacity to live full meaningful lives by becoming self-aware of their own responsibilities and the impact of the decisions they make in life. Each decision avails opportunities or consequences which could either expand or restrict their consciousness. The goal is to increase their self-awareness to limit the ignorance of conditions the foster contentment.

By increasing self-awareness, existential therapy can limit inauthenticity and provide the freedom needed to take responsibility of one's own life, oppose to assuming that it is controlled by external forces. When someone becomes self-aware, they are able to create their own personal identity and develop meaningful relationships based on fulfillment.

If I was Conrad's therapist using existential therapy, I would take time to understand his world and experiences. I would like to learn about his assumptions, beliefs and values. I would

listen for areas in his life that he complains about frequently and challenge him on how he contributed to the situation. I would be conscious of my technique of approaching sensitive topics. I would try to avoid making him feel like I am blaming him for anything or levels of shame, especially since he may feel that way at home. My goal will be to help him take responsibility of the choices he had in those situations and understand what was outside of his control.

As our therapist-client relationship evolves I will hope that he is becoming more self-aware and comfortable in his chosen identity. He can begin to implementing actions that will be authentic to himself in his life. He will begin to learn more about his innate strength and create a purposeful life.

References

Corey, Gerald. (2015), *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy.*, 10th edition____
USA, Thompson Learning.

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary people* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.