

Ordinary People Paper

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March 7, 2023

### Abstract

The Sage Encyclopedia of Theory in Psychology lists over 300 approaches to counseling. In this paper, this counselor analyzes 12 of those approaches in the context of the 1980 American drama film "Ordinary People." The movie tells the story of a family dealing with the aftermath of a tragic accident that took the life of one of their sons. The remaining son, Conrad, is left with feelings of guilt and depression and is struggling to cope. Each of these approaches can be applied to the character of Conrad, who struggles with major depressive disorder. By analyzing the patterns of behavior and thought in the context of each theory, the counselor can help Conrad reframe his thoughts and gain a deeper understanding of his emotions and behavior. Modeling therapeutic approaches can be beneficial for counselors in several ways, such as providing a framework, tailoring treatment, and enhancing professionalism. This can lead to a more positive and fulfilling life for Conrad and his family. In addition, modeling therapeutic approaches can help counselors be more effective, efficient, and professional in their work with clients. By using a structured and evidence-based approach to counseling, counselors can provide high-quality care to their clients and achieve better outcomes.

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Modeling therapeutic approaches provide information and insight into different types of therapies that can help individuals with mental illness. Therapeutic approaches are a critical part of mental health treatment, and there are many different types of therapies that can be used to help individuals overcome mental health challenges. This writer exemplifies an overview of twelve therapies. Therapies that can help to improve the quality of mental health treatment and support better mental health outcomes for individuals who are struggling to cope with unconscious thoughts and feelings.

Overall, modeling therapeutic approaches is a valuable way to provide information, insights, and recommendations that can help counselors learn different techniques and better understand how to apply them.

## Discussion

### *Psychoanalytic Therapy*

Psychoanalysis aims to help clients recover repressed emotions and deep-seated, sometimes forgotten experiences by tapping into their unconscious minds. In *Ordinary People*, Dr. Berger used this technique to help Conrad articulate and healthily process his feelings concerning the tragic loss of his brother.

- This writer would have preferred a softer, more empathetic approach to encourage a more inviting atmosphere and may have started the conversation with, “How are you doing today?” By prefacing today, Conrad would have discussed reluctance to therapy, enabling this therapist to dismantle any preconceived ideas about therapy and offer assurance of being in a safe place. Conrad’s answer helps the therapist determine the appropriate action and build trust.
- The answer to the initial question will drive the subsequent questions, but this writer would also like to explore more about Conrad’s feelings because he is visibly annoyed about having to be there. Perhaps spending time with these feelings and exploring his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors would break his barriers. This counselor would ask, “tell me more about your feelings and how these feelings might affect your day-to-day life?”
- “Are these the feelings you experienced that led you to the hospital? Tell me how these feelings affect your behavior.” This would be a segue into the purpose of counseling. We can now explore his unconscious thought processes depending on Conrad’s ability to be vulnerable.

*Jungian Therapy*

A therapist using the Jungian approach, helps patients see the potential within themselves and leads them in the direction of personal growth. Given Conrad's hesitancy coming into therapy, this technique would be most beneficial after a few sessions of discussing maintenance.

- This writer would encourage Conrad to keep a dream journal and bring it to therapy. This would allow for an open discussion on unconscious feelings that have not yet been disclosed. In addition, it shows the client a trend – i.e., when you go to sleep with these things on your mind, you are bound to have a nightmare.
- This writer may also consider word association where the counselor offers a word, and the counselee responds with the first word that pops into his head. This also allows for unconscious thoughts and feelings to be revealed.
- If this author were a counselor using a Jungian therapy approach, she would also have him explore Art Therapy. Images have a way of teaching an individual about self-image when the focus is on a particular problem. Art Therapy can provide a safe and creative outlet for the patient to express their feelings and emotions in a non-verbal manner. The counselor can then use the art as a tool to help the patient better understand their own thoughts and feelings, as well as how to better manage them. Additionally, the counselor can use the art as a means of helping the patient to explore their own unconscious thoughts and patterns. By engaging in this type of therapy, the counselor will be able to better understand the underlying issues of the patient and work towards finding solutions that are tailored to their needs.

*Adlerian Therapy*

The Adlerian approach emphasizes success, connections, and contribution to society. The goal is to help individuals understand their underlying motivation and meaning. Moreover, Adlerian therapists foster safe and supportive environments for their clients by strongly emphasizing the therapeutic relationship.

- This counselor would begin with a Lifestyle Assessment, exploring birth order and early recollections. Birth Order may shed light on Conrad's development and personality and how he handles situations; early recollections dive into childhood memories and the meaning made from those experiences. These techniques would reveal to Conrad what his life themes are and how he perceives and engages the world around him.
- Also, this therapist would explore Conrad's relationship with his mom before Buck's death. Processing childhood memories attempts to show how they grieve together, yet individually. The therapist would also attempt to help Conrad and his mother understand how their relationship has changed since Buck's death, and how they can make it better. They would discuss how Conrad's mom could be more supportive of him and how he could be more understanding of her.
- During the session, this counselor would introduce the Push-Button technique, asking Conrad to recall a pleasant event that he has experienced. He is asked to become aware of the feelings associated with it. He learns how these emotions trigger a desired feeling by switching to an unpleasant image and those feelings. (Thompson, 2019)
- Lastly, homework is assigned. This step puts into practice the tools learned and reinforces the client's ability to maintain control of his emotions. This counselor would also recommend journaling any unwanted feelings during the upcoming week.

*Behavioral Therapy*

Behavioral therapy is an approach that focuses on changing a person's unwanted behaviors in order to improve their functioning and quality of life. Behavioral therapists work with individuals, couples, families, and groups to identify the underlying causes of their behaviors and help them learn new skills and strategies better to manage their emotions, thoughts, and actions.

- This writer helps Conrad develop a set of attainable goals that will help him focus on his desired results in a session. These goals will also help Conrad stay on track to reach them. He can evaluate his progress and adjust as needed by setting measurable benchmarks. The follow-up plan will ensure that Conrad remains committed to achieving the objective. Furthermore, by identifying potential obstacles, he can develop strategies for overcoming them and have access to the resources he needs to complete the tasks.
- In addition to setting goals, the therapist assists Conrad in identifying and understanding the variables that contribute to his unwanted behaviors and developing a plan of action to decrease or eliminate them. This action plan should include identifying triggers and developing coping strategies for managing them. The therapist should also help Conrad develop an understanding of his thoughts and feelings, as well as the thoughts and feelings of those around him, in order to manage his behavior better. The therapist should also help Conrad identify and practice assertive communication skills and create a support system of family, friends, and other professionals to rely on when needed. Lastly, the therapist should provide Conrad with tools and resources to help him monitor and track his progress in meeting these goals.

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*Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)*

Using CBT and REBT Therapies, this author focuses on helping Conrad understand how his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected. By using cognitive restructuring to help him identify and challenge irrational beliefs he may have and work to replace them with more constructive thinking. The therapist would also focus on helping Conrad develop more effective coping and problem-solving skills to manage stress and difficult emotions. Additionally, the use of REBT would help him understand how his beliefs and attitudes influence his behavior and help him to develop more realistic and helpful beliefs.

- The therapist uses a technique called cognitive restructuring, which challenges irrational beliefs and replaces them with more realistic, adaptive thoughts. This process helps Conrad develop more rational and helpful perspectives on life. It also assists him in managing his emotions more effectively, as he can now identify and challenge his negative thoughts, which can reduce the intensity of his emotional responses. It also helps him develop new, healthier coping strategies that will be more effective at addressing his problems.
- With the help of the therapist, Conrad is able to recognize and change his irrational beliefs and replace them with more rational ones. The therapist works with Conrad to question and challenge his irrational beliefs, such as "I'm a failure" or "I'm not good enough," and assist him in replacing them with healthier, more realistic beliefs. Through this process, the therapist helps Conrad identify his automatic thoughts and the distorted thinking patterns that may be contributing to his negative emotions and behaviors.
- Additionally, the therapist encourages Conrad become more aware of his thoughts and how they shape his emotions and behaviors.

*Existential Therapy*

Existential therapy used with Conrad in Ordinary People involves a lot of self-exploration and discussion of his feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about himself and the world. The therapist would likely focus on helping Conrad identify and understand his core beliefs and how they may influence his behavior and feelings. The therapist would also help Conrad explore how his current situation relates to his past and how he can use his understanding of his history to help him move forward.

- Role-playing to help Conrad explore different scenarios and how he would respond to them is an effective way to help explore his emotions, reactions, and behaviors to different situations. The therapist would use techniques such as guided imagery, mindfulness, and creative visualization to help Conrad explore his feelings and reactions and to gain insight into his behavior.
- This therapist would also have him keep a daily journal to document his thoughts and feelings and any changes he has noticed. Journaling keeps him actively involved in therapy and helps him gain insight into his behavior. Self-reflection is essential to existential therapy as it will allow him to reap the benefits by transforming inner awareness into goal-directed action (Wellman, 2019).
- Through exploration and discussion, the therapist can help Conrad become aware of his limiting beliefs and work through these beliefs to find a greater sense of purpose. Through exploration, self-reflection, and creative visualization, the therapist can help Conrad to gain a deeper understanding of himself and to find a greater sense of meaning and fulfillment in his life.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, counseling Conrad using these twelve therapy approaches would involve a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy, solution-focused therapy, psychodynamic therapy, client-centered therapy, and family systems therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy would help Conrad identify and change his unhealthy thought patterns, while solution-focused therapy would help him develop actionable and achievable goals. Psychodynamic therapy would explore underlying emotional issues, while client-centered therapy would help Conrad explore his feelings and develop greater self-awareness. Finally, family systems therapy would help Conrad better to understand his role and relationships within his family. These approaches would be used to provide Conrad with the best possible care and support.

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