Ordinary People – Gestalt Therapy

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According to Corey (2017), Gestalt therapy is a cross between an existential approach and a phenomenological approach. The primary goal of Gestalt therapy is for the client to practice and experience more self-awareness, as well as to become more aware of the circumstances that they are put in. Many therapies help clients to look into their past to figure out why they feel and act the way they do in the present. With Gestalt therapy, the therapist will aid the client on focusing on the here and now, rather than looking for answers in the past or future. Clients will not be able to gain the proper amount of self-awareness if they aren't present. Corey (2017) also went on to explain how many clients who do tend to heavily focus on their past experiences will visit distinct memories and it can interfere with effective contact. As a result, this leads the client to act more compulsively, have more oppressive behaviors, be preoccupied with the past rather than focusing on the present, etc.

In the movie Ordinary People, Conrad shows countless amounts of signs of how he hyper focuses on his past experiences and how that is hindering his growth to self-awareness. Gestalt therapy would be a big help for Conrad, as long as he would be open and honest to the therapist. Gestalt therapy is known to help clients struggling with anxiety, depression, interpersonal issues, etc.

If I were Dr. Berger and conducting Gestalt therapy with Conrad, the two main techniques I would like to use are the empty chair technique and the exaggeration technique. The empty chair technique would help Conrad be able to express, understand and speak to the more anxious and troubled side of himself. Not only can he use this technique to speak with himself but to also practice and express what he needs and wants to say to his parents, especially his mother. The exaggeration technique would help Conrad by allowing him to exaggerate one of

the negative emotions he is experiencing that is also linked to past experiences. This would potentially help him to deal with present issues.

Reference

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

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