

Ordinary People Paper: Reality Therapy

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GCN: 502 Theories and Foundations of Counseling

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March 14th, 2023

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Reality therapy is an approach to psychotherapy, founded on the principle that views all behaviors as a choice. That being said, this model of therapy does not factor in mental health conditions (How Reality Therapy Works, n.d.). Reality therapy provides a delivery system for helping individuals take more effective control of their lives (Corey, 2016, p.314). The therapeutic process primarily involves assisting and educating clients to make more effective choices, as they deal with the necessary relationships in their lives. As a reality therapist, it is essential to create a satisfying relationship with clients as a prerequisite for effective therapy (Corey, 2016, p. 314).

Reality therapists conclude that the significant problem for most clients is equivalent. Reality therapists consider clients to be either involved in a present discouraging relationship or lack what could even be called a relationship. Reality therapists view the problems as being caused by their inability to connect, get close to others, or have a satisfying or successful relationship with at least one significant person in their life. The goal of the therapist is to guide clients toward a satisfying relationship and teaches them more effective ways of behaving. As client increase their ability to connect with people, the greater chance they have to experience happiness (Corey, 2016, p. 311).

The function of the therapist is often looked at as a mentoring process in which the therapist is the teacher, and the client is the student (Corey, 2016, p. 318). However, the role of the therapist is not to make the evaluation for clients but to challenge clients to analyze what they are doing. Reality therapists assist clients in evaluating their own behavioral direction, specific actions, wants, perceptions, level of commitment, possibilities for new directions, and action plans (Corey, 2016, p. 319).

Reality therapy has been applicable in a variety of settings. The approach is applicable in settings such as crisis intervention, corrections, rehabilitation, and institutional management. In addition, this therapy is popular in schools, state mental health hospitals, halfway houses, and alcohol and drug abuse centers (Corey, 2016, p. 314). The targeted population of these settings consists of working with an increasing number of involuntary clients who may actively resist the therapist and the therapy process. These individuals often engage in violent behavior, addictions, and other kinds of antisocial behaviors.

As I examined the main character Conrad in the film *Ordinary People*, he appeared to be a high school kid that continued to display ongoing symptoms of anxiety, low- self-esteem, worry, agitation, and disturbance when around people. These symptoms were highlighted in his hostility, inattention, aggression, and self-harming practices throughout the film. The film was able to capture these symptoms and behaviors in several instances toward his mother, swim teammates, father, and psychiatrist. During the session, I would primarily begin to form the “mentor style” of relationship that is indicated in the function of the therapist. In doing so will allow me to challenge his ideations and behaviors toward healthy relationships.

During a session, Conrad also expressed having memories in the form of dreams that were unpleasant in multiple sessions. He continued to express how his memories of his brother’s death caused his distress and intrusive thoughts. In addition, Conrad verbalizes how his brother was “screwing around in the thunderstorm” (Redford, 1980, 1:38:59). As his psychiatrist applying this type of therapy, this would prompt me to identify the “choice factor” that his brother had pertaining to the behaviors that led to his death. Additionally, in the film, Conrad meets with his psychiatrist and discusses his ongoing feud with his mother. During the session, Dr. Burger

encourages Conrad to “forgive your mom and yourself” (Redford, 1980, 1:09:24). As Conrad’s therapist, I would recommend a group therapy session with his mother and father. I believe that doing so would allow me as his therapist, to focus on assisting him with ways to restore his connection and relationship with his mother as well as begin to remove the triangulation that is taking part in his family dynamic.

In my opinion, the application of this theory would be useful in terms of the basic approach towards change in the behaviors of clients. In addition, I believe that this theory does an in-depth analysis on the importance of relationships and the factors that improve those relationships. Furthermore, when clients are dealing with interpersonal relationships that consist of variables like communication skills, managing conflict and active listening like Conrad was throughout the film, increasing the awareness of control and choice the individual has in their own lives promotes the positive growth necessary in change.

Reference

1. How Reality Therapy Works. (n.d.) *How Reality Therapy Works*. Very well Mind.
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2. Corey, G. (2016). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. 10th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning US.
3. Redford, R. (1980). *Ordinary People*. Wildwood Enterprise.