

Ordinary People: Reality Theory

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Reality theory (RT) assumes that human difficulties are rooted in relationship difficulties. People are either in an unsatisfactory relationship or lack a relationship altogether. The person is struggling with making significant connections with others. The therapist's focus is on teaching more effective ways of behaving to connect with others. William Glasser even regards the labeling of mental illness only to be done for insurance payment. He feels that mental illness should only be applied to neurological issues and in turn treated by a neurologist (Corey, 2021).

A person has five major needs: survival, belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Power, the idea of being better than others can at times conflict with the need for belonging. The need to be better than others can cause the person to behave in a manner that makes it difficult for them to belong or be accepted by a group. In trying to meet these needs the individual will develop either a success identity or a failure identity. One who has a success identity feels worthwhile, confident, and loved while the person with a failure identity feels worthless, lacks confidence, feels helpless, and unloved. Symptoms are caused by not taking responsibility for one's choices, choosing maladaptive behaviors to meet a major need, and lacking the ability to fulfill needs (Grande, 2016).

When Conrad was in the hospital, he was free. He stated that he fit in there and did not have to play a role. He could just be himself. This is demonstrated when he meets up with Karen and asks her if she misses the hospital. When she can't quite seem to understand his questions, he responds regarding missing that freedom. He does not have that in his home. His guardedness with his family shows that there are feelings he is not free to express or demonstrate in the presence of his parents.

An RT technique that can be used with Conrad is asking questions (Grande, 2016). When he first walks into Dr. Berger's office and is asked why he is there, he expresses his desire to be more in control so that people will stop worrying about him. He can be asked, "What does being in control look like? Do you think you can control another's worry? Were you ever in control? Where did you lose control? What can you change to control this situation?"

Another technique to be used with Conrad is to continue to build on the counseling alliance. Make sure that at least in the counseling space all his five major needs are met so he can be authentic in that space. As Dr. Berger, I would also take extra caution to clear my head and provide him my undivided attention with respect, warmth, and sincerity.

I think that RT would be useful in treating Conrad due to its focus on the quality of relationships. While he feels his father's concern for his well-being, he does not feel that same regard from his mother. There are things from a maternal relationship that he seeks for but has not received. That relationship can be explored particularly by looking at Conrad as expecting something that his mother cannot give.

References

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