

Reality Therapy and Ordinary People

Geraldine Javier

Alliance University

Dr. Ramos

March 21st , 2023

Reality Therapy is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy that focuses on improving current relationships and circumstances. Similarly to Gestalt Therapy, this approach focuses on the present and is less concerned with past events. This form of therapy is based on the work of psychiatrist William Glasser in the 1960s. Reality therapy is a form of client centered therapy that focuses on the belief that human beings have an innate need to be loved and belong. In Reality therapy, human connection satisfies a client's needs. Reality therapy is based on choice therapy and emphasizes that people are a result of the choices they make. This approach believes that although people can't control how they feel, they can control how they think and behave. There is an emphasis on personal responsibility and accountability. This form of therapy empathizes that there are genetically encoded basic human needs in everyone. These basic needs include; Love and belonging, Power, Freedom, Fun and Survival. Everyone desires to fulfill these needs and mental issues arise when the needs are not met. Relationships can also be affected when a person's needs are not met. In this approach, each person has a "quality world" and "perceived world". A client's perceived world is what they think reality is, whereas a quality world consists of their visions of people, activities, events, beliefs, situations that will fulfill their needs. In Reality therapy, there are specific procedures that lead to change. WDEP is a fundamental system in Reality Therapy. WDEP stands for Wants, Doing, Evaluation and Plan. Through this system, clients are able to discover what they want and identify what they are doing to achieve what they want. Clients can also evaluate whether they are taking the necessary steps to achieve their goals. Clients are encouraged to make "SAMIC3" plans. SAMIC3 consists of five components; S-Simple, A-Attainable, M-Measurable, I-Immediate/Involved, C-Controlled/Committed/Consistent. Clients make plans and set goals with the help of the therapist. The therapist helps the clients identify any behavior that is

unlikely to help them meet their goals. A Reality therapist must be able to create a supportive, challenging and non coercive environment. It's also important for that the relationship between the therapist and client is trusting and positive. Unlike some common form of therapies, reality therapists reject unconditional positive regard. Fostering a positive environment is essential, however, therapists help clients identify which behaviors are not helping them achieve their goals. Clients are encouraged to focus on the present, avoid discussing symptoms, changing their thoughts and behaviors, taking responsibility/accountability and making specific plans/goals.

In the film, *Ordinary People*, we see that Conrad struggles with with being able to live in the present moment. He is fixated on the past and believes he has no control over his life. Conrad can benefit from parts of this approach because Reality Therapy focuses on the present moment and current relationships. Throughout the film, we see that Conrad is insecure about his choices. As a reality therapist, I can help Conrad learn that he has the ability to control his behavior and make his own decisions. Using techniques such as "WDEP" system and "SAMIC3" can help Conrad identify his wants, needs and evaluate if he is headed in the "right" direction to achieve his goals. This approach can help gain a sense of self-direction and empowerment. However, I don't believe reality therapy would be completely suitable for Conrad. Some of the limitations of this approach are that clinicians focus too heavily on the present moment and can fail to see the bigger picture. Past experiences help shape people into who they are today. Conrad needs to revisit the past in order to heal the issues revolving around his brother's death and the relationships he has with family. Reality therapy does not place importance on mental health conditions and their effects or medication. Reality therapist also oppose to prescribing medication for mental health disorders. This serves no benefit to Conrad who is currently

suffering from depression. Reality therapy's focus on unmet needs, disregards mental illnesses/the unconscious as a contributing factor to emotional distress.

References:

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Cengage.

Redford, R., Sargent, A., Schwary, R. L., Kanew, J., Hamlich, M., Pollack, B., Bennett, P., & Riva, J. M. (1980). *Ordinary people*.