

Ordinary People Paper: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

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GCN: 502 Theories and Foundations of Counseling

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March 28th, 2023

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Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is an approach to psychotherapy founded on the basis that human beings learn irrational beliefs from significant others during their childhood and then re-create these irrational beliefs throughout their lifetime (Corey, 2016, p. 272). In addition, the theory poses that a person's emotional makeup is created primarily from those beliefs, which influence the evaluations and interpretations of how people interpret and fuel the reactions they have to life situations (Corey, 2016, p. 272). In accordance with the approach, rational emotive behavior therapy has been seen to be beneficial in treating conditions such as social anxiety disorders, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, psychotic symptoms, and disruptive behavior in children (Cherry, 2023).

One of the goals of rational emotive behavior therapy is to assist clients in being able to minimize their emotional disturbances and self-defeating behaviors. During this process, clients develop the necessary skills that provide them the tools to identify and dispute irrational beliefs that have been acquired and self-constructed and are now maintained by self-indoctrination. As clients learn how to replace these detrimental ways of thinking with effective and rational cognitions, it results in clients changing their emotional experience and their reactions to situations. (Corey, 2016, p. 272). As clients replace these ways of thinking, they are able to acquire a more realistic, workable, and compassionate philosophy of life (Corey, 2016, p. 273).

Rational emotive behavior therapy practitioners use the application of many techniques during the therapeutic process. These techniques include unconditional acceptance, rational emotive role-playing, modeling, rational emotive imagery, and shame-attacking exercises. These emotive techniques tend to be vivid and evocative in nature, and their purpose is to dispute clients' irrational beliefs. These strategies are applied in both the therapy sessions and as

homework assignments in daily life. The purpose is to assist clients to change some of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

One of the emotive techniques I believe would be effective in treatment is rational emotive imagery. Rational emotive imagery is a technique utilized as a form of intense mental practice designed to develop new emotional patterns in place of disruptive patterns. In using this technique, clients are asked to distinctly imagine one of the worst things that might happen to them and to describe their disturbing feelings. After the mental exercise, clients are shown how to train themselves to develop healthy emotions. As a result of changes in the adverse feelings of clients, a positive change in behavior becomes more likely in the situation (Corey, 2016, p. 277).

Another technique I believe would be effective in treatment is the shame-attacking exercise. According to the textbook, this exercise was created to help people reduce shame and anxiety over behaving in a certain manner. The application and practice of shame-attacking exercises can reduce, minimize, and prevent feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, the exercises are aimed at increasing self-acceptance and mature responsibility, as well as aiding clients to point out that most of what they think of as being shameful has to do with the way said person defines reality for themselves (Corey, 2016, p. 278).

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. After identifying those cumulative symptoms, I would consider the application of the technique of rational emotive imagery. As Conrad's mental health

practitioner, I believe that this technique can reduce his disruptive pattern of emotions that are chronic in his life. The ongoing practice of this technique will have a positive effect on healthy emotions.

During another 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 mental health practitioner applying this type of therapy, I would utilize the technique of shame attacking. I believe that because Conrad is dealing with guilt and frustration, the application of this technique will assist him in reducing the guilt, anxiety and negative emotions that are at the forefront of his behavior issues. Furthermore, this technique will help Conrad develop in the areas of responsibility and maturity that he lacks in the film.

In my opinion, the application of this theory is very useful in terms of examining the pathological process in which an individual's environment influences and shapes their beliefs. Furthermore, this theory is useful because it allows the counselor to collect data pertaining to the impact of environmental factors based on the analysis of the counselor. Finally, this theory uses natural techniques such as counselor/ client communication and homework/ educational assignments for the client to change, rather than intervention such as medication management to alter the behavior of an individual.

Reference

1. Cherry, K. (2023, February 9). *What is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)?* Very Well Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/rational-emotive-behavior-therapy-2796000>
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.