

**Ordinary People: Behavior Approach**

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Behavioral therapy is a very diverse approach which includes four major areas of development: classical conditioning, operant conditioning, social cognitive theory and increasing attention to cognitive factors that influence an individual's behavior. A unique characteristic of behavior therapy is that it places strict reliance on the principles of the scientific method. Treatment and assessment are interrelated and occur simultaneously. The goal of behavior therapy is to identify specific goals at the beginning of the therapeutic process. By helping clients achieve their goals, behavior therapists help the client to determine how a particular behavior could be modified. Behavioral therapists help their clients develop a treatment plan using various techniques and procedures from a wide variety of therapeutic systems. They then teach their clients how to apply these techniques to their own unique individual needs.

The strategies utilized in the behavioral approach can be used to attain both individual goals and societal goals. Behavioral therapy Places emphasis on self-management and the incorporation of mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches into the practice. Behavioral therapists define mindfulness as a way of being that takes ongoing effort to develop and refine (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Self-compassion is a foundational part of behavioral therapy as well. It is also linked to an increased sense of well-being.

In the film *Ordinary People*, Dr. Burger provides some ground rules for Conrad to follow In order for the therapy process to be effective. He instructs Conrad that he must make a commitment to therapy and that in order to do that he has to cut down on some of his extracurricular activities so that he may attend their therapy sessions. At first Conrad is reluctant to make the change but soon realizes that it is a must If he has any chance of regaining control over his life. In the film, Conrad found himself in many anxiety provoking situations. The death of his brother created many cognitive distortions affecting the way he saw his environment and the

people in them. He suffered from anxiety, insomnia and experienced frequent panic attacks as a result of his maladaptive behavior and thinking processes.

I would utilize the process of systematic desensitization to treat Conrad. The key to desensitization is the repetition of exposure to anxiety arousing stimuli. This would allow Conrad to imagine the anxiety arousing situations he finds himself in temporarily. The hope in utilizing this technique is that Conrad could gradually or systemically become less sensitive to the situation that is giving him anxiety. It would allow Conrad to expose himself to the anxiety provoking situation and not experience a negative reaction to it.

Another technique I would utilize for treating Conrad is in vivo flooding. In this approach Conrad would be prevented from engaging in his usual maladaptive responses to anxiety provoking situations. This technique would also allow anxiety to decrease on its own overtime. However, before utilizing this technique I would inform Conrad of everything that he needs to know before proceeding and make sure that he understands that anxiety will be induced as a way to reduce it.

I believe that this approach would be useful for Conrad because it would allow him to gain insight into specific triggers that bring on panic and anxiety. This approach would also aid him and becoming aware of some of the maladaptive behavioral problems then he may have developed overtime. This approach would allow him to focus on his wants and values which would hopefully strengthen his relationships, spirituality, and wellbeing. Because the behavioral approach it's so diverse and the techniques used to treat clients, I feel as though Conrad wouldn't have an issue finding an approach that will help him develop healthy behaviors To help him strengthen these areas.

## References

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