

“Ordinary People”

Behavioral Approach to Counseling Conrad Jarret

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Conrad Jarret is a high school junior who has been struggling with bouts of depression and suicidal ideation that appears to have been brought on by the accidental death of his brother Buck during a boating accident. Conrad has been consumed with survivor's guilt and recently attempted suicide.

After four months of being instituted at a psychiatric hospital, Conrad has returned home. He is back on the school's swimming team and choir but has some social challenges and has become entirely withdrawn. He spends most of his time at home in his bedroom behind closed doors. Conrad has also been facing challenges in his relationship with his mother. They have not been able to connect emotionally or communicate effectively with each other. Conrad believes his mother's emotional detachment from him started long before Buck's death and that his mother found it easy to love his brother but difficult to love him.

During the intake interview, Conrad stated that his presenting problem is that he wants to regain control over his life to prevent people, especially his father, from worrying about him. I will be employing Behavior Therapy in counseling Conrad to address his problems and help him regain the control he seeks.

Behavior Therapy was founded by B. F. Skinner and was expanded by Albert Bandura. It constitutes four areas of development—classical conditioning, operant conditioning, social-cognitive theory, and cognitive behavior theory (Corey, 2015). Behavior therapist emphasizes individual choice and that behavior can be learned. Behavior therapy also theorizes that behavior can change without the client understanding the why's of their behavior or that both—the behavioral change and understanding the underlying reasons can be accomplished

simultaneously (Corey, 2015). The goal is to eliminate maladaptive behavior and reinforce more desired ones.

According to Behavior therapy, Conrad is experiencing depression due to ruminating thoughts and a lack of positive reinforcement of the behavior, which causes a positive mood. Also, Conrad becoming socially withdrawn results from several life-changing experiences—the death of his brother, his suicide attempt, and being admitted to a psychiatric hospital for several months. Conrad socially withdrawing is his way of coping with the pain and discomfort that he is feeling. The lack of positive social contact only reinforces him to avoid others more, bringing him further into a cycle of isolation and depression.

The behavioral techniques will address Conrad's problems—Mindful-Based Cognitive Therapy and Self-management and Self-directed techniques. Conrad will learn to become more aware of his internal thoughts, feelings, emotions, and environmental conditions (Corey, 2015). This technique will help him to increase present-moment awareness and reduce automatic negative thoughts. Conrad will be taught to respond skillfully and intentionally to his automatic negative thought pattern, which will help him break away from negative thinking and reduce his depression. Conrad will also be encouraged to be actively involved in the process, exercise specific actions to bring about change, and monitor those targeted cognitive-behavioral patterns in and outside of the therapeutic environment and not just talk about the problem (Corey, 2015). This will help Conrad understand which behavior he is eliciting prevents him from gaining the control he desires over his life.

Conrad will practice self-management and self-directed techniques after identifying the behaviors that are significant for him to gain control. Collaboratively, we will establish goals and strategies and help Conrad commit to the target behavior. Conrad will also keep a behavioral

journal to help monitor his behavior and will learn that he can choose to change or control his behavior (Corey, 2015). We will establish a plan that will be concise and attainable. Having the behavioral diary will help Conrad assess what behavior he needs to change and whether he needs to revise his goals or strategy. In addition, Conrad will learn to establish some form of self-reinforcement system that he will use until the new behaviors become a part of his daily habit (Corey, 2015). With these techniques, Conrad will gradually regain control over his life and not be consumed by negative thoughts and emotional patterns.

Reference

Corey, G. (2015). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy, Enhanced*
10th Edition. Cengage Learning

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary People*. Wildwood Enterprises Production.