

Cognitive Ordinary People Paper

Bénie Ntoto

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling, Alliance University

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Professor George James Ramos

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Behavior therapy has birthed the branch of cognitive behavior therapy. Well-known cognitive behavioral therapy approaches include cognitive therapy (CT), rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), strengths-based CBT (SM-CBT), and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). According to Gerald Corey, author of *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, all of the cognitive behavioral approaches share the same basic characteristics and assumptions as traditional behavior therapy (Corey, 2015, p. 270). All of these approaches share qualities that include a collaborative relationship between therapist and client, a focus on changing thoughts to produce desired changes in behavior, the premise that psychological distress is often maintained by cognitive processes, a present-centered focus and treatment, and an active and directive stance by the clinician.

CBT and CT both encourage clients to have an active role in their therapy sessions, as well as hold importance to the relationship between therapist and client. The key focus is to use a variety of cognitive and behavioral strategies to bring about change (2015, p. 270). Clinicians aid clients in understanding themselves and the world and encourage ways for the clients to experiment different ways of behaving.

Ordinary People is a film, directed by Robert Redford, that depicts the story of a young highschool student named Conrad Jarrett. This teenager is struggling with assimilating back to regular life after attempting to kill himself and mourning his late brother, Buck. His father is trying to rebuild a relationship with him, while his mother is distant and cold towards him. Conrad has also chosen to alienate himself from his friends, even though they did not treat him differently after it all happened. These events and circumstances have troubled Conrad tremendously and cognitive or cognitive behavioral therapy may be able to help him.

Two techniques that might help Conrad would include rational emotive imagery and shame-attacking exercises. Rational emotive imagery is a form of intense mental practice that would help Conrad establish new emotional patterns instead of disruptive ones through thinking in healthy ways (2015, p. 277). He would be asked to vividly imagine a tough situation and describe the feelings attached to the event and learn to develop healthy emotions towards these situations. It would be a helpful tool to apply, especially towards the situation with his mother and with his friends. If he started to have healthy emotions, this would lead his behavior towards them to change, not necessarily meaning he reconciles with them, but having feelings of peace.

Shame-attacking is the second technique that might help the highschool student. This technique can reduce, minimize, and prevent feelings of shame, guilt anxiety and depression (2015, p. 278). These exercises would target increasing self-esteem through self-acceptance and responsibility. Through homework, clients will learn how to not worry or choose to let the reactions of others affect what they think of themselves. This would benefit Conrad by giving him the freedom to finally be himself without caring what anyone else thought of him. He is not his late brother, and he is still good enough. He might not like being on the swim team, that does not mean he is not good at anything else. He was not responsible for his brother's death, even though he feels that way. He might have a hard time with some memories, but that does not make him weird or strange.

Rational emotive therapy and cognitive therapy would be extremely beneficial to Conrad. In the film, Dr. Berger asked Conrad questions about his thoughts and feelings and Conrad, although shy and closed off at first, opened up and had a breakthrough towards the end. These approaches would help Conrad be honest about how he feels and would give him the tools on how to change these thoughts along with his behavior over time.

References

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

Redford, R. (Director). (1980). *Ordinary People* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.