

Ordinary People – Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Lauren R. Mangiaracina

AGSC, Alliance University

GCN 502: Theories and Foundations of Counseling

Professor George J. Ramos

April 11th, 2023

According to Corey (2017), individuals within a family systems therapy session are best understood by the counselor/therapist when multiple family members are present. The family systems theory expresses how important the family unit is in regard to the mental health and well-being to each member within that family. For example, if one person has a mental health diagnosis, regardless of what it is, it effects the rest of the family unit in multiple ways.

Triangulation is a technique often used for this form of therapy in order to reduce anxiety and stabilize relationships between couples. Salvador Munuchin is the founder of structural family therapy which has a primary goal of making structural changes within the family unit in order to aid an individual of any problematic behaviors. It is important to note that with this therapy, in most cases if not all, there are no scapegoats or blame to be pinned on any person; Everyone is there to improve in order to benefit everyone.

In the movie, *Ordinary People*, Conrad could possibly benefit from this style of therapy since there are clearly many symptoms and dysfunctions presented in his family unit. After his older brothers' passing, there has been a lot of tension within the family especially between Conrad and his mother, as well as between his mother and his father. Every member of Conrad's family is handling Buck's tragic death differently. Conrad is more prone to taking out his angers, anxieties and depressive episodes on himself, as we can see in the movie since he had just come home from being at a mental institution for months. His mother represses her emotions and goes out to parties, pretending she is okay but behind closed doors, takes out her frustration on Conrad. His father has anxiety towards Conrad's well-being after Buck's death and especially with Conrad trying to kill himself. He still babies Conrad, as we can see in the very last scene of the movie Conrad expresses how he would rather his father be little tougher on him because he needs that sense of direction from his father figure.

If I were Dr. Berger and were given the task to help Conrad using family systems therapy, the two main techniques I would use would be structural family therapy and strategic family therapy.

Reference

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (10th ed.)*. Cengage Learning.

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