

**Ordinary People: Feminist Therapy**

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GCN 502 Theories and Foundations of Counseling

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April 18, 2023

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The feminist approach grew largely out of the recognition by women that the traditional models of therapy impose limitations due to the biases of early white male professionals. The feminist approach is aimed at both personal and social change. The major goal of this approach is to replace the current patriarchal system with feminist consciousness to create a society that values equality and relationships, values diversity, stresses interdependence rather than dependence, and encourages both men and women to define themselves rather than having society define them. This approach tends to be very diverse, self-critical, and varied. Feminist therapists and other therapists incorporate their work with multicultural and social justice perspectives. They also share several basic assumptions and roles as they engage in appropriate self-disclosure, they make their values and beliefs known so that the therapy process is clearly understood by the client, they established egalitarian roles with their clients, they work toward client empowerment, and they emphasize the commonalities among women and other marginalized and oppressed groups while honoring the life experiences of their clients. Feminist therapists use a variety of therapeutic strategies from other therapy models which include bibliotherapy, assertiveness training, cognitive restructuring, reframing and relabeling, counselor self-disclosure, role playing, identifying and challenging untested beliefs, and journal writing.

Conrad struggled with his social identity. He also struggled with building relationships particularly with women in due parts to his relationship with his mother. In the film, *Ordinary People*, we see Conrad exhibiting low self-esteem and negative self-evaluations as it pertained to himself and his capabilities. He had a difficult time articulating his feelings and regulating his emotions. He struggled to love himself and to trust others around him. Conrad deeply desired the connection he was missing between himself and the people around him.

The first therapeutic technique that I would use to treat Conrad from the feminist approach is that of empowerment. As Conrad 's therapist, I would pay careful attention to informed consent issues, discussing ways Conrad can get the most out of the therapy session, clarifying expectations, identifying goals, and working towards a contract that will guide the therapeutic process. I feel like this would help to alleviate some of the anxiety and apprehension that Conrad seems to have about therapy as informed consent offers a place to begin a relationship that is egalitarian and collaborative. The next technique I would use is gender role intervention. Gender role intervention would provide Conrad with insight into the ways that social issues may be affecting him. Society tends to define what is masculine and what is feminine, what is strong and what is weak Often giving off unrealistic ideals even for men. Men are often told that showing emotion is a sign of weakness and that they must be brave and strong and full of machismo to be accepted as male and dominant. Implementing this technique would probably help Conrad gain insight into how these expectations have affected him psychologically and contributed to him feeling depressed.

I believe that this approach would work for Conrad as this approach could help him gain insight and think more positively about his unity with his peers as well as the women around him. He may even become a role model for young boys and men in the future debunking the societal stereotypes that define what it means to be masculine or feminine. This approach would help Conrad to learn how to love himself and focus on his strengths rather than his weaknesses. He would also be able to articulate his feelings and build strong relationships with the people in his life.

## References

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