

Chapter Twelve

1. The social justice piece of feminist therapy aligns well with the Biblical perspective. God Himself, is a defender of the oppressed (Ps. 146:7, 9:9; Prov 14:31; Luke 4;18-19). The Bible also supports that God is a lover of all people. He gave His only begotten Son for the world to be saved, and through the new covenant joins the Jewish people with the Gentiles through the message of the Gospel (Acts 10:34-35). As for the equality of all people, God states in Genesis that both man and woman were created in His image. This denotes that they are of equal worth. In the New Testament, we see that women were chosen by God to be the first to report the resurrection and that the women participated with the men for prayer and ministry.

However, feminist theory fights against the establishment of gender roles. In the Bible, although men and women are equal, God does assign specific roles to each gender. These roles are not demeaning nor meant to devalue women. Paul states in Galatians 3:28 that, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.", but in 1 Corinthians 11:3 he declares that there is an order of authority that requires a woman to submit to her husband. The Bible depicts gender and class discrimination but this is a result of man's fallen nature and cultural customs. I do not believe this was God's intention. Feminist therapy does not coincide with the Biblical view of a patriarchal society. Yet in the Bible men held the responsibility, maximum authority, and the priestly position in the tabernacle. However, through the new covenant, we all spiritually possess these qualities (1Peter 2:9). Still, socially in the family system, God maintains distinct and specific gender role responsibilities for husbands and wives (Eph 5:33).

4. A primary goal of feminist therapy is to lead clients to see the importance of becoming advocates for themselves and others. Therapists also desire to help clients take hold of their power as individuals to be able to trust their interpretations and intuitions. Afterward, then can unite their strengths with that of others. Another goal of feminist therapy is to promote social change, equality, and the importance of valuing diversity. Feminist therapists also seek to assist clients in identifying the gender role internalizations they may have adopted as their own. Clients need to become aware of how society may have contributed to their perspective of what is expected of them as men and women. This is so that the clients can see how these misconceptions can be harmful and hence find ways to replace them. Afterward, the client can then learn how to incorporate these personal changes into society, particularly institutions. But clients are also encouraged to fight against institutional oppression. All of these aspects teach clients the value and power of interpersonal relationships.

The focus of this approach is composed of empowerment and transformation of the individual as well as society to bring equality to all. Part of this empowerment is emphasizing that women's voices deserve to be heard and valued. A feminist therapist seeks to confront traditional theories based on patriarchal social systems. This theory contends that it is necessary to acknowledge that culture, society, and government contribute to problems on an individual level. For this reason, a huge focus is on working with individuals on a personal level to remove sexism and discrimination so that these individuals can then be prepared to come against these oppressive behaviors at a social level.

6. One of the core principles of feminist therapy is “the personal is political and critical consciousness” (Corey 2017, p. 343). This principle supports the idea that the client's problems, have its roots in social stereotypes or political oppression and marginalization, but especially for females issues of subordination. Although I can see how some of these can affect a person on an individual level I do not think personal issues arise solely from this source. People despite their social class or gender hold unique attributes that are a matter of decision. At the same time, socialization affects people no matter their age, gender, or social class because humans are relational creatures that exert a powerful influence on one another.

The second core principle is “commitment to social change”(Corey 2017, p. 343). According to this principle therapists and eventually, clients are responsible for impacting the larger social systems they are a part of to use their power to promote change. As people who have been exposed to oppression and injustices, it is expected that in some form or fashion they give back to help others. On one hand, I think this is a humanitarian attitude and that it is positive. It is fine to want to motivate others to take action, however, not everyone will share this perspective. Since all types of people suffer oppression and the negative effects of socialization, advocacy applies to whoever is willing to speak up and defend the rights of others.

Thirdly, feminist therapy believes that “women’s and girls’ voices and ways of knowing, as well as the voices of others who have experienced marginalization and oppression, are valued and their experiences are honored” (Corey 2017, p. 344). Women need to be encouraged to be aware of their value and rights to express themselves in a largely male dominant society. However, it is a bit contradictory to seek acknowledgment from the very society that is oppressing them. I believe that when people have a conviction of their core beliefs, regardless of

gender or social class change occurs naturally. The reason for this is that people are led by what they believe to be the truth, so change does start with us.

The fourth principle is that “the counseling relationship is egalitarian” (Corey 2017, p. 344). For feminist therapists transparency, respect, reciprocity, and the client’s empowerment are foundational in treatment. I agree that it is beneficial for clients to understand the concept of power in every relationship, however, I am not sure if this is realistic. This principle pertains to all people because power is something every person struggles within most human interactions. Yet, I think this could be particularly useful for men because society has portrayed power as a necessity to gain self-worth and control for them.

“A focus on strengths and a reformulated definition of psychological distress” is the fifth principle (Corey 2017, p. 344). According to feminist theory, people that suffer from symptoms of mental distress are simply coping or surviving, but not sick. Perhaps this is true to a certain extent. However, research shows that certain types of mental illness are biological or degeneration. Social injustice can psychologically affect men, women, rich or poor, so this principle can be applied to all people.

Finally, the sixth principle of feminist therapy is “all types of oppression are recognized along with the connections among them” (Corey 2017, p. 345). Socialization is indeed powerful and it is impossible to separate the individual from the influence of their socio-cultural context. A person’s environment and socialization greatly influence their worldview but stating it is the ‘best’ way is not. Often people in the same society and circumstances respond completely different. However, I do agree that we are all affected to some level or another by the negative effects of socialization and therefore this principle can be applied in a non-gendered manner.

13. A feminist therapy intervention that I would implement in working with both women and men is empowerment. I agree that it is important for clients to grow in trusting themselves as well as not depend on others, not even the therapist, to resolve their issues. By showing the client how useful their input is and what they can contribute to their well-being will give them a foundation to make the necessary changes in their life. Both men and women can be expected by society to behave in ways that make that individual uncomfortable or frustrated. Whether male or female, the goal is that the individual discover who they are apart from society so they can be psychologically congruent. For this reason, I would also use social identity analysis so the client may pinpoint social messages they may have internalized. Consequently, I would use gender-role intervention to help the clients understand how those messages affecting them psychologically and emotionally.

Using Narrative therapy could help separate the client from the issues that are being experienced and assist in identifying negative messages they have received throughout their lifetime. The existential theory would also be useful because it promotes the power of choice in a but in a realistic manner. Person-centered therapy could be effective as well because it focuses on developing the client's trust in themselves. Finally, cognitive-behavioral therapy can equip clients on setting/achieving goals and making practical changes to change how they think. These theories and the application of the techniques would also be effective because they emphasize the quality of the client-therapist relationship. Integrating these theories balances the concept of the client as an expert but also the benefit of training and teaching.

Incorporating feminist therapy into other theories could be challenging due to its position against the individual not being the problem. However, feminist therapy can be integrated into

psychotherapy to help clients address gender socialization issues that may be causing clients distressed. The advocacy aspects of feminist therapy can be combined with assist clients that desire to seek a purpose for their life. Feminist therapy can be incorporated into existential therapy to help clients obtain a better idea of who they are as individuals. It can be applied in behavioral therapy to provide clients with identity issues related to gender that may be causing maladaptive behaviors.

22. Postmodern perspective supports but also contradicts biblical perspectives of humanity. God's Word validates an individual's worth, capabilities, ability to contribute to the world positively. However, God makes clear that although He created man good (Gen 1:31), this perfection was marred by sin (Rom 5:12). In this manner, the postmodern concept that the problem does not lie in the person does not align with God's standard of holding humans responsible for their behavior (Ezekiel 18:20; Rom. 2:6). Yet at the same time, in Christ, God provided the means for man to be restored and we are flawless in His sight (Rom 5:1; Heb 10:17). The Word of God coincides with postmodern theory in that it encourages change, provides solutions and strategies for people to overcome the obstacles in life. But the Christian perspective does not agree with the idea that an individual is an expert in their life. According to the Bible, although humans have the ability to self-reflect (Ps. 4:4), they also tend to deceive themselves (James 1:22; 1Cor 3:18).

The biblical perspective of not looking to the past (Isaiah 43:18-19) is supported by postmodern theory since it deals primarily with the present and the future. Postmodern therapy (particularly Narrative therapy) involves externalizing problems but Jesus states that the problems are usually in the person. Jesus states in Mark 7:15 that "Nothing outside of a person can enter and contaminate a person in God's sight; rather, the things that come out of a person contaminate the person" and that "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matt 15:19). Therefore, from a biblical perspective most negative or dysfunctional behaviors come from sin or heart problems, not circumstances. However, externalizing can help a person separate themselves from certain behaviors or sins so they can repent and be freed of them.

24. Although postmodern therapy presents the clients as experts in their life, it also supports the importance of relationships. Therefore, the client-therapist relationship is vital because it serves as an effective sounding board for the client. A “not knowing” position dismisses any assumptions the therapist may have of the client and places power and responsibility into the client’s hands. It also provides a clear space for the client to create or rebuild their story according to their capacity and desired goals. Although the client is given these tasks it still requires a skilled person to not prejudge or interfere with this process. However, one of the most significant roles of the therapist will play is that of listening, asking creative questions and guidance through feedback.

I may be inclined to adopt this not knowing attitude to a great extent at the beginning of therapy. It would benefit the client that I do not have any preconceived notions of him/her. Also, this is necessary to allow the client enough time to discover themselves and develop at their own pace. However, I may not be able to maintain it throughout therapy as I get to know the client more. The reason for this is that after a certain number of interactions the client’s personality and patterns will begin to take better form. As the client learns more about themselves so will I. There are also blind spots that the client may not be able to see and address without the objective input of others. At the same time, there may be strengths or resources available to the client that they are unaware of due to issues of low self-esteem or shortsightedness. I want to have enough faith in my clients to allow them to self-reflect, self-correct and devise solutions for their problems. But if I see that they are stuck and causing harm to themselves I may eventually mention it directly.

27. The miracle question is a technique often used by solution-focused therapists. The question consists of asking the client what could solve their problem from one day to the next, in what way this would solve their issues and would change in their life. This can help the client see things differently and think of possible solutions. However, the overarching purpose is to guide the client towards taking a specific action towards problem-solving. This technique gives clients hope for the future and encourages them to dream. I once read a book called, *The Path*, by Lori Beth Jones. In her book, she has an exercise that uses this type of concept. I found it useful at first but it requires constant review and maintenance to be effective.

Therapists use the exception questions to help clients identify instances in their lives when the problem they had was not all-consuming. By showing the clients that at one time they were able to deal with certain issues, they encourage them to regain power in those areas. This technique allows the client to not be overwhelmed and see the situation more appropriately. The therapist also uses this questioning to guide clients toward their strengths and available resources. This type of technique may not be too effective with me because I will most likely say, “Yes but that was then, this is now” or “Yes, but I am not the same person functioning in the same way”.

As for the scaling question, therapists use this method to measure where they were in regards to an issue before and then measure where they are in the present. This technique allows clients to evaluate and monitor their progress. By doing this the client realized that change is occurring and that the situation is manageable. But it also serves to motivate and challenge the client to keep going. I like this technique because would help me stay focused and maintain a balanced view of things. Most of all it is practical and requires action to keep going forward.

40. The foremost benefit of writing a letter to the client is that it applies a personal touch that reinforces the client-therapist relationship. For people, I think this can create a long-lasting impact. The reason for this is that it shows the care, interest and time someone has invested in your life. The letters document the client's journey as well as the trouble areas. However, an essential function of the letter is that it focuses on the client's strengths and abilities to empower the client. The client must be able to look back to recall what worked and what did not but also how far they have come. Letters provide the client with a life map that can continue to guide the client long after therapy has been terminated. The letters can also serve as a comparison tool that helps the client monitor future progress. Since the letters contain detailed information that could also be a historical record of the client's life that can be shared with their families or friends.

I would be inclined to use narrative letter therapy with my clients because I believe it can provide support for them to continue to incorporate changes into their everyday lives. I would like the client to be able to take a realistic but positive experience from therapy. Although the content won't be perfect or complete, it could be like a souvenir of that season of their life. I want clients to remember certain things so that they do not repeat the same mistakes and that there are different ways to approach a situation. But most of all, since most of the therapy is directed by the client I want them to be able to reflect and celebrate the results of all the work they have done. This can help build confidence in them but will enable the clients to encourage others to embark on the journey to better mental health. I would like to write these letters because as a counselor they can also be useful for me to review my work with the client. This evaluation can assist me in observing what I have learned from the client and for me to critique ways that I could improve. I want my clients to know that they are worth it!