

# Orientation of counseling theory assignment



At the beginning of this paper, I state my point of view about the integration of different theories and my main ground on practicing person-centered theory. Then I start to make critical reflections on different aspects of the person-centered theory. On each of the aspect, I tried to illustrate my ideas with the real experience when I am facing different clients. Lastly, I bring out my personal belief about the power of spirituality. The final part of the paper is a real case, which I worked on a year ago, during the process, I tried my personal theory in practice and the result was positive.

Introduction-My personal theory Among over ten approaches of therapeutic systems, they share some common goals, but with differences when it comes to the best route to achieve these goals. Some therapists call for an active and directive stance on the therapist's part, and others place values on clients being the active agent. Their focus differently stress on feelings, cognitive patterns, and behavior. The key challenge to me is to find ways to integrate certain features of some of these approaches, so that I can work with clients on all three levels of human experience.

There are four ways of integrations, and their ultimate goal is the same—to enhance the efficiency and applicability of psychotherapy. For me, I prefer the assimilative integration approach, which means grounded in a particular school of psychotherapy, along with in openness to selectively incorporate practices from other therapeutic approaches. I am convinced by Norcross and Beutler's opinion ' psychotherapy should be flexibly tailored to the unique needs and contexts of the individual client, not universally applied as one-size-fits all. ' I find person-centered therapy play a crucial role in my personal counseling approach.

There are contributions of this approach: Clients take an active stance and assume responsibility for the direction of therapy. This unique approach has been subjected to empirical testing, and as a result both theory and methods have been modified. It is an open system. People without advanced training can benefit by translating the therapeutic conditions to both their personal and professional lives. Basic concepts are straightforward and easy to grasp and apply. It is a foundation for building a trusting relationship, applicable to all therapies.

Surely, person-centered theory has its contributions and strengths, but I need to accept also the theory has its weakness. In order to benefit the clients most, integration of some aspects of some other theories is a more realistic goal. Basic philosophy and key concepts According to person-centered therapy, the view of humans is positive; we have an inclination toward becoming fully functioning. In the context of the therapeutic relationship, the client experiences feelings that were previously denied to awareness. The client moves toward increased awareness, spontaneity, trust in self, and inner-directedness.

I agree the basic philosophy of humans have an inclination towards becoming full functioning. My agreement base on both my belief and my personal experience. I am a Christian, I believe in the fact that humans are God's creation and God has a distinct plan for each. According to the famous book *The Purpose Driven Life* Rick Warren wrote ' before you were born, God planned this moment in your life.... God longs for you to discover the life he created you to live...' Everyone needs to regain his or her awareness, and the counselor is the one to facilitate the process.

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I taught in a secondary school for quite a long time. A phenomenon I noticed was that all from one students behaved very well in the first three months. They were punctual, active and attentive in class, polite to both teachers and schoolmates. Even their parents were being amazed for the dramatic behavior. I had ask many of them, the answer were more or less the same—' I want a new start, I want to be good. ' Both my belief and experience turn me take the approach of person-centered therapy. But as I shared in the beginning, I prefer flexibility.

The key concept of the therapy is that: the client has the potential to become aware of problem and the means to resolve them. Faith is placed in the client's capacity for self-direction. Mental health is a congruence of ideal self and real self. Maladjustment is the result of a discrepancy between what one wants to be and what one is. In therapy attention is given to the present moment and on experiencing and expressing feelings. Person-centered therapy gives most attention to the present, which for me may be too rigid. I have deal with many students' cases.

Transference is so frequent that the young people are not actually behaving normally here and now. A fourteen years old boy had a very confrontative attitude towards me because he hated his mother who beat him with a hanger when he was four. I had to deal with his past and so that he can release his anger. Goals of person-centered therapy The goals of person-centered therapy is to provide a safe climate conducive to clients' self-exploration, so that they can recognize blocks to growth and can experience aspects that were formerly denied or distorted.

To enable them to move toward openness, greater trust in self, willingness to be a process, and increased spontaneity and aliveness. To find meaning in life and to experience life fully. To become more self-directed. The goal of person-centered therapy is to help client become more self-direct. It is well fit to my personal philosophy. I am independent and self-initiative, optimistic and active. Unfortunately, these ‘virtues’ become my personal obstacles—my bias in counseling. As a counselor, I meet different kind of people; many of them are terribly dependent, passive and pessimistic.

I accept them but lack of patience to wait until they become self-directive. Sometimes I would be too directive: – Fiona is 45 years old, married for 20 years and had three children. She works in government and her husband is a finance controller. She always says in proud that she has a ‘free’ family and every member are free to do what they want and all members are happy. One night she came to me, broke into tears because her husband told her that he had another family in Mainland China. It was not an affair since he had this family for over ten years.

It was typically a crisis so I took a more directive role during the counseling process. After six months, when Fiona came to me, telling me that she behaved exactly the same as before, checking her husband’s phone records, sending SMS to condemn him, etc. I aware that my impatience and have the impulse to stop her and demand her to change immediately. Therapeutic relationship of person-centered therapy The relationship is of primary importance. The qualities of the therapist, including genuineness, warmth, accurate empathy, respect, and nonjudgementalness—and communication of these attitudes to clients—are stressed.

Clients use this genuine relationship with the therapist to help them transfer what they learn to other relationships. Considering the relationship between therapist and client, the main task is to make a good match. Transference and counter transference may be positive but sensitivity in assessing what the client needs, along with good judgment about the appropriateness of the match is a challenge. I have to foresee the potential barriers that would make it difficult for me to form a working relationship with certain clients. I think the major difficulty would be an insincere client, in other words, a cheating client.

It seems very hard to me to be nonjudgmental. Rationally, I know that the client may not be intend to hurt me, but emotionally(I am a real person! )I feel like being fooled. In this part, integration of psychoanalytic therapy may help, the knowledge of analyzing defense mechanism do a great job.

Techniques of person-centered therapy This approach uses new techniques but stresses the attitudes of the therapist and a ' way of being'. The therapists strive for active listening, reflection of feelings, clarification, and ' being there' for the client.

This model does not include diagnostic testing, interpretation, taking a case history, or questioning or probing for information. I would like to share my actual experience when using the techniques. Once I helped a woman who discovered her husband had an affair. After a serious quarrel, the husband left home and the wife came to me. She was so angry that she had a hairdo because she was going to end her life. After a long conversation, she seemed apparently calm, no more overreacting expression. But looked in her eyes, I found confusion and uncertainty.

So I reflect her feeling—she is better now but she is not sure what will happen later. Will she become out of control again? Then I disclosed my feeling to her, ‘ I share your uncertainty since I am not sure whether she will hurt herself or not after she walked out the room. ‘ I suggested we pray together and let God take over the situation and protect her. After the prayer, she shared the faith and left. Applications of the person-centered approach Person-centered therapy has wide applicability to individual and group counseling.

It is especially well suited for the initial phase of crisis intervention work. Its principles have been applied to couples and family therapy, community programs, administration and management, and human relations training. It is useful approach for teaching, parent-child relations and for working with groups of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. I would like to share some experience below. Reading my paper it is easy to find my experience in crisis intervention work. I am really convinced that crisis is the greatest challenge and test to human potentials.

Person-centered therapy believes that everyone has the capacity to overcome difficulties and which in some way to make lives more meaningful. Going through the crisis enable a person to tap his or her potentials and afterward one will become stronger and wiser. A lot of my clients are middle-aged housewives. They spend most of their time taking care of their family and believe that it will be all they can do and hope. The most common crisis come to them is either their marriage or the relationship with their children. Person-centered therapy is especially applicable for group therapy.

For example, parent-child relationship improving group. I have the experience of organizing a group for parents who are deeply trouble with their teenage children. I integrate the techniques of CBT such as homework, role-playing during the process. There are all together ten couples and we have meeting every week. The group last for three months and have twelve sessions. In order to facilitate group dynamic, I assign a book for compulsory reading (The Disconnected Generation by Josh McDowell)and they would have discussion on what they discovered from the book.

During the sessions they would have good sharing and reflection on their style of parenting. I also arrange an interview with a teenager and let the parents practice listening. In the group, everyone is being encouraged and supported; they are reminded that they are capable to guide their children.

Limitations of the person-centered therapy The major limitation of person-centered therapy is the possible danger from the therapist who remains passive and inactive, limiting responses to reflection. I will bear this in mind even though it seems unlikely to happen for the time being.

Rather I will concern more about the issue of 'burning out'. Since the therapeutic relationship is of primary importance and the most powerful technique or skill is the attitude of the therapist, what if the therapist is too tired or run out of enthusiasm? The mirror effect means it is not affecting the therapist but the client also. In order to be a responsible counselor and keep the goal to benefit the client most, therapist need to maintain good health physically and mentally. Another limitation is that many clients feel a need for greater direction, more structure and more techniques.



For example clients in crisis may need more directive measures. As I stated at the beginning of this paper, I would like to take an integrated approach and try to maintain a reasonable flexibility when dealing with clients.

Conclusion-My final integration of Spirituality and Religion As a counselor, I need to assess the special needs of clients. Depending on the client's ethnicity and on the concerns that bring this person to counseling, I need flexibility in using different strategies. Besides the consideration of techniques and strategies, I also aware of one important aspect: the spiritual issue.

I believe that spiritual value and behavior can promote physical and psychological well-being. It is clear that spirituality is an important component for mental health, and its inclusion in counseling practice can enhance the therapeutic process. It helps in at least three aspects. Firstly, spirituality and religion is a force that can help the individual find a purpose for living. I met a client who had cancer and had operation many times and all kinds of treatments. Kai was 40, married with no child. He was the only son of her widowed mother and he felt so sorry for his sickness.

The treatments were so painful that he wanted to give up, but he insisted because of his mother. Bad news came again and again and he really found no ground to go on. He became a Christian and found the purpose for living. He told his beloved mother that he had tried hard to fight the cancer and still he would go on despite the fact that he was not fear of death. He persuade his mother to become a Christian and so that they can meet again in heaven. Until he died, his mother had not yet accepted the religion but I witnessed how he lived during the last period of his life.

Secondly, spirituality and religion are critical source of strength for many clients, and promote healing and well being. It is not easy to face the death of a beloved one. Kai's wife became a widow when she was thirty-five. Over five years she been supporting her husband and fought the illness together. When Kai passed away, she felt that part of herself lost. Facing the empty house she got a phobia of darkness. She seemed so weak that she claimed that all her strength gone with Kai. Church members took care of her, supported her, yet she needed to go through by herself.

It was religion that gave her hope that she would meet her husband again; it was religion that promised her she would not be alone. Of course it takes time but she was improving day by day. Thirdly, spirituality and counseling have similar goals. Both emphasize learning to accept oneself, forgiving others and oneself, admitting one's shortcomings, accepting personal responsibility, letting go of hurts and resentments, dealing with guilt, and learning to let go self-destructive patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. Carmen is suffering from PTSD.

Her neighbor was sexually abusing her when she was ten years old. She had married and had two young kids, but the secret was never told to anyone including her husband. She is always having nightmare whenever she read about news about rape or sexual assault. She has very low self-esteem because she thinks she is not a good wife, not a good mother and she is worthless. I give her my support and acceptance and also I honor her for being brave enough to tell me all about. I try to convince her that she deserves a better life because she is only the victim but it seems very hard for her to accept herself.

Thank God for His merciful words, which have done great job. ' Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come. ' Carmen is recovering slowly, she learns to let go the self-blaming pattern of thinking and also she finds she is valuable in the eyes of God. I would not force her to tell her husband about this but I am sure one day she will be strong enough to face the past. Exploring spiritual and religion values has a great deal to do with providing solutions for client's struggle.

Theme like loving, caring, accepting human imperfection and going outside of self-oriented interest have healing influence. Last but not the least, the power of sharing unload the burden of the client. The integration of religion to my counseling practice brings up a question. That is about the limitations in multicultural counseling—when the client do not share the core values of my belief, this approach may not be congruent with the client's culture. This is an issue I will always aware of and there is a statement bear in my mind, ' to expose but not impose. ' Case Study - Person-centered Family Therapy  
Case study

This case study is about a divorced mother who has coping problem with her situation. Background The client is a young mother, a new-reborn Christian, about 30 years old, looks a bit nervous and talks a lot. She has a son who is nine years old. The son is very active and the mother is all the time keeping her eyes on him so as to stop him from any misbehavior. The boy seems afraid of his mother and will stop from what he is doing at once when the mother yells to him. The client is working in an insurance company and she works very hard in order to support the family since she divorced.

Her ex-husband is a policeman, married two times before he married the client. He is a gambling man and always in-debt. Two years ago, the client found unbearable and finally got divorced. She got the custody of the son and moved home because the house they lived is government housing for the police. The problem she faces is that she finds her son behaves badly and she can do nothing about it. She feels sad and desperate that her son will become a bad guy and all she tries become meaningless. Her job is also getting hard because of the economic atmosphere.

She is so nervous and confuses being crazily driven between her work and her family. The tension is up to a level that her temper is out of control. Once she punished her son badly she would feel terribly guilty and depressed, but she could not avoid it happen again and again. Analysis of the Case In the humanistic point of view, everyone has the desire of being love, the same as the client. The main cause of her psychological distress is about the failure to maintain a marriage. The divorce gave her a bad experience of failure and frustration.

The experience left her a wrong message that she is not lovable and has a low self-esteem. Emotionally she will keep on blaming herself and complaining her son. Even worse is that she sometimes expressing the anger with her ex-husband towards her son. The problem is not her son's misbehavior, but rather the communication of the mother and the son. The mother seems not acknowledges to the divorce is also a trauma to her son. While the mother is depressing of her poor marriage, she pays no attention to the boy's feeling. The Goals

The goals for this case will be as following: first goal is to help the client to reconstruct the past experience and accept it. Then is to help her to aware that she has the ability to face the problem. The third goal is to help her to communicate with her son efficiently, which means to teach her some communication skills. Mother and child need emotional closeness, mutual support and encouragement. Communication should be both verbal and emotional, that is active listening and empathy. Ineffective communication is always defensive and negative, excessive control and criticism and complaints.

It arouses the child's guilty feeling especially when the mother is threatening and punishing the kid. In order to improve the mother and child communication, I need to point out her types of parenting. That is the Authoritarian parenting: that means parents will tell the children what to do but rarely let children doing but themselves with assurance. According to Maccoby and Martin: authoritarian parenting is that the parents control children in terms of physical power, always use threatening, punishment beating and control resources.

Parents ignore their children's desire to make decision, lack of negotiation and explanation. During the counseling sessions I will introduce to her the Equalitarian type of parenting: that is parents will make fair decision on how the children behave. Advantageous Strategies Since the client is a Christian, introducing the biblical prospective is a good choice. Being a Christian counselor, when I deal with this Christian family that accepts the authority of scripture, it is not as difficult to set some goals for family counseling.

We share the same value orientation and we will find it easier to come to terms with how biblical principles apply to their family situation. There may be some central values that are helpful to the client: for example, the belief in the desirability of children and in the primary responsibility of parents for their own children. Also the desirability of having stable and harmonious family relationship is opposed to chaotic family relationship. The last but not the least is the importance of effective child-rearing techniques for promoting proper spiritual, emotional, social, and physical development.

For this case, religion value is the main cause of her change(or her motivation to change). Cognitively, the Bible's teachings empower the client's effort to act against her wrong belief of herself and family. She learns to evaluate her marriage objectively and knowing that she may become more mature through this experience. Emotionally, she finds her own value and in the eyes of God, with the support of the fellowship members, she faces the difficulties bravely since she knows that she is not alone.

Homework in Between the Counseling Sessions The client is invited to join a group which are families learning the skills of parent-child communication. In this group they have definite goals and assignment to do and then share with the group member Some examples of assignment are: Mother discusses with the son about what joyful things they have done in the past 3 months; tell the others your wish; tell the others how you admire him or her; ask about the mother's wish when she was a kid, etc A trial

In order to let the client to express her emotion, a sharing meeting is organized with brothers and sisters in the fellowship are ready to support

her. During the meeting, she is secure enough to openly voice out her weakness and needs. After the sharing, brothers and sisters organize some tasks to support her, namely send her cards with comforting scriptures and give her supporting promise. In order to facilitate the client to value communication, a young man aged 18 is organized to meet her and tell her how he behaved when he was a kid and what did he think at that moment.

After all he tells her that he think differently now. This meeting will let the client regain hope while in the past she is in the darkness and being confuse with the tunnel vision. Reference 1. Corey, Gerald. (2009)Theories and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy. (Eighth edition). Thomson, Brooks/Cole. 2. Warren, Rick. (2005)The Purpose-Driven Life. IM Print Edition 3. Sharf, Richard S. (2009)Theory of Psychotherapy and counseling: Concepts and Cases, 4e . (fourth edition). Cengage Learning Company.