

Lying on the couch book review

Psychology



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This article gives an analysis of Irvin D. Yalom's *Lying on the Couch*, a 369 psychoanalytic book published by the Harper Perennial publishers on 18/07/1997. This book gives a critical evaluation of the challenging role of the therapists. It records that even if one may be a distinguished expert in a given field; challenges are inevitable and should be faced with a lot of confidence and transparency.

Question 2

Ernest, 40 is an ambitious guy who discovers his passion for talking therapy after a long duration of practice of psychopharmacology. Besides, he is honest, open minded and looks forward to be an efficient therapist. Unlike his supervisor, Marshal, he comes out as more liberal. He denounces Marshal's traditional therapeutic skills for a modern spontaneity, face to face and dialogue approaches.

If I were to supervise this controversial inexperienced fellow, I would use the Douglas McGregor's X and Y theory of supervision. Gelsco, C. J. (2001, p. 136) says that theory Y states that people naturally like work and consider it as a responsibility. Such people are always happy with the kind of work they are given. They feel happy about them and set realistic goals to achieve. On his part, Ernest likes work. He enjoys it and has a lot of objectives he is targeting to accomplish. This makes this theory be so relevant to him. He has even gone an extra step to eventually discover his great passion for talking therapy.

On the other hand, Gelsco, C. J. (2001, p. 217) argues that theory Y claims that people are naturally lazy, hate and see work as a punishment. I can apply this to Ernest because he does not portray a total commitment to his

duties . Instead of concentrating on it and follow all the regulations, he deviates and acts unprofessionally. For instance, he disregards Marshal's directives and fall a victim of his female clients.

Question 3

Gelsco, C. J. (2001, p. 17) also says that it is normal for a man to feel attracted to a woman. This may innately apply to any normal person.

However, as Dr. Marshal argues, all sorts of relationships are unique and should be treated uniquely. Even a therapist-client relationship should be perceived peculiarly and be given a special treatment. Being disciplined is paramount for success. I think this is why Dr. Marshal has prospered in his psychiatric practice.

Being attracted to one's client brings one as weak. In this regard, Dr. Ernest's weakness is manifested when he gets attracted to Laura. He should have been so strong and adhere to the professional codes of conduct expected of him.

However, I commend the referral of this complex role to his senior, Dr. Marshal. Actually, this means that Ernest is a team player. He recognizes the potential of his superiors. It made him be a good colleague who is able to carry out a personal evaluation to discover his weaknesses. I strongly argue in favor of this conduct.

Question 4

Lying on the Couch is a novel that gives a lot of coverage about shattered relationships. Justin abandons his wife, Carol for a younger lady. At the same time, the relationship between Ernest and his long time friend, Justin breaks as a result of the latter failing to acknowledge Ernest's efforts in separating
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the troubled couple.

Carol uses this opportunity to revenge on Dr. Ernest whom she claims to be solely responsible for her ordeal. She therefore, conceals her identity and openly seduces her honest therapist. I think this is an unprofessional. No therapist should entertain such behaviors of falling into the traps of a weird patient. This injures one's reputation and as the conservative Dr. Marshal asserts, this should not be tolerated. In fact, such a victim should be referred to the APA for a professional penalty.

Hence, if I were Paul, I would advise Ernest to be very strong and stringent on the professional demands of his job. He should not engage into a sexual affair with his clients, but also stop admiring them. Because, as it happened to Seth, this can jeopardize his career.

Question 5

I agree with the fact that Dr. Seth's conduct is unethical. It's in deed against the medical practice for a practitioner to engage in a deviant practice with the client. Besides, I strongly support Dr. Marshal for taking an action against this perverse colleague. Dr. Marshal's action is justified.

I think all the therapists should use Marshal as a role model and subscribe to his philosophy of treating all kinds of relationships differently. Even the doctor-client relationship should be given special treatment. This means that the doctor should not engage in any activity like sexual affairs. This is against the medical ethics.

Therefore, I will not consider Dr. Marshal's action as populist simply because he is eyeing for an elective post in the American Psychiatric Association (APA). I think he did this in a good faith, just to build the name of this institute.

However, Dr. Marshal in himself is not perfect. He can be viewed as a hypocrite because of his records. He was also attracted to his client, Carol, a behavior he condemned Seth for. At the same time, he comes out as a materialistic individual who wants to use any single opportunity to get rich. This is why he found himself in the hands of con artists like Seth.

Question 6

Actually, the role of supervision becomes so tricky. As the story comes to an end, it becomes evident that no one can claim to be a perfect know it all. For instance, even if Dr. Marshal boasts of a wealth of experience in the field of psychiatry, it eventually emerges that he is the best brain. Over the years, he has been perceived as an ambitious personality who has made a lot of contributions in his expertise. He has been a football line backer and a rigid defender of the traditional psychoanalysis skills. His rigorous advocating for the free association, dream analysis and the couch skills has made him be so respected by all the people.

However, all these were shunned when he was gullibly lured into a non-existent investment by Peter Macondo. After realizing that he was conned, he confides in himself and keeps this a secret to himself. As the story unfolds, he hires Carol to assist him. Carol had been his client. This leads to a changed role in which the client becomes a consultant for her former supervisor.

This clearly shows that life is so complex and nobody can claim to be the most superior. If Marshal could use a lay man to assist him, it means that anybody can be a therapist so long as they can show a commitment for it. Hence, people should be humbled irrespective of their status in the society.

Work Cited

Gelsco, C. J. (2001) *the Psychotherapy Relationship Theory, Research and Practice*. John Wiley: New York.

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