

Elements of the person-centred approach



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Part 1

Considering the value of the person-centred approach compared with a psychodynamic approach to counselling, although they originate from different theoretical and philosophical structures and at first they seem to offer differing methods of treatment, there are similar features, which are common to all effective counselling therapies, particularly ingrained in the beneficial relationship itself and in the merits and expertise of the counsellor. Focusing on how each method views the person and their mental life, explains the problems being experienced and the help offered to relieve psychological stress, also, looking at how the client is encouraged to change, the techniques used, the expectations of the client and the role of the counsellor within each therapy. Concluding by summarising how this shows the worth of the person-centred approach within counselling.

The person-centred approach was developed by Carl Rogers, the basic elements of Rogers' approach, which he referred to as counselling rather than psychotherapy, is having a special relationship with the client and to help them reach a place of comprehension that they can actually change themselves. McLeod (2008) suggests that Rogers did this by allowing the client to grow, stressing the here and now instead of the past. In order for the person to reach their highest potential, favourable conditions are required, and that if these are not met they may not grow and develop in a positive way. For example, when people are not regarded in a positive light and accepted for who they are, particularly when that regard is made conditional, they may lose touch with their inner-self and begin to develop in a way that is not true to that self. Psychodynamic counselling as Jacobs

(2004) states incorporates many different approaches, from Freudian psychoanalytical theory, and is usually understood to centre upon the unaware activity of the consciousness. The inner characteristics of the consciousness are seen as taking form during childhood growth and compose elements of the child's connection with significant people, particularly the mother and father. Therefore, psychodynamic therapies tend to give consideration to “ the importance of the child's early environment as promoting the foundation of later personality strengths or areas of vulnerability” Jacobs (2004, p. 9). At moments of emotional stress we can be driven back to a more basic, childlike, way of thinking, feeling and behaving in agreement with our idea of those early relationships.

The similarities of the person-centred and psychodynamic approaches according to McLeod (2008) are that, they both explore the psyche, they are both person-centred, and they both highlight the importance of the counsellor and client being comfortable with each other. A rapport with the client is formed, by both person-centred and psychodynamic counsellors bearing in mind their situation and has broad-based approaches, which include specialists with different opinions under the same approach. Although McLeod (2008) shows that the differences are larger than the similarities, although the person-centred approach focuses on the conscious process, it does not emphasize dreams and the therapist may divulge information about themselves, helping the client feel settled. This is different from the psychodynamic approach, which looks at the unconscious processes; dreams are emphasised and there is no self disclosure.

McLeod (2008) also suggests the person-centred therapist is friendly, aiming towards articulating feelings and sees people as essentially good, this contrasts with the psychodynamic therapist who should keep a practised detachment, looking at fundamental anxieties, with a view to understanding the person's feelings and can see people as hostile or untrustworthy. The person-centred approach is that they centre on the past, present and future where as the psychodynamic connects the past with the present. Jacobs (2004) suggests that the psychodynamic approach, produces explanations for the client, can see reluctance as conflict within the client, looks for what is hidden, offer's an opinion, time boundaries are fixed, is inflexible to cultural diversity, promotes self-understanding and has a vast theoretical basis. Unlike in Mearns and Thorne (2007) which shows that the person-centred counsellor permits the person to make their own analysis, concur on what is to be talked about, it's a shared decision, they have flexibility with time and boundaries, can adapt easily to cultural diversity, promote personal growth and has limited theoretical structure.

In summary, it could be seen that creating a good person-centred therapeutic climate is what all counsellors should be doing anyway, but this misses the point of how difficult this is to achieve consistently, in particular being truly congruent. In the psychodynamic method the therapist can often be perceived as something of an expert, solving the client's problems for them, and leading them along. If they were to try and establish a true person centred climate, they would have to conceal their judgements about the client with a tendency to hide behind a professional face. This therapeutic climate is seen within the person-centred approach as being enough on its

own to promote change, therefore it follows that anybody in the client's life could create the right atmosphere and achieve change. I think that what else the therapist brings to the table, in terms of themselves, is important, as surely if they are being transparent with the client, the client will see the therapist's true self and beliefs, which I think may have an impact, not necessarily positively, on the therapeutic relationship. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, and each has its place within counselling, which method is to be used would depend on the therapist's personal choice and philosophies, and what type of person the client is, as the two approaches would suit different clients. I feel that the psychodynamic approach is a more structured method than the person-centred approach, and would be suitable for clients who are comfortable with introspection, requiring a large background theory, a diagnosis of their problems or to analyse their psyches. With the person-centred approach it develops a very effective client-counsellor relationship, it is more suited to people who have an ability to explore themselves and their beliefs and who value taking personal accountability, don't need a more formal approach with their counsellor or a large theoretical structure.