

# What are the key elements of counselling theory?

Science



In this essay, I will describe key elements of Psychodynamic theory, Person-Centred theory, and Cognitive-Behavioural theory. I will also identify the key differences between the above theories. I shall also describe how counseling theory underpins the use of counseling skills in practice. I will then end with my conclusion.

## **Key Elements of Psychodynamic Theory**

Dr. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), is the founder of the psychodynamic approach. Dr. Sigmund Freud believed that childhood experiences and unconscious thoughts had an effect on people's behavior. Psychodynamic counseling refers to the inner deepest unconscious traumas and conflicts of the person's mind. According to Jacobs, 2010, p. 4

" Psychodynamic counseling has more variations than many people realize." Psychodynamic counseling was developed from psychoanalytic theory. Its main purpose is the client's self-awareness and understanding of the influence of the past on present behavior. As a way of Freud understanding people's thoughts and motivations, he introduced the idea of distinct psychosexual stages. The psychosexual stages are oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital.

Dr Sigmund Freud saw human behavior as a result of giving and take between three parts of the psyche (personality). The three parts are the id which is a pleasure, too much of everything and instant gratification. The ego is the sensible side of us and try's to find ways of satisfying the id in a way that the superego will agree with, and that is also in line with reality. The superego is the moral part of the psyche; its punitive comes from our parents, teachers,

and society. It uses anxiety and guilt to prevent us from acting on the id's impulses. According to Jacobs, 2010, p. 8

“ Freud used the terms Id, Ego, and Super-ego to illustrate his ‘ map’ of the internal relations within the psyche.” In the psychodynamic approach, clients are encouraged to ‘ transfer’ feelings they have toward important figures they have in their lives. Onto what they call the analyst in a process called ‘ transference’. The success of this approach often depends on both the counselor and client and how well they work together.

### **Describe key elements of person-centered theory**

Carl Ranson Rodgers (1902-1987), was the founder of the humanistic approach. Most counseling courses use Rodgers as their bases. The core conditions are the framework of Rodger's work. The first key element of person-centered counseling is empathy. Empathy means to understand and share the feelings of another. According to Mearns and Thorne, 2007, p. 64

“ A state of profound contact and engagement between two people, in which each person is fully real with the other, and able to understand and value the other's experiences at a high level”. The second key element of person-centered counseling is congruence. Congruence means to be genuine and transparent for the counselor to be themselves within a counseling relationship without putting up fronts that prevent them from revealing their true self.

The third key element of person-centered counseling is unconditional positive regard, including prizes. This means the counselor accepts the clients unconditionally and non-judgementally. Within the framework of the person-centered approach to counseling, the client is given the knowledge of

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the power and tools they already possess to take responsibility for their own lives and health.

Great emphasis is placed upon the importance of the relationship between the counselor and the client and firmly disregards the concept of the counselor as an expert who knows all the answers to the client's issues in life. Carl Rodgers has taught us that given the right conditions, anyone and everyone is more than capable of fulfilling their true potential, this is called self-actualizing. According to Mearns and Thorne, 2007, p. 49

“ Empathy should not be confused with sympathy.”

### **Describe key elements of cognitive-behavioral theory**

Aaron Temkin Beck, M. D (1921-present), developed his approach called cognitive therapy in the 1960s. Cognitive-behavioral theory (CBT) is a kind of psychotherapeutic treatment that enables patients to comprehend the thoughts and feelings that control their behaviors. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is more frequently used to treat an extensive range of disorders such as depression and anxiety. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is widely short-term and concentrates on enabling clients to deal with very particular problems.

Often six weeks to six months sessions, of course, depending upon the problem it is peacefully goal-directed and places great weight upon self-help as a long term coping tool that the client can take away with them and successfully use. Cognitive-behavioral therapy believes that clients can learn the wrong ways of developing and making sense of information during their cognitive development. This can often lead to distortions in the way they

identify reality, it's the job of the therapist to enable them to work this out. According to Dryden, 2007, p. 299

“ Cognitive therapy first came to the attention of British psychologists and psychiatrists through the pioneering work of the British researchers who sought to evaluate the efficacy of Beck's treatment for depression.” Cognitive-behavioral theory can be used on a one to one basis or in a group setting. It is said that in order for cognitive-behavioral therapy to be effective, the client needs to be ready and willing to devote time and effort to analyze their thoughts and feelings.

### **Identify the key differences between the above theories**

Cognitive-behavioral theory's main purpose is on the awareness cause for negative behaviors has and transforming them through a course of self-help. This treatment is a brief course. Person-centered theory observes that because the clients had not been given the opportunity to experience the right conditions during development to be able to self-actualize, the clients' problem branch from this.

The person-centered counselor endeavors to recreate these core conditions within a safe therapeutic relationship. This type of therapy usually lasts for a few years. One huge difference between humanistic counselors and other therapist is that they refer to those in therapy as “ clients” not patients. Psychodynamic theory is based on the concept of the relationship between the three different fabrics of the psyche “ personality”, psychodynamic therapy is long term. It draws attention to the unconscious and seeks to advance the clients conscious power over their lives.

The three theories have their differences for instances cognitive-behavioral therapy is a short-term therapy is usually given to clients free on the NHS and is one of the cheapest hence the reason the NHS provide it. Person-centered therapy is in the middle it cost a lot more than cognitive-behavioral therapy and the timescale for the therapy is considerably longer. Psychodynamic therapy takes a number of years and is the most expensive of the three. According to Dryden, 2010, p. 78

“ The therapist is confined to listening and interpreting the material brought by the client.”

### **How counseling theory underpins counseling skills**

The backbone of counseling theory is developing a good rapport with your client. Theory gives the counselor the professional framework, guidance and knowledge to be able to enable their clients. This, in turn, gives the client the reassurance and confidence to build an effective therapeutic relationship (working alliance) with their counselor. It ensures that a professional framework is in place to enable the client the freedom to explore very traumatic and disturbing experiences ethically and safely. When a counselor has a good understanding of the theory they can better provide the therapy their client deserves.

They can understand their clients and their experiences comprehend why a client may behave in a certain way or feel the way they do. Having this knowledge better helps the counselor to know what direction they should take with the material provided by the client. The task of undergoing counseling training teaches a counselor extensive but vital significant skills for instances by using unconditional positive regard (U. P. R), you are

accepting the client for who they are no matter what they may have done or said in their lives.

Accepting the client as they are good and bad traits. This is exercised by the counselor to enable the client to establish self-regard, self-worth. Also part of the counselor's framework is it is absolutely compulsory to take their material from their session to their supervisor.

The supervisor will enable the counselor to gain a better understanding and knowledge of their sessions and also work through any transference the counselor may be experiencing. Also, the supervisor ensures the counselor is able to counsel as of course, the counselor is human and maybe experiencing difficulties in their personal lives. The supervisor will ask about the theory used following the questions used at this point the counselor is able to reflect upon their skills and theory. A counselor will be able to understand what they are doing and able to explain their methods if they have a good concept of theory. According to Dryden, 2010, p. 530

“ Theory and techniques specific to the therapy approach being learned. In most types of training, this is a major component but, as has been proposed, the well-educated therapist needs to consider the range of approaches.”

## **Conclusion**

In my essay, I have considered three different theories. There are vital differences between the three theories but equally, there are also comparability's. The main framework of all the theories is to enable people to change so they can understand and appreciate themselves and ultimately have power over their lives, behaviors, feelings, and attitudes in all the

therapies it is said that this can be accomplished through talking and self-analyzing.

Through writing this essay I have learned that I would like a mix of person-centered and psychodynamic therapy. All three theories have their worth and value and I found it fascinating learning about them more intensely. While most people would say that the issues such as finance and time would be a factor, I believe one of the main issues would also be the willingness of the client for change and self-growth.