

Humanistic theory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Essay on Humanistic Theory of the Person This piece of work is purely my understanding of humanistic theory, how I perceive it, and how I believe its teachings (so far) has made me the person that I am today. Looking at the first point ??? What it means to be human??? Each and every one of us would probably come up with different concepts and ideas of what the answer could be.

What we have to remember is that we are specifically looking at the concepts and theory according to the humanistic approach in counselling. As human beings we all have the potential; that potential is intrinsic for growth and change and could be for anything including positive or negative, the choices lie with us, depending on the seeds that were sown there in the first place. What I mean is; dependent on the key, usually human influences in our lives (which I will come to later). Unwittingly we strive for self-actualisation, terminology used in humanistic theory and commonly used by Abraham Maslow a significant theorist believing in the humanistic approach, in other words we as human beings have a desire to fulfil our ??? potential??™, however in order to achieve self actualisation which is the top of the pinnacle there are basic needs that must be met before we can achieve this, and therefore achieve growth as a person such as physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs and recognition needs.

To be human is to be complex, theoretically once basic needs are met such as food, water, shelter, warmth so on and so forth we evolve and are able to move further up, striving to reach the pinnacle and to make us whole physically, mentally and emotionally. We have the ability to reason, to adapt and to change. We have the ability to influence our own fate (if the

circumstances are right for good or bad). We also have the ability to influence others. With so many of these examples many things can be done for the greater good for ourselves and those around us.

Equally all these human characteristics have their dark side; so many of these abilities are not always used positively but are used negatively and to hurt others. After all Hitler was a human being with the same basic needs and abilities as say for example Mother Theresa, but how very different and contrasting their lives turned out to be. However and once again focusing on humanistic theory did these two very different people, which were equally intelligent both reach their full potential and self-actualisation I would suggest that actually “yes they did – both in their own extraordinary way. From my personal experience being human and specifically focusing on self-actualisation in understanding of what it means to be human, at times I think that I have what I need and want. I can go out and buy what I want, (within reason).

I enjoy life, sometimes things don't always go my way, but that's the way it is. I don't feel that I am ever wanting what other people have and never have a desire to be in anybody else's shoes. So therefore does this mean then I have reached self-actualisation I would say that for me maybe I have. I accept life and I am content with my life, but is that because I have what I desire What I have and am happy and grateful for another might not consider as being enough so therefore for them they haven't reached that point of the pinnacle. This reinforces the theory of just how complex being human is.

As the aforementioned Abraham Maslow described, 'What a man can be, he must be' (Abraham Maslow 1970 p22). And for the entire human race we all have a different perception and knowledge of what that is. So let us now move on and look at, 'How problems develop?' once again in accordance with the humanistic model. Before I explain my understanding of this statement let me start by describing how we start off, We are born as 'Organismic Self' from the off set when we enter this world we are absolutely in touch with our needs and our feelings. We are able at this point to identify what our needs are and we ask those needs to be met. The example being a newborn baby is hungry and will cry in the endeavour of having its hunger satiated.

Therefore at this stage the baby is totally in touch with the very core of itself, all it listens to or is aware of is its needs and wants and is only respondent to its Internal Locus of evaluation. Very simple or so it seems. So as babies we grow but are still absolutely dependant on our caregivers for survival. So what do we do then We avoid disapproval of our caregivers who can be our parents, grand parents, teacher's etcetera. Our caregivers give out messages when at times we do behave or act in a certain way for example start to cry because we have fallen over.

So start these subtle messages known as 'Conditions of Worth', which are giving an affirmation or disapproval of our behaviours, so what do we do What we do is adapt and change to gain approval. We internalise that desire to cry because we know it isn't approved of. So therein builds our external locus of evaluation. We move away from doing what it is we genuinely feel but act in such a way we believe the adult would approve of

and instead of listening to our inborn internal locus of evaluation we listen to the one influenced by those around us the ??? external locus of evaluation??™. I can think of occasions when I as a child would fall over or trip up and sometimes cry and constantly being told to ??? stop crying or I??™ I'll give you something to cry for!??™ in other words a smack. It??™s amazing though because I soon learned that bursting into tears every five minutes wasn??™t going to earn me any favours! There is a real importance here because we are still dependant, we still are wanting our needs met, its just that we have learnt to get those needs met in other ways that gain the approval of those adults in our lives. With the conditions of worth being imposed we then build on an external locus of evaluation and listen to outside influences as opposed to what??™s inside us i. e.

internal locus of evaluation. We construct a self concept and what this means is we start to believe this is who we are, and we no longer recognise what it is that we need. In essence therein lies the danger and the development of problems i. e. firstly the divorcing of our orgasmic self and self-concept and secondly the width of the gap between the one and the other, the further the gap theoretically the greater the problems. Just how impactful the conditions of worth can be in our lives not just in our early years but in our day to day living are encapsulated in this short piece of text:???. They struggle, therefore, to keep their heads above water by trying to do and to be those things which they know will elicit approval while scrupulously avoiding or suppressing those thoughts, feelings and activities which they sense will bring adverse judgment???. Dave Mearns and Brian Thorne (Person Centred Counselling in Action) 3rd Edition 2008 p 11.

At this point the principles of how problems develop has been explained which now moves us along to ??? How problems are perpetuated??™ Previously I spoke of the construction of the self-concept and that??™s exactly what it is. It is not something that was created innate within us when we were created. It is something that was constructed, and for that very reason that it was constructed it has a very real danger of falling down. In order that we as human beings combat this is that we develop defences, which help us, prop up the self-concept. So to begin with we relied on our internal locus of evaluation for that is all we knew and all we trusted. Our caregivers then influenced us and the conditions of worth that were imposed on us.

As a result we disown certain parts of ourselves and repressed certain parts of ourselves, for example something may anger us, however through conditions of worth it may be that we do not display or show our anger so therefore it becomes repressed and internalised. The anger is subject of subception or squashed down within our selves. I can think of times now whereby I have been really angry and not displayed it as to how I was really feeling it but instead let off small parts of it like a pressure cooker valve being released in short sharp spurts with stupid caustic comments.

Actually I did quite a lot of this at work, you know when you never really get to the point of what it is that has infuriated you but instead resorted to sarcasm in order to get your own back. A colleague of mine who thought she was doing me such a favour by putting all the chairs out for the training I was doing. (She couldn??™t actually do the training because she was undergoing treatment for MS and had all her immune system killed off so

hence couldn't go into big classes of people) I can remember saying things like, "You know Katy I don't know how I'd manage without you" with an ingenuous smile on my face.

There was a definite conflict going on between my orgasmic self and my self concept, the anger was there, I felt I couldn't truly express it so resorted to a comment that I didn't mean at all! The thing is on reflection behaviour or reactions like this don't really resolve anything. My true feelings were repressed and subject of subjection, certainly not vocalised I was very careful of what I did say and acted on the my external locus of evaluation by not making a big scene. It was in fact completely ineffectual, because I didn't really get to the point.

I would argue that this was part of my defences not wanting to experience everything in one go. She continued thinking she was helping and I was still on the inside still angry so nothing was resolved. Fortunately for me I wasn't the only trainer that felt this way, so therefore frustrations were released by bitching about some body that didn't even know they were a problem! So in essence a perfect example of a problem that in the first instance could be resolved with forward planning but instead because it wasn't addressed was perpetuated by not being dealt with. This then brings me to the final point and that is, "The Process of Change" how do we change This doesn't happen usually as a matter of course there has to be a realisation that something isn't right or any particular life event.

It could be a relationship issue, a work issue, any thing that is of significant importance to that individual when for what ever reason we begin to

recognise what our needs are, by doing so we listen to our internal locus of evaluation, and recognise what our orgasmic self needs and value those needs. We then rely less on the expectation of others and external valuing i. e. seeking their approval. Therefore there becomes a better integration between the orgasmic self and the self-concept.

(Remember I mentioned earlier about the gap and the wider the gap potentially this perpetuates more problems) With that comes less need to use our defences because we are being true to ourselves (our orgasmic self) and therefore less distress is caused. I can compare this to when I was previously married in the end unhappily. I stuck with it not because I wanted to but because I felt I should, After all, what about my poor Dad he??™ d be so upset and the rest of the family good Lord! What would they think Isn??™ t this a typical example of me being so divorced from my orgasmic self that I had created such a self concept not for my well being but for what I thought would satisfy others I know now I was going through a process of change actually listening to my internal locus of evaluation and what my orgasmic self needed. I can remember clearly after a night shift I told him I was going to the solicitors and it was over. It then transpires he was having an affair anyway!- maybe I sensed that or my orgasmic self was telling me that, but I certainly had a realisation. The point is, the saying about a ??? weight had been lifted from ones shoulders??™ is absolutely true.

I felt totally liberated and I can say even felt a shred of happiness having been miserable for so long. I took responsibility for the situation I was in with the realisation that I could and would change it. With my own experiences, I can clearly link the humanistic theory with different life events. There are

many positives in listening to your orgasmic self and in layman's terms being true to yourself. Like with everything though there is a time and a place and sometimes we have to play the game or act with the self-concept as a means of survival. It becomes a danger though when the self and self-concept have become so divorced we no longer recognise what our own needs are or even who we are. Let me leave you with this final thought; taken from a piece of text where Heron is counselling Toad " Counselling for Toads (Robert de Board) 2010 If you take responsibility for yourself, you realise you can take your own authority.

Consequently you realise that you have the power to change your situation and, more importantly, change yourself. and hopefully go through and arrive safely on the other side through the Process of Change So ends my explanation and understanding of Humanistic Theory as I see it, and how I believe it has impacted on certain life events on a personal level, which I have shared with you. I hope you enjoy reading as much as I have the writing. Maria Francis