

Person centred model of counselling psychology essay



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Carl Rogers an influential American psychologist, one of the many theorists although, arguable the most leading figure whom founded humanistic psychology and established the person centred approach (Charleson, 2011). The term ' person centred' arose from the perceptions clients were and are treated as the reality (Colledge, 2002). Rogers' view was that there are as many different realities as there are people within the world.

Rogers rejected the deterministic nature of the psychoanalysis and the behaviourists view to counselling (McLeod, 2008) and the approach is as it claims to be ' person centred', thus meaning that the person centred counselling is the non - directive approach of the counsellor. According to Wilkins (2010), the client directs the session as they themselves are said to be the expert on their experiences.

Rogers also stated that for successful therapy to be achieved there were six necessary conditions, three of them Rogers termed as the core conditions that relate to the attitude of the counsellor and the modus operandi. The three core conditions are that the counsellor is empathetic, has unconditional positive regard for the client and congruence between the self and the organisms. I will discuss the three core conditions in more detail further on within my reflective piece of work. (reference)

However, the theoretical assumption to person centred counselling started with the belief that both the counsellor and client are trustworthy (Colledge, 2002) and every individual have the innate potential to actualise. Rogers draw upon this term of actualising from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, formulated his ideas of the person centred approach, and termed it the self-

actualisation of a person, as previously mentioned Rogers believed that all individuals have the potential to self-actualise provided the right conditions are present (Mearns, Thorne, 2010).

Another point which Colledge (2002) stated was that the foundation to Rogers' theory of the frame of reference is subjective or perceptual, which leads me onto the next point regarding this skill of a counsellor.

The frame of reference is a fundamental skill to counselling, which I believe means I feel what the client feels and experience what the client experiences and I perceive the situation as they perceive it. As I think of a client's frame of reference, I am reminded of a particular sentence that I would like to share, as I find it a mystical way to explain the meaning to the 'frame of reference' for myself.

It was a particular sentence within a Mearns and Thorne book (2000, p. 55) that stated the possible depth to people and their way of being as an 'Invisible dance of communication between the therapist and the client'. In a sense, this sentence could possibly describe one particular practice session that stands out within my mind. I was the counsellor with one of my peer members within our trio's group, I felt completely within her moment, I was within her 'frame of reference', and we were in the invisible dance of communication described by Mearns and Thorne.

However, I am aware that this could possibly be down to the fact that we have a relationship that is established, the words I was hearing were in context, and I do have more knowledge of her (Tolan, 2012) character and personality. She explained how she would approach a problem, and I
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visualized her actions, but unfortunately, I did not share my visualisation or voice this with her. In reflecting on this, I am not entirely sure what core conditions I could use to describe this other than being with her in the moment.

Locus of evaluation could be either external or internal. The external locus of evaluation is described as, the thoughts and opinions of external people in the way they want you to live your life (Gladding, 2011) or alternatively through the conditions of worth that was placed on you from childhood. On the other hand, with the internal locus of evaluation, you live your life within your rules and in charge of your own thoughts and opinions.

Time boundaries or time keeping are with no doubt the parameters or guidelines that govern a working relationship between the client and counsellor (Hough, 2010) and I realise that time keeping is essential and it is good practice when I am a trained counsellor or hope to be. If I cannot be reliable on my course, how can the clients rely upon me?

I was reading the written work of Spurling (2004) when I came across a paragraph, which explains beautifully the importance of time boundaries and the process of counselling,

This process is about change and the rate or pattern of change cannot be predicted in advance, as it is the outcome of the interchange between counsellor and client, and the unpredictability of the counselling therefore needs predictability in the structure of the setting in order to be sustained (Spurling, 2004, p. 29).

I understand this and realise the importance to the time boundaries within a counselling session and the ability to adhere to it.

As mentioned previously there are three core conditions for successful therapy to be achieved which relate to the counsellor's attitude. It is, without hesitation that a counsellor needs to have the core conditions that Carl Rogers outlines (Gladding, 2011) within his person centred model of the Counselling theory.

These include Empathy, Congruence, and unconditional positive regard (UPR) towards the client. These core conditions I believe are necessary for counselling to be effective for the client and for client progression into a fully functioning person, that is, a person whom uses their ability to the fullest extent possible (Gladding, 2011).

However, according to Gladding (2011), there are two levels of empathy. One is described primary empathy, the other is advanced empathy, and the two levels are defined differently. However, I will only be referring to the primary level of empathy within this piece of work, as I am only within the first semester of my degree. I do not believe I can or I am able to convey the advanced level of empathy at this stage, as I would only be able to demonstrate this advanced stage as I progress within the remaining years of my degree.

Empathy as defined by Gladding (2011) is a counsellor's ability to effectively, reflect back to the client their feelings, thoughts and to be within the client's frame of reference concerning the situation or point of view that the client may perceive as being current.

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Empathy one of the 'necessary and sufficient conditions for change' (McMillian, 2004, p. 53) with congruence and unconditional positive regard (UPR) or simply known as the acceptance of a client's position or point of view. The core conditions of the person centred approach will be addressed further on in my reflective essay within the person centred approach to counselling.

It is my belief that we are encouraged to use primary empathetic responses by the skills of clarification, paraphrasing and reflecting the client's feelings back to them. Although as I began practicing the role of a counsellor, I felt that at times I was parroting words that my peers had said, reflecting back on these sessions, I now know that in some instances the words only hold part of the meaning and do not fully express the deeper feelings. I have realised this and I am endeavouring to try listening more vigilantly to the client's tone of voice or any hesitations, and to be aware of the client's body language as all these factors can convey a deeper meaning than words can.

However, Gladding (2011) goes on further to define empathy or conveying empathy as being able to put myself in the client's situation with their perception and emotion but remaining objective, this definition from Gladding appears to be very similar to the core condition of UPR. I believe that in everyday life I am empathetic towards people and suspend my own personal judgement and opinions, which, in the person centred approach are highly important for any client to form a trusting relationship and encourages them to self-explore on a deeper level. This point is closely intertwined with Carl Rogers's core conditions of UPR and congruence.

Unconditional positive regard is one of the core conditions I find quite easy to demonstrate within the practice session with my peers. This I believe is one of my qualities that I possess. I am not a person without defence barriers, behaviours, or reactions that can be perceived by others as inconsiderate and perhaps foolish at times. I am also able to accept that I make mistakes but I am not afraid to admit them, so I accept people, as I would like them to be acceptant of me.

However, as much as I would like to believe that I am a non-judgemental person, there could quite possibly be a time I am faced with a client or situation that I cannot accept. I am positive that the Personal development on the degree will help me to address my own fears and unresolved issues so my ability on offering the core condition of UPR is increased which enables my clients or prospective clients to achieve constructive change. According to Rogers, (1959, p. 208) UPR 'seems effective in bringing about change' within the client.

It is my understanding that congruence is being truthful and honest, however, Rogers states in his six necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change that the role of congruence must be within the therapist or integrated into the relationship. Rogers (1959) also linked congruence to the other core conditions of empathy and UPR, he stated that for therapy to occur within the therapeutic relationship the wholeness of counsellor needs to be primary, but part of congruence must be the experience of myself and the client would need to experience empathy, congruence, and UPR.

As a counsellor, I believe it will be difficult for me not to ask questions on a regular basis. This 'weakness' will be a target for me to achieve, and to only ask questions when appropriate, also as it is person centred counselling it is a practice of non – directive approach to therapy and asking questions could possibly direct the client. The client could also perceive some questions as being oppressive and insinuating that they should feel or think in a specific way, in other words, I could unintentionally impose more conditions of worth onto the client. The asking of questions I believe will be a challenge; however, I do understand, that questions may be asked of the client but only when it is appropriate to do so and to approach asking any questions in a thoughtful and non-judgemental way.

Challenge

Silence

To conclude, Rogers' person centred theory seems quite simple however, it appears to be difficult for me at this early stage to demonstrate certain core conditions within the practice session's but I will endeavour to achieve and be the best that I can be. Although, I am quite comfortable with the theory and deep respect for Rogers' theory, I am however looking forward to learning more about the different approaches to counselling, for example, cognitive behaviour and the gestalt approach. I am intrigued to find out how they differ and compare them to the person centred approach.

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