

Personal counseling theory essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A comprehensive theory of counseling for any Christian counselor should always keep in the forefront the integration of psychology, theology, and spirituality. Knowing and understanding the human condition requires us to take into account the mind, the soul (or spirit) and the body. According to McMinn (1996) “ for Christian counselors doing interdisciplinary integration, two areas of competence are necessary and sufficient: psychology and theology. ” (pg. 9) He goes on to say that successful integration will also include a third area of competence; spirituality.

This paper is an attempt to outline approach for effective Christian counseling using an integrative theory that will serve to ensure the psychological and spiritual health of my clients. Theory of Personality Personality develops through our lifespan. Knowing how the personality develops and its structure is important for understanding how we can assist clients seeking our help. Hawkins’ (2006) model of personality takes into account five distinct factors: the core, soul, body, temporal systems, and the supernatural.

These five factors come together to shape the human personality. Using Hawkins is concentric circles affords the counselor the ability to look at the client as a whole as well as to see the individual parts that make up the personality. Crabb (1997) believes it is important to also look at “ the key functioning elements within the human personality” (pg. 88) At the center of who we are, is the core; our human spirit. The image of God and the Holy Spirit are also a part of our core. 1 Corinthians tells us “ do you not know you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? We have God at our center and all the talents, gifts and abilities that he has bestowed upon us

making us the unique individuals that we are. Our personality can also be shaped by our own soul. Hawkins (2006) says the soul is made up of an individual's feelings, conscious, thinking, emotions, and volition. Our thinking can shape who we are, and the misbeliefs we tell ourselves can destroy the person God created us to be. Backus & Chapian (2006) believe negative self talk and misbeliefs are the direct cause of emotional turmoil. " The words you tell yourself have power over your life.

If you tell yourself something often enough, eventually you will believe it. " (pg. 171) these words can either be negative or positive. It is our choice to speak the truth through the promises God made to us. " For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and hope. " (Jer 29: 11) The temporal system contains the groups that Hawkins says we deal with every day. This includes family, friends, church, government, and our community. As human beings, we are in this world together. No man stands alone.

The relationships that we cultivate can impact who we are as a person and can have a role in shaping our personality. Cloud and Townsend (1999) believe in order for relationships to be healthy, they need clear and defined boundaries. " If you know where the boundaries are in your relationship, you know who owns things such as feelings, attitudes and behaviors. " (pg. 18) Boundaries are important to set so we don't mistake others feelings and attitudes for own. Sandra Wilson (2001) builds on this idea in her concept of hurt people hurt people.

She states that the words people use to describe us can be internalized and therefore we make them the truth. God knows our inner truth and “ focuses primarily on our unseen, inner lives”, and calls us to “ watch over or guard our hearts because our external lives flow out of our internal selves. ”(pg. 21) He calls us to live the truth inside of us, not what others see on the outside. We must guard ourselves against the negative impact that the temporal systems can have on our psyche and that have the potential to change the person God created us to be.

The final circle in Hawkins’ is model is the supernatural system. Anderson (2000) believes that supernatural forces such as Satan and demons can work to shape the human personality. These negative entities can change the temperament of an individual causing chaos and destruction in their lives. Backus and Chapian would say that the voices in our head that tell us we are imperfect or sinners are our own. Anderson believes these voices are supernatural in nature, and it is Satan who is undermining who we are and undermining the truth that God has laid before us about ourselves.

Motivation The health of the body, the soul and the spirit must be looked at as a whole to understand how any illness can occur; especially an illness of the mind. Theories abound as to the cause of mental illness. We are, indeed, all broken human beings, and the breakdown can occur in any one of Hawkins’ concentric circles. Our bodies can contribute to poor mental health. Heart (1999) points to physical problems that can increase or cause symptoms of anxiety or depression. He states that hypoglycemia, premenstrual syndrome and alcoholism are three common factors that make mental illness harder to deal with.

Heart also contributes mental illness to heredity and biological factors. “ There is an interactive effect with how a person’s body tolerates stress”. “ Genetic factors play a part in determining how reactive our stress response mechanisms are. ” (pg. 55) Anderson (2001) would blame mental illness on the influence that Satan has on our minds and bodies. He believes that Satan has the ability to control our minds. Once Satan has control of our minds, he can manipulate our thoughts and actions, therefore controlling our lives. “ He (Satan) knows that if he can control your thoughts, he can control your life. (pg. 61) Anderson also believes that our earliest coping mechanisms we learned in order to defend ourselves are not mentally and emotionally healthy. What psychologists would term as defense mechanisms such as denial, projection and fantasy are really just unhealthy emotions. Emotional problems can also stem from our temporal system. Wilson (2001) suggests that damages done to us by those in our lives cause us to lash out and hurt others. “ We hurt others most deeply in the areas of our deepest wounding. ”(pg31) most often this cycle of hurt is ongoing between parent and child.

The child in us remembers those past pains family passes on to our own children. People must acknowledge the wrongs done to them in order to break the ongoing cycle of hurt. Partners in marriage can also cause distress and pain. Cloud in Townsend (1999) suggests that confusion, anger and discontentment come from a lack of boundaries and relationship. If boundaries are solid, everyone knows their own role in the marriage and can accept responsibility for the part they play. They no longer have to count on others to be happy or content in life. They are in control of their feelings and can own them.

Sin can also be a cause of mental illness. J Adams (1986) believes that sin is at the core of mental illness. Sin is in our very nature. We are all sinful human beings and in order to affect change, we must turn to God and Scripture for answers. He uses the example of homosexuality in alcoholism as forgivable since, not disease or genetic defects. Multitasking It is imperative that a counselor understand their client and be able to attribute their illness to the appropriate system given to us by Hawkins (2006). A person's personality type can made a counselor to the most effective method of treatment depending on their needs.

Theological perspectives must be considered alongside psychological perspectives for effective Christian counseling. As counselors, we must simultaneously consider theology, psychology and spirituality for our clients benefit. Elements of Personal Theory Multitasking is the cornerstone of any effective theory. The ability to blend theories together to better serve a client is crucial to success. Blending together proven theories from both secular psychology and theology will be the basis of my theory. As a counselor, I will develop a psychological base model that will incorporate spirituality and theology.

I do not want to close my door to anyone seeking help; therefore I do not want to be too rigid in my theory. I want Christians and non-Christians alike to feel comfortable and safe in my care and not threatened by my method of treatment. I see counseling as a partnership between the counselor and counselee. As a professional, my goal will be to assist the counselee and recognizing their problems and tailoring therapy to meet their needs. I have

found several of the theories we have studied to be insightful and they will facilitate me and assisting counselees.

Backus and Chapian's (2006) method of identifying the misbeliefs people have about themselves, controlling negative thoughts and believing the truth about themselves along with Wilson's (2001) identifying hurts and dealing with them, in conjunction with Hawkins' (2006) concentric circles will be integrated into my personal method. This will allow me to understand the counselee's personality and what is motivating their current problems. I also would like to be able to incorporate scripture and prayer into counseling sessions, as long as the counselee is fully aware of this method and is comfortable with it.

My counselee's comfort level with spirituality will dictate how much or how little I can incorporate scripture and prayer into a session. Currently, I also have the obstacle of my lack of expertise and theology. The last thing I want to do is lead a counselee astray by using incorrect Scripture quotes or referencing Scripture falsely. My ultimate goal would be to lead people towards God and my fear is that what I lack in theological expertise would cause people to turn away from God. This is an area I hope to get more stable in and plan on working hard to develop a solid base in order to incorporate spirituality into my model.

Worldviews The expectation in counseling is change healing and hope. The effectiveness of any theory is measured in the change of the client. As Adams (1986) states, " whatever one's problems may be, there can be no change that is acceptable to God, and in the long run, to the counselee, and

tell fundamental, positive change toward God has occurred. ” (pg. 3) moving a client towards healing and towards God is the cornerstone of an effective Christian counseling practice. Every counselor has their own theory for counseling. These theories are centered in their worldviews.

Our worldviews bring with us our biases, values and assumptions about the world and the people that sit across from us people as Christian counselors we need to have an understanding of our worldview in order to effectively treat a counselee. It is also important to understand the counselee’s worldview in order to comprehend where there issues arise from. Integration Integration is a challenging endeavor. As Christian counselors, we should have a biblical worldview and our goal should be to approach counselee’s with a psychological and theological theory.

Non-Christians may be threatened by this integrated approach, but as long as it is done with a counselee’s full knowledge and consent, there can be success. This area is one of my biggest fears when considering integration. As I discussed previously, my knowledge of theology at this point is limited. In my experience, there have been too many examples of Christian pastors engaging in unethical use of Scripture. I see examples of Scripture being bent and manipulated to fit the need of whoever is quoting the verse. This is not who I want to be.

I want to be humble in my approach to integration and hope that what will come through in my counseling model are my devotion to God and my devotion to the health of the counselee. I believe it is possible that we can move non-Christian counselees to a state of better mental health but also

towards God. Conclusion The human condition is fragile. The work of a competent Christian counselor will bring together psychology, theology and spirituality to form a model that will move people towards positive personal change.

Unifying these three competencies will allow a counselor to assess a person's personality and help define their greatest area of need. Obviously, psychology has proven itself to be a sound discipline that can provide help to hurting human beings. There are many great theories to pull from that have scientific basis and have proven successful. Spiritually, God's ability to heal the human spirit is the foundation of what we believe. As we take the journey with our counselee, the hope is that we move them not only towards mental health, but to instill hope and ultimately move them towards the glory of God.