

A Case Study Analysis Using Reality Therapy

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June 22, 2016

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This is a case analysis using reality therapy. It will be based on the social history that will immediately follow.

Ms. Class dropped out of school last year, after completing the 11th grade. Her mother died of cancer when she was 5. She was in her father's custody (Mr. Joseph Class) following her mother's death and appeared to adjusting to the loss of her mother. Mr. Class was killed in a car accident following his daughter's completion of the 5th grade. Ms. Class was placed, as part of a Child Protective Services intervention, with a maternal uncle and his wife in Nashville, TN following her father's death. This uncle was physically and emotionally abusive. Other family members were not available for placement. Elizabeth ran away from the uncle's home in last year and ended up in Henderson, TN living with her 19 year old boyfriend (Jason Schooler) and his parents.

Problems developed between the boyfriend and his parents that led to them moving out and living in cheap hotels and staying with friends. The boyfriend is supportive, not abusive and has a low paying job at a local restaurant. He has a high school diploma. Both have experimented with marijuana, but decided to terminate this behavior. There are no problems with alcohol or other drugs. Both are generally healthy. They are sexually active with each other. The first time they engaged in sexual intercourse, it was with each other. Jason sometimes uses a condom, but no other means of contraception. A week before coming to Regain Our Youth, Ms. Class and Jason were mugged. Both will recover without complications. Jason received minor injuries. He was dismissed from the hospital after a couple of days of treatment and observation. Ms. Class will remained in the hospital for a few days because one of her lacerations became infected. Elizabeth has also dealt with anemia for the past 2 years. The police

officer who took the report of the mugging recognized that Ms. Class needed some assistance, and he, along with a hospital Social Worker, referred Elizabeth to Regain Our Youth, a state operated residential facility for homeless teens and young adults. Jason was able to return to his parents and his employment. However, his parents are no longer open to Elizabeth living there. He still wants to continue his relationship with Elizabeth, but is under a lot of pressure from his parents to terminate the relationship. Jason, because of his financial situation, has a certain level of dependence on his parents. Elizabeth is resistant to being placed with Regain Our Youth, but knows that she needs some type assistance. She understands that Regain Our Youth is a program designed for persons without serious psychiatric problems; problems like Schizophrenia or Paranoid Delusional Disorder. Most of the staff at Regain Our Youth (R.O.Y) have found that Elizabeth is guarded, has trust issues and was resistance to group counseling. However, she has verbally noted that she might be open to individual counseling.

### **Application of the Theory to Elizabeth**

#### **The Nature of People**

Choice theorist believe the essential nature of people is positive (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1995) but also acknowledge humans may be loving and productive as well as bedeviled, selfish, and self-absorbed. The basic human motivation is to increase pleasure and decrease pain (Glasser, 2011), feelings that occur based on the satisfaction (or lack) of basic needs. Those needs are survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun. (Henderson & Thompson, 2016)

According to Elizabeth's social background, she is guarded, has trust issues and was resistance to group counseling. However, she has verbally noted that she might be open to individual counseling. The nature of Elizabeth's quandary is her decision of choice. Elizabeth is choosing to be guarded, not to trust, and resisting to participate with people who maybe dealing

with similar issues. If Elizabeth is willing to choose another way of coping with her problems (trusting); she may experience an increase in positive life outcomes and a decrease in negative life outcomes with support of a counselor.

### **Theory of Counseling**

According to choice theory, the only assessment necessary is to determine what relationships are problems. Healthy people build, develop, and maintain relations to fulfill their needs. Glasser theorizes two types of functions: healthy functioning and unhealthy function. Healthy functions equate to responsible behavior, meeting one's own needs without preventing others from meeting theirs. Unhealthy functioning, is people's breakdown in meeting their needs in responsible and effective ways. (Henderson & Thompson, 2016) Elizabeth has unhealthy functioning by guarding herself and trusting others. She is unable to satisfy her need of closure from the loss of her parents and trauma caused from being abused from her uncle. However, theory of reality therapy is to only focus on the here and now. "The Reality Therapy approach to counseling and problem-solving focuses on the here-and-now of the client and how to create a better future, instead of concentrating at length on the past. It emphasizes making decisions, and taking action and control of one's own life." (Reality Therapy, 2005)

### **Concepts**

The five basic needs of survival, love and belonging, power, fun, and freedom are innate and universal (Wubbolding, 2011a). Each person has the generic motivation to fulfill those needs in order to avoid the pain that occurs when those needs are unfulfilled. (Henderson & Thompson, 2016)

1. *Survival* – food, shelter, and safety. (Choice Theory Basic Needs, 2012) Elizabeth's survival needs are being met. This need is met through Regain Our Youth (R.O.Y.)

2. *Love and Belonging* - relationships, social connections, to give and receive affection and to feel part of a group. (Choice Theory Basic Needs, 2012) Elizabeth's love and belonging needs are not being met. This need is causing the most conflict for her.
3. *Power* – to achieve, to be competent, to be skilled, to be recognized. (Choice Theory Basic Needs, 2012) Elizabeth power needs are also not being met. She did not complete high school or has been given opportunities to be recognized for work or contribution to society.
4. *Freedom* - independence, autonomy, to have choices. (Choice Theory Basic Needs, 2012) Elizabeth's freedom needs are somewhat being met. She ran away from her uncle's home to escape abuse, she met her boyfriend Jason (however, later their unable to just "be" together), and as young adult she has now has freedom of choice.
5. *Fun* - to find pleasure, to play and to laugh. (Choice Theory Basic Needs, 2012) Elizabeth's fun needs are not being met. This is because she needs to learn to prioritize her other unmet needs.

### **Counseling Relationship, Method, and Process**

The counselor's role in helping Elizabeth would be to encourage, inspire, be straight-forward, and focused with her. The counselor should provide a partnership in which Elizabeth avoids excuses and accepts responsibility, emphasizes strengths, and learns and practices new behaviors. Elizabeth must be willing to focus on her behavior and must be ready to change. She must also be open to having a relationship with the counselor and to being challenged about their choices. The counselor would need to explain to Elizabeth that in order for the change process to work well, Elizabeth must realize the many options she has in her situation. This will lead

Elizabeth to realize that what she is doing (withholding her trust) is not going to get her to fulfill her needs and that another behavior (choosing to open and trust) has a greater potential.

Gasser's 8 -Step Original Practice of Reality Therapy (Henderson & Thompson, 2016)

<i>Step 1</i> Build a trusting relationship with Elizabeth.	<i>Step 2</i> Ask Elizabeth to "tell her story" but also focus on what she is doing now.	<i>Step 3</i> Elizabeth should begin to evaluate what is going on in her life and what is helping her.	<i>Step 4</i> The counselor and Elizabeth should begin to look at alternatives for getting her what she wants in life.
<i>Step 5</i> Elizabeth should choose an alternative for reaching her goals and commit to try them.	<i>Step 6</i> Counselor and Elizabeth evaluate if the alternative is purposeful and if not simply choose a different alternative.	<i>Step 7</i> If Elizabeth is not making improving after step 6 the counselor should not interfere with her logical or natural consequences.	<i>Step 8</i> The counselor should never give up on Elizabeth, but rather preserve.

### Evaluation of Reality Therapy

Rational therapy with choice therapy would be successful in helping Elizabeth because of the following outcomes it brings to the client.

- ✓ Building a trusting relationship is the focus. Any attention to past becomes how it affects the future. Elizabeth had a traumatic social background, those events can't be changed. Elizabeth can however choose how to live presently and in the future.
- ✓ Seligman and Reichenburg (2014) suggest that reality therapy is best for people who have mild to moderate mental disorders. Her only abnormality is not being able to satisfy all of her basic needs.

## References

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