Handout 5 - The Theoretical Approaches Underpinning Casework

Psychoanalytic

This model is based on the theories of Sigmund Freud. It helps the client to explore their childhood experiences, relationships with parents and psychosexual development. These are analysed in order to uncover the human psyche hidden in the unconscious mind.

Psychotherapeutic

In this model the stages of social development (but not Freud's stages) over the life span are explored. Experiences are examined and defence mechanisms identified. The client is helped to "unlearn" counterproductive coping strategies. The Case Worker helps the client to learn new and more appropriate decision-making skills and behaviours.

This model proposes that childhood experiences influence people's reactions to their current circumstances but that these learned behaviours are so ingrained that people are unaware of them.

Client-Centered or Rogerian

Carl Rogers (1951, 1957) developed a humanistic approach to helping. He believed that the quality of the relationship between the Case Worker and client was the key factor for achieving positive change in an individual's life. 'Client Centred' helper roles included helping individuals to assess their own problems and understand themselves as part of the process of achieving positive change. This model views human behaviour as rational and human nature as generally positive. It considers change to be possible through self-acceptance and an awareness of self.

Cognitive

This model suggests that feelings and behaviours are the result of the way we think. The cognitive Case Worker seeks to help the client identify unrealistic expectations, irrational beliefs, or negative self-talk. The Case Worker helps the client replace these thought processes with realistic thinking, so that the client experiences healthy emotions and relationships. This approach is didactic, directive and collaborative.

Narrative

Narrative Therapy believes that people's problems occur because the individual believes in self-defeating and limited views about themselves and their world. The Case Worker tries to widen the client's circle of understanding about their
problems so that they can interpret their situation in a more holistic and realistic way.

The Case Worker explores the language used by the client to construct their understanding of who they are and where they “fit” in the world. Experiences are collapsed into narrative stories to give a frame of reference to help the client to understand their experiences. The narrative approach holds that problems are created in the social, political and cultural context.

**Behavioural**

This model is a more scientific approach to people’s problems. This model argues that only those issues that can be observed and measured can be addressed. For example, a problem behaviour is observed and then a plan for changing it is implemented and its progress measured and reported. Behaviourists believe that their environment shapes people. Others believe behaviour is learned by modelling observed behaviours and through the consequences of those behaviours.

**Family Systems Theory**

The family systems theory is based on the belief that individuals have the power to change their behaviour once they start to understand the history and origins of their family. The family may be defined as the immediate family one lives with, the extended family or the community in which one interacts with.

This model argues that current situations/problems may be understood in terms of family history, dynamics, communication patterns and sources of conflict. The model suggests that individuals' choices/decisions are determined by their own family's culture. If family members are able to see themselves as part of the family system and understand their role in this system, they become able to take responsibility for their actions and to assist in creating new and more effective behaviours within the family.

**Feminist Theory**

Challenges traditional views about gender, class and emotional problems.

**Source:**


- WELS CSM: 2002 A Brief Review of Counselling Models - [www.wels.net/sab/csm/health-ask-03.html](http://www.wels.net/sab/csm/health-ask-03.html).