

Theory Application

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Client description

My client was referred to the school counselor from her teacher Mrs. Johnson. My client, Violet Almeida is a 6-year-old, quite Hispanic girl who was born and raised in the rural area of Los Angeles. She is currently a part of the Los Angeles Unified School District, attending 122nd Street Elementary school. She has two **hard working parents** who currently have two jobs in order to support Violet and her older sister. After school, Violet and her sister stay with their grandma who only speaks Spanish. Their grandmother is having a challenging time assist the girls with their homework since, she **does not understand English**. This client is in need of support due to with her experiencing a lack of motivation in her schoolwork. She is constantly saying “I can’t do”, “I’m dumb” which has developed into low- self-esteem. Her teacher, Mrs. Johnson is very concerned for this child since her behavior is affecting her academic work. Mrs. Johnson explains, after coming back from winter vacation the student has not voluntarily participating, nor engaging with the material, and has a tough time completing task individually. Recently, Violet cries in the morning and her mother is obligated to walk her onto campus because Violet is **feeling** nervous. During her time in kindergarten, she participated and seemed very excited to go to school. However, her transition to 1st grade has been difficult. Not only has the curriculum demand more cognitive comprehension skill, but her mother who usually helps her with her homework is working two jobs. Her family is very worried, her mother has also expressed concerns to Mrs. Johnson about Violet new behavior.

Identification of issues/challenges

Violet Almeida is presenting low-self-esteem characteristics which is causing her to be unmotivated to complete **tasks** at school or at home. Recently, she has been crying in the

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morning because she does not want to go to school. She says she feels nervous and mom now must walk her to the yard. Unfortunately, due to dealing with the daily responsibilities of being an inner-city public-school educator, Mrs. Johnson is struggling to find extra time to assist Violet. Violet has the potential to be successful because of her high academic performance in Kindergarten. However, she is lacking support from her parents, due to high rent **costs** in the Los Angeles area both parents must work two jobs to support Violet and her older sister. Her mother **used** to stay at home with the children and helped them with their homework, but since she has two jobs, she is having difficulty finding time to help. After school, the two girls stay with their grandmother who only speaks Spanish.

Rationale of choice of theories

The choice of theories I believe would be appropriate for my student would be person centered and cognitive **behavioral** therapy. Person centered approach will allow my student to tell her truth and provide opportunities for a growth- promoting environment. For example, Violet has not had an opportunity to express what she has been feeling about these new transitions she has been experiencing. Furthermore, since my student is experiencing low- self-esteem, being around a demanding environment may result in **depression** or anxiety. According to *Students With Depression: Help Them Find Their Way Out* Mary Fischer, has seen depression in many level at her elementary school and suggest school counselors to, “consider ways to give the extra support and attention they need, while recognizing that the student may be doing the best he or she can do at the time (2014). Also, using Cognitive **Behavioral** theory will **assist** my student with changing her thought process by self-observation, new internal dialog, and learning new skills. For example, Violet may not feel motivated to try things that are hard and have a tough time dealing with mistakes. Deep down, she may not believe she is worthy of good

treatment or success. Using this approach will provide opportunities to learn to develop emotion regulation through diaphragmatic breathing, accurately identifying feelings and problem-solving skills to handle challenges.

Description of techniques

As a school counselor, using a person centred approach would allow me to develop a working, collaborative relationship with Violet. Some type of talk/ art therapy would be a great way for Violet to talk about her feelings, concerns, and learn ways to deal with her emotions (2014, Fisher). Since my student is a 1st grader, I believe expressive art would be a great opportunity for this student to achieve personal growth and a higher state of consciousness. From our activity, I acknowledge Violet's characteristics, I created an unconditional positive environment, and demonstrated empathy which allowed us to generate growth. Violet expressed her experience with self- doubt and hesitation to ask for help during class. Allowing this space, Violet will be able to create art which will lead to the unconscious, enabling her to express previously unknown facets of herself and bring into light new information and awareness (2015, Corey). This new information will encourage Violet to ask for her because she is worthy of success. Additionally, I taught the student about the benefits of mindfulness, staying in the moment without judging, to cope with stress and anxiety. For example, a helpful strategy is to self-monitor anxiety using a simple scale or a feeling thermometer to assess what triggers high levels of anxiety and what coping tools help bring the anxiety to an acceptable level (2016, McCormac).

I will be meeting with Violet to discuss the potential reason for her feeling nervous in the morning in order to prevent this recurring behavior. As a school counselor, techniques using cognitive behavior therapy have been shown to be effective in teaching positive ways to cope

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with anxious behaviors. For example, to help Violet keep anxiety in check, I will teach her to ask herself, “Is this really true?” Additionally, I will have her write positive affirmations such as “I am safe in school” on an index card she can keep in their pocket to read when needed. (2016, McCormac). Exploring cognitive strategies such as changing negative automatic thoughts, correcting unrealistic beliefs and interpretations will be an effective technique by implementing a group therapy session with 1st and 2nd graders using ABCs. To empower the students because it is important to limit their irrational thoughts to help them overcome obstacles (2016, Pincus). To begin, I will explain the ABC’s. A is for Action- this is the event(s) that is the obstacle for the student. B is for Belief – I explain to the students that their thoughts about the events are either rational or irrational thoughts. C is for Consequence – The students are asked if consequences are good or bad. This trick question allows the students to discuss their answers with the group. After explaining the ABCs for the students, I take a blank piece of paper and fold it into three sections. I letter the sections A, B and C. I then ask for issues the students in the group have at school. I use one of the issues and write the actions under the ‘A’ box. For example, a student brings up an issue about receiving an assignment during class and having no idea what to do after instructions are given. Many students believe “they’re dumb”, “classmates will think I’m dumb” or “scared to ask for help.” In our group, we discussed that this thinking was irrational because other students discuss how they walk to the teacher’s desk if they feel shy asking for help in front of the class. The consequence of student thinking will lead to not doing schoolwork or failing the class. The information the group members have discussed, empowered others to make an educated decision on whether the belief is rational or irrational in which students then

generally understand their thoughts are irrational. Also, creating a group discussion is a great way for Violet to relate to others who are going through similar experiences.

Possible limitations to approach

Possible limitations can be Violet's family may be hesitant about their daughter going into therapy because of their cultural views. A shortcoming for the person- centered approach can be difficult to translate the core therapeutic conditions into actual practice in certain cultures. Also, a person centered approach with clients from diverse cultures pertains to the fact that this approach extols the value of an internal locus of evaluation. Possible limitation to cognitive behavior theory, Violet may be too little for group therapy, but I wanted to implement this as a technique, so she knows she is not alone. Also, due to the active and directive nature of this approach, it is particularly important for counselors like myself to avoid imposing their own philosophy of life on their clients.

Work Citations

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

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