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Critical Evaluation of the Grief Counselling

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Grief counseling is a form of psychotherapy that helps the individuals cope with their responses to the losses. Grief counseling is being provided to the people who are experiencing the death of a loved person or because of any prominent life-altering event (Worden, 2009). It has been noted that every individual has its unique way to experience, perceive or reflect grief. Grief counseling facilitates the process of providing solutions to the natural reaction to the loss. A people is liable to grief counseling when the normal coping abilities are restricted due to grief or a loss (Palmer, 2015). Two vital aspects of life are very much interconnected to one another- Friendship and Grief. Grief is the general response to the loss that can be experienced in any form. Loss of friendships is one of the experiences that cause immense pain to the individual. In this essay, we will aim to give an overview of the counseling session between the client and the counselor along with the identification of the losses thus made. The essay will also present the critical evaluation of the skills and interventions used in the grief counseling session along with the strength and quality of the therapeutic alliance.

The counseling session presented involves grief counseling of the client Geetu. Geetu, who is immensely overwhelmed the moment she decided to seek the help of a counselor is now present at her second session with the counselor after the first session where she discussed her grief. The client involved is facing troubles with acknowledging her friendships due to experience when one of her closest friends, Mira, went away to another country without bidding a goodbye. She is now settled in her life and has a lot of friends and family, yet the childhood experience of loss of friendship has shown up again when she forms another deep friendship with Vasu. She is facing troubles in accepting and assuring the depth of her friendship with Vasu and is restricting herself to ask Vasu about how she feels about the

friendship they share. The fear of losing friends she is close to without them knowing how much they mean to her is like a nightmare to her. She shares a good bond with her friend Vasu but still feels struggling to communicate in letting her know how much she the friendship means to her due to her insecurity or wall of protection. This session is an active interaction between the client and the counselor. It involves the recognition of primary and secondary losses caused to the client. Within the session, it has been seen that the client is very much comfortable in sharing her concerns and is aware of the losses that have occurred in her life. The client has a good regard for the people involved in her life and is participating in the activities proposed by the counselor which has helped the client getting a feel of gratitude and acknowledgment towards the end of the session.

The losses that have been identified in the session have been categorized as primary and secondary losses. The primary loss that has been described in the session revolves around losing a friend and a confidant at a very tender age. It is prolonged grief that lingers upon for a long time as it was hidden and never appears till the time new deep relationship is yet again made. However, it is one of the crucial prospects that has affected the client in her later stages of life also. Attachment theory given by Bowlby emphasizes the importance of human bonds and attachments that are made during the early years of life. It describes and explains the need of humans in forming strong affectional bonds. He relied upon the fact that the experiences of childhood affect the reactions in adulthood. It explains grief as a normal response when the affectional bonds that are strong enough are disrupted. It relates to the grief evolving through four phases of shock, yearning, despair, and recovery (Holmes, 2014). The client was shocked when she experiences the images from her childhood flashing when the same bonds are forming in adulthood. The secondary losses that are identified are struggling to communicate in letting

the significant another know how much they are essential to one's life. It is also because of the protection wall that has been built to protect oneself against further grief or hurt. Grief counseling helps the bereaved person in coping up with the lingered grief.

Therapeutic alliance can be considered as the basic foundation of all the intervention and techniques that is going to be implied in the counseling session. The quality of the alliance thus formed has been shown significantly strong as the client was motivated and supportive enough for the interventions that were used in the counseling session: the empathy, positive regard and active listening of the counselor towards the client help in maintaining the cordial counselor-client relationship (Simpsons & Reid, 2014). The strength of the therapeutic alliance can thus be noticed in the session when the client has shared her personal stories and relationships with the counselor with an enormous amount of mutual trust and confidence towards the counselor. However, the skills imbibed by the counselor helps in forming the therapeutic relationship. It is to be noticed that the therapeutic alliance is the unique relationship that has been formed between the client-counselor which is focused on the client needs so that the client feels safe, supported and understood by the counselor (Cooper et al., 2013). In the session at 09:21 when the counselor showed an empathetic and understandable approach towards the grief of the client underlines a strong relationship between them both. At 09:58 and 20:01, when the counselor asks clients permission makes the client feel more valued and supported by the counselor which strengthened the alliance.

The approach that has been used in the counseling session revolves around "companionship." The companionship approach suggests about listening with all the heart rather than analyzing by the head (Wolfelt, 2013). In the session, the grief counseling skills that has been demonstrated by the counselor includes open questions, paraphrasing and reflecting

feelings. At 00:50, the Counselor said ‘Tell me how do you feel about the last session? How can you relate to your loss now?’ That demonstrated usage of open-ended questions. Questioning is an integral component of the grief counseling session as it facilitates the clients to unravel the grief. In the session, the counselor had demonstrated various instances when he focused upon asking questions that encourage new discussions and helps the client in resolving the grief (Carpinello, 2004). Paraphrasing or reflection of the feelings in the session has been demonstrated at 04:28 when she quoted ‘So you are scared about knowing how much it might have a great impact on your friendships at the moment.’ It made the client feel safe and valued which also helps her to discuss all her concerns with the counselor freely (Winokeur & Harris, 2015).

However, there are few instances where I feel that the counseling skills induced can be improved. At the instance 01:19, when the counselor showed a restricted body language with the arms closed could be enhanced as the body language is the most important skill since it helps in the formation of a good rapport with the client (Carpinello, 2004). It can also be noticed with the course of the video that counselor could have also incorporated the skill of summarizing at the beginning as well as the end of the session. A good summary is the indicator that reflects the proceedings of the entire session with an accuracy check and helps the client in getting a sense of identification and facilitates the client to give any recommendations for the solution to grief (Geldard et al., 2015). The counselor could also have indulged client’s husband in the session because of them being so supportive as mentioned by the client in the session at 05:23 saying ‘Solid foundation with my partner has always been there’. It has been noted that family can help the bereaved fill the gaps in the bridge in the process of coping up with the loss (Carson & Becker, 2015).

Person-centered interventions or approaches can be used to release the repressed emotions that affect the present life and experiences and is an important feature of grief counseling (Klasen et al., 2017). The counselor has used two intervention strategies with the client throughout the process of grief counseling. The active therapeutic alliance shared by the client and the counselor help the counselor in adapting the interventions in the process of counseling. The counselor has used symbols and writing letters as the responses to help the client cope with the grief. The use of symbols at 09:45 in the video session demonstrates the belief of counselor in gaining information about client's thoughts and feelings. The use of symbols as the symbolic strategy using physical objects have been shown useful to explore the feelings, beliefs, and relationships. It can be proven as Carl Jung stated that the use of symbols could facilitate the client in gaining self-knowledge and also helps in uncovering the unconscious thoughts (Ranjan, 2018). It has been realized by the client that communication has a significant role to play in restricting her to be letting people know what she feels about the friendships involved in her life and what is its value (Carpinello, 2004). The counselor has used rituals of affirmation, i.e., writing letters at 20:30. The process of writing down about the thoughts and feelings that were never openly expressed allows the client gains a sense of relief and release of the feelings from the inside (Spuij et al., 2015). The interventions were effective enough as they provide the client to the opportunity to open her thoughts and feelings surrounding the instances of her life and also support and propose free and more open expression of thoughts and feelings.

However, the interventions can thus be improved or can be used in different than the strategies used in the session can be associated with the visual art or asking miracle question. At 03:38 in the video the client mentions that she had an experience of revisiting the image of her waiting for Mira at the window which was overpowering. Depicting the image in

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the form of a picture can help the client in externalizing one's thoughts and feelings and also allow the person to see object different from themselves (Ranjan, 2018). Also, during the video at 09:00 when the lack of communication has been discovered as another reason is what stopping her from telling Vasu how she feels about her friendship as she never got a chance to express that to Mira. The question quoting, "Let's say you went to bed tonight and in the early morning when you got up you have both Mira and Vasu standing just beside your window. What will be the first thing you want both of them to know?" can be used as the miracle question. It is a unique intervention and can help the client feel more positive and energetic with having a belief that their problems can be resolved (Miller et al., 2017).

The companionship that was demonstrated by the counselor was helpful to the client as shown throughout the session (Wolfelt, 2013). She was not only empathetic towards the client but also provided an environment where the client can retrospect the issues that are affecting her self. Grief counseling tends to be useful for the person who seeks out for it. The client throughout the session showed a positive approach to all the questions and interventions used. The client has a realization or awareness of the losses that she is suffering from in her life that is very beneficial in deciding the course of the session (Hall, 2014). At 12:42 'My insecurity, I am putting as a block in accepting her friendship,' reflected the situation where the client aware of the situation but is acting protected against any further grief when her friend leaves for overseas. She has also reflected the trust issues to be the cause of her grief as she knows what she means to Vasu but not accepting the reality.

The overall session reflected the identification of the losses of the clients and helping her finding solution to that. It has been observed that the patient is much more confident and positive about the session and the interventions used during the process of grief counseling

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with the counselor showing a great attending and observation skills. Analysing the strength and the weakness of the session gives an overall understanding of the grief counselling involved in helping the client to cope with the loss as it has been seen towards the end of the session that the client has walked with the awareness of the impact of past experiences and knowing how much it is essential to acknowledge few attachments or relations that matter in your life.