

Reality Therapy Chapter 11

Dr. Sheila K. Grant
California State University
Northridge

William Glasser

- “. . . it is what you choose to do in a relationship, not what others choose to do, that is the heart of reality therapy



Biography of William Glasser

- Born 1925 & educated at Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio).
- Initial training in chemical engineering, then master's in clinical psychology
- Attended UCLA medical school & became a board certified psychiatrist in 1961

Biography of William Glasser

- Glasser's path a continuing progression from private practice to lecturing & writing, ultimately culminating in publication of 20+ books
- After writing counseling book, *Reality Therapy* (1965), published his first book on education, *Schools without Failure* (1969), greatly expanded understanding of motivation & behavior with *Choice Theory* (1998), & finally added, *Warning: Psychiatry Can Be Hazardous to Your Mental Health* (2003), to help people improve their mental health and happiness

Philosophy of William Glasser

- People should not be labeled with mental illness unless they have a true brain disorder such as Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, head trauma & brain infections (they should all be treated by neurologists)
- Otherwise, categories of DSM-IV-TR are not mental disorders or illness
- Psychologists & psychiatrists should only use DSM categories to satisfy requirements of insurance companies to receive payments

Philosophy of William Glasser

- People choose to be depressing, anxious, panicky, angering, behaving in a way that others say they have a psychosis, etc. in order to avoid other more painful experiences or to reach out for help
- They are coping in best way they know how for given situation, which is usually caused either by relationship problem or a lack of a relationship at all

Philosophy of William Glasser

- The brain reacts to actions & thinking processes of individual, rather than individual reacting as result of an “imbalance in brain chemistry” as is popularly thought
- As a result, people do not need psychotropic or “brain” drugs such as Prozac
- Rather, they need psychotherapy to help them with their relationships
- Society should be in a more preventive mode rather than a reactive mode for psychological behaviors, just as communities are for medical illness

Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Past 100 years, technology has progressed drastically, but human progress has been at a standstill
 - Still wars, divorces, suicides, murder, poor productivity in schools & workplace & unhappy people
- Two groups of people of unhappy people:
 - Those who try to find their way back to pleasurable relationships w/happy people
 - Those who have given up on relationships & try to feel good by other means (drugs, alcohol, violence, sex, abusing food, etc.)
 - Once this group can find meaningful relationships through AA or other professional or nonprofessional counselors & teachers, they too can find happiness again

Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Glasser believes problem is external mindset of our society
 - “You must do what I want or be the way I want you to be!”
- Rather than letting us both decide what is best for us in our relationship & then work together to make it happen
- Glasser feels that society should move more towards internal locus of control

Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- Need to change our “7 Deadly Habits of External Control”
 - Criticizing
 - Blaming
 - Complaining Nagging
 - Threatening
 - Punishing
 - Bribing or rewarding to control
- To the “7 Caring Habits of Choice Theory)”
 - Respecting
 - Supporting
 - Encouraging Listening
 - Accepting
 - Trusting
 - Negotiating differences to a Win/Win situation

Choice Theory: Need for a new Psychology

- **Difficult to retrain our thinking & communication because we are so engrained in the external control system**
- **Three Beliefs of External Control Psychology:**
 - 1) My behavior is caused by something that occurs outside of myself (e.g., “I answer the phone because it rings”)
 - 2) I can make you do what I want you to do or we can control each other by what we say or do
 - 3) I know what’s right for you & if you don’t do it, I should & must control you because it is the right thing to do
- Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
- Where are you on this continuum of beliefs for #1, 2, & 3**

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- Similar idea as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Survival, Love/Belonging, Power, Freedom, & Fun)
 - Different in that only Survival & Love/Belonging are in both sets
 - Choice Theory needs are NOT in a hierarchy
- Rather they are analogous to the legs of a chair -- if all legs are balanced, the chair functions better
- Glasser believes that we are genetically programmed to satisfy all five basic needs
- Negotiation is necessary to balance the needs of both parties of a relationship
- One party may need more of one need than the other

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- There may also be an internal conflict to satisfy multiple needs at same time
 - e.g., you want to be responsible & gain respect of others but also want freedom & fun
- McNamara (1997) also added intraneed conflicts (e.g.,
 - “the need for survival can include the motivation to be safe & the urge toward growth”)

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- **1) Survival - Physiological Need**
 - All living creatures struggle to survive & reproduce the species
 - Also, humans look beyond present survival needs & make an effort to live in ways that lead to longevity (exercise & eating healthy)
 - Survival comes from the “old brain” – base of the brain As humans developed, cerebral cortex or “new brain” allows us to have needs beyond survival
 - If survival was our only need, there would be no anorexia or suicide
 - Also getting along better with each other would result in more survival & less death

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- **2) Love & Belonging - Psychological Need**
 - It's a 2-way street
 - “I need to receive love, be involved & feel like I belong”
 - “I feel better if I am able to give love & acceptance to others”
 - Most of psychotherapy in countries where survival needs are primarily met revolve around this need
 - Either lack of love or deteriorating love are associated with
 - Suicide
 - Mental illness
 - Infidelity
 - Murder
 - Feelings of jealousy, abandonment, revenge & despair
 - External control is used extensively here

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- **3) Power – Psychological Need**
 - Distinctive human need
 - Includes feeling of accomplishment, success, recognition, respect & being heard
 - For some, the need is insatiable
 - For others, they are satisfied with the amount they have
 - For some, it comes at the expense of their relationships with others (greed, external control over others)
 - But for some, it may work for the common good (saving lives or developing new treatments)
 - We need to strive for the latter rather than the former

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- **4) Freedom to express ideas, choices & ability to be constructively creativity – Psychological Need**
 - It concerns us most when we perceive that our freedom is threatened
 - Need balance between “your need to try to force me to live my life the way you want & my need to be free of that force
 - This balance is best expressed by the golden rule “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you”
 - External control is the enemy of freedom
 - When we loose freedom, we loose a defining human characteristic (creativity)

Choice Theory: Basic Needs and Feelings

- **5) Fun – Psychological Need**
 - The genetic reward for learning
 - We play all our lives & as a result we learn all our lives
 - “Fun is best defined by laughter”
 - “People who fall in love are learning a lot about each other, & they find themselves laughing almost continually”
 - “Laughing & learning are the foundation of all successful long-term relationships”

Choice Theory (Quality World)

- As people grow up & interact with environment, they find some parts of world satisfy their needs & make them feel good & other parts do not
- They take this information & build into their memory pictures of people, things, beliefs or situations which seem to be the best ways to satisfy one or more of the basic needs
- The conglomerate of these wants is the world in which we would like to live & is called our **Quality World**

Choice Theory (Quality World)

- It is dynamic as our experiences grow
- Anytime we feel good, we are choosing to behave so that something or someone in our real world comes close to matching the image in our quality world

Choice Theory (Quality World)

- Everyone has their own unique quality world
- Total objectivity is a myth
- It could only exist if we all had exactly the same quality worlds
- It's just like jury trials – everyone sees things from a different perspective
- Only things that are not important to us can be seen as they truly are
- Luckily, there are enough of these unimportant things to almost all of us that we can agree that what is out there is **REALITY**

Choice Theory (Quality World)

- Besides being in conflict with other's quality world wants, our own quality world wants can be in conflict with each other and/or they can be linked together
- Advertisers hope that consumers will put their product into their quality world & link them to the images the consumers already have in their minds (heroes, beauty, power, wealth, etc.)
- Pictures or wants exist in a priority & often it is the therapist's job to help clients to determine priorities about what is need satisfying in the long term & not just for the moment

Choice Theory (Quality World)

- Besides being in conflict with other's quality world wants, our own quality world wants can be in conflict with each other and/or they can be linked together
- Advertisers hope that consumers will put their product into their quality world & link them to the images the consumers already have in their minds (heroes, beauty, power, wealth, etc.)
- Pictures or wants exist in a priority & often it is the therapist's job to help clients to determine priorities about what is need satisfying in the long term & not just for the moment

Choice Theory (Total Behavior)

- Behavior generated to fulfill *quality world wants* is always composed of four elements: actions, thinking, feeling, & physiology
- All behaviors have all 4 components, so it is called **Total Behavior**
- Other psychotherapy theories emphasize one or two of these components whereas Reality Therapy emphasizes all four of them
- However, we only have direct control over two of them: Actions & Thinking

Reality Therapy (Characteristics)

- Reality therapy focuses on what clients can control in a relationship, rather than finding fault or talking about what they can't control
- It is crucial for client to understand they can only control their own actions & behavior, & they can control all of them
- Reality therapists strive to be themselves in order to build relationships with client & teach them how to relate to others
- Therefore, transference is rejected in this therapy

Reality Therapy (Characteristics)

- It is important to keep the therapy in the present & not dwell on the past
- Glasser admits that we are products of the past & the therapist can listen to past experiences briefly, but we are not victims of the past unless we choose to be
- Also, it is important not to focus on the symptoms because they are just the body's way of warning client that behavior they are choosing is not satisfying a basic need
- Glasser believes that if client believes therapist wants to hear symptoms or past, they will comply & result will be therapy that lasts longer than it needs to

Reality Therapy (Therapeutic Process)

- Basic goal is to help clients learn better ways to fulfill all of their basic needs & connect with the people that they have chosen to put into their quality world
- If client has not voluntarily come to therapy, it is key for therapist to focus on connecting with client before doing anything else
- Often these clients have not had any positive relationships in past with adults (teachers, parents, school counselors, etc.)
- Therapist's role is not to judge or evaluate client but act as an advocate to help & support, as a teacher or mentor to client & to encourage them that there is hope

Family Therapy (Application: Therapeutic Techniques & Procedures)

- Practice of reality therapy is conceptualized as the "cycle of counseling" consisting of two components:
 - 1) Creating the counseling environment
 - 2) Implementing specific procedures that lead to changes
- Cycle begins by establishing a working relationship with client & proceeds through an exploration of client wants, needs & perceptions

Family Therapy (Application: Therapeutic Techniques & Procedures)

- Clients explore their total behavior & make their own self-evaluations
- If they decide to try a new behavior, they make plans & commit themselves to plan & there is a follow-up on how well client is doing
- Reality therapy is an art form, not just following procedures
- Each client is different with different needs

Reality Therapy From a Multicultural Perspective

- It is essential that cross-cultural therapists respect differences between their own quality world & that of their clients
- Counselor can work with client to help them develop relationships as they are meaningful to them in their culture
- In some cultures, the procedures need to be modified such as not asking direct questions or accepting "I'll try" when asked to make plans with Japanese clients

Reality Therapy (Contributions)

- It has a short-term focus
- Existentialism exist in the theory as well as cognitive-behaviorism
- There is no hidden agenda by the therapist, it is client focused
- Client is encouraged to decide if what they are doing is working or not

Reality Therapy (Limitations and Criticisms)

- Corey believes that for some cultures, clients may be reluctant to voice their needs, & that discrimination & racism may impede clients from obtaining what they want in life
- The result would be that client may feel misunderstood
- Corey also believes that the psychoanalytic aspects of counseling (unconscious, dreams, transference & past childhood experiences) are not given adequate emphasis in influencing our behavior

Reality Therapy (Limitations and Criticisms)

- Counselors need to ensure that their own values & need to give advise does not pervert the basic concepts of choice theory
- Many people disagree with Glasser that all psychological disorders are behavioral choices & there are no biochemical or genetic influences

Reality Therapy in Summary

- Reality therapy is best characterized as a form of cognitive behavioral therapy
- In Reality Therapy:
 - Therapy is a didactic process
 - Clients must make commitments
 - Punishment is eliminated
 - Therapists do not accept excuses or blaming
- Goals:
 - Clients are taught Choice Theory
 - Clients are helped to get connected or reconnected with people they have chosen to put in their quality world
 - Assist clients in dealing with the present

Reality Therapy in Summary

- Emphasis is on choice & responsibility
- Therapist establishes involvement with the client
- Focus is on client's strengths
- Planning & commitment are essential
- Methods of Reality Therapy:
 - Behavior-oriented methods
 - Contract method
 - Role-playing
 - Confrontation of client

Reality Therapy in Summary

- Functions of Reality Therapists:
 - Setting limits in the therapeutic setting
 - Getting clients to be specific about how they will make desired changes
 - Confronting clients by not accepting their excuses
 - Helping clients reformulate their plans, if necessary
- Reality Therapists deal with the following:
 - What client is currently doing
 - What clients are thinking & feeling, when this relates to what they are doing
 - A client's relationships with significant others
 - Assisting clients in developing an action plan geared for change