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PSY-204

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Case Formulation and Response to Therapy Sessions

Case Formulation: Gloria

In working with Gloria, several major themes emerge based on the case formulation model.

Autonomy:

Gloria clearly struggles with balancing her desire for independence with her need for approval from others. She shows signs of wanting to make her own choices, but she second-guesses herself and often seeks validation, especially from authority figures.

Connectedness:

Gloria wants close relationships but has difficulty trusting others. There's a tension between her desire for connection and her fear of rejection, which keeps her guarded, even in therapy sessions.

Worthiness:

Self-esteem appears to be a major issue for Gloria. She carries guilt over her divorce and worries about how others, particularly her daughter and society at large, perceive her. This guilt feeds into a larger sense of unworthiness that colors her relationships.

Limits and Standards:

Gloria has internalized high standards about what it means to be a "good" woman, mother, and partner. When she feels she's falling short of these standards, she tends to be very hard on herself, which reinforces her feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

Theoretical Application

Freudian/Psychodynamic:

Gloria's internal conflicts—between what she desires and what she believes she “should” do—fit well with psychodynamic theory, particularly Freud's ideas about the id, ego, and superego.

Cognitive-Behavioral (Aaron Beck):

She frequently engages in automatic negative thoughts, particularly about her worth and her ability to maintain relationships.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Gloria is caught between the need for love and belonging and the need for self-esteem. Because these foundational needs aren't fully met, self-actualization feels out of reach for her.

Behavioral/Learning Theory:

Gloria's patterns of seeking approval likely stem from learned behaviors that were reinforced over time, particularly in her earlier family relationships.

Responses to the Three Therapy Sessions

1. Carl Rogers – Person-Centered Therapy

Carl Rogers approached Gloria with empathy, warmth, and unconditional positive regard. He allowed her to lead the conversation, giving her the space to express herself without judgment. Gloria responded well to Rogers' supportiveness, but at times, she seemed to want more direct guidance. While Rogers created a very safe environment, Gloria's deeper issues—like her guilt and self-doubt—weren't fully challenged or addressed in a way that might help her change her thinking patterns.

2. Dr. Fritz Perls – Gestalt Therapy

Dr. Perls' style was much more confrontational. He pushed Gloria to stay present with her emotions and challenged her defenses more aggressively. While this approach surfaced some raw and genuine emotions, it also made Gloria visibly uncomfortable. She often became defensive and struggled to stay open under the pressure. Gestalt therapy brought important feelings to light, but it may have moved too quickly for Gloria to process comfortably.

3. Dr. Albert Ellis – Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

Dr. Ellis focused on identifying and challenging Gloria's irrational beliefs. His approach was direct and cognitive, encouraging Gloria to reframe her thinking and

recognize how her beliefs were contributing to her distress. Although Gloria initially resisted some of Ellis's logic, she gradually engaged with the process. This method seemed effective in helping her see that some of her guilt and fear might not be based on reality.

Reflection

Each therapist brought something valuable to their work with Gloria:

Rogers provided emotional safety.

Perls helped Gloria confront difficult emotions.

Ellis offered tools to restructure harmful thinking patterns.

Ideally, a therapist working with Gloria would blend these approaches, first building a strong, supportive relationship (like Rogers), then gradually introducing emotional and cognitive challenges (like Perls and Ellis) as trust deepens. Gloria needs both compassion and a structured path forward to fully heal and grow.