

COUNSELING ACTIVITY OF A CRISIS PSYCHOLOGIST: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Oksana Voitenko

Master of Psychology, Postgraduate Student,
Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav, Ukraine
e-mail: oxyvoyt@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-6299-5734

Summary

The article explores the fundamental principles of work for a crisis counseling psychologist operating within the humanistic-existential paradigm, namely: social determinism, freedom of choice and personal responsibility, congruence, individual approach, contracted activity, empathetic non-judgmental attitude towards the client. In the intervention process, the psychologist can exert only temporary influence on the client's personality, mediated by the power of ideas, beliefs, and a certain level of social maturity. Caution and "ecology," adhering to certain boundaries are emphasized, with balance being a sign of the psychologist's professionalism and skill. It is noted that neurotic disruptions in the behavior of a crisis client are often caused by prolonged experiences of loneliness, alienation, helplessness, and a sense of constant danger. It is determined that when assisting such individuals, it is crucial to convince them of their personal significance and value to others or at least to a few people, by expressing warmth, sensitivity, empathy, and tolerance. The importance of being able to activate the inner resources of a deprived person, instilling belief in goodness and people, is discussed. However, it is essential to remember that such persons find it challenging to part with a person who understands and accepts them as they truly are. The psychologist must ensure the formation of a reference group to avoid traumatizing the lonely personality with their disappearance or detachment and confirm the fulfillment of the contract conditions. It is established that the structure of professional humanism primarily includes empathy (as the ability to feel and empathize), tolerance for the existence of other views and positions, optimism (faith in the significance and perspective of psychological assistance), flexibility, and balance in choosing means of influence, as well as reflection on one's abilities. The value of an individual's life, openness, and integrity become the main guidelines in the professional activities of a counseling psychologist. The importance of the psychologist's orientation towards creativity in contemporary practice is emphasized, manifested through independence in judgments, open mind, high tolerance for complex and ambiguous situations, a developed desire to explore the beautiful, and the ability to experience a wide range of feelings and social maturity.

Key words: humanistic model, crisis counseling, empathy, social integration, decisiveness, meaning of existence and individuality, self-concept.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/6424>

1. Introduction

According to the national and international experience, the practice of humanistic crisis counseling based on understanding and acceptance of client's own experience, rethinking of self-concept, reconsidering meaning of existence etc. is quite common and effective. Following humanist psychologists, we consider it appropriate to represent the individual in the system

of such structural components as freedom, individuality, social integration, spirituality (*Khomych, Khomych, 2022*). It follows that a healthy person is a free, socially integrated individual, endowed with spirit.

The basic principles of crisis clinical psychologist who works in the humanistic-existential paradigm are social determinism, freedom of choice and personal responsibility, congruence, individual approach, work under contract, empathic, unbiased attitude to client.

2. Analysis of domestic and foreign research

Methodological problems of crisis counseling are clearly represented in the works I. Yalom, R. May, V. Frankl whose works reflect valuable experience of humanistic interaction aimed at developing and acceptance of its own paradigm of life, self-image, as far as updating internal resource. Addressing scientific heritage of existential psychologists, we have identified a number of principles offered by them.

The principle of social determinism of the individual. For clinical psychologist it is important to know that the regulatory aspects of the mind can be brought to a state of chaos by acts of “repression”, that is by individual insincerity with himself. Socially unacceptable activity will look for different form, this time as a neurotic syndrome such as anxiety, forgetfulness, or psychosis in a more serious form.

These symptoms are like buoys that indicate the presence of underlying psychological conflict. Psychologist task is to get to a particular conflict by eliminating confusion in the mind of the client, or by liberation from guilt and thus by restoring the functional unity of his personality. If such a solution is not acceptable, then the client is coming to an informed understanding of this impossibility and the necessity of true renunciation of desire. Psychological counseling is a versatile creative process which is successful because it is not bound by tight causal theory. You can not get to understanding the theory that represents a person as a victim of his instincts; and the only way to save him is an expression of his desires with the least incentive. The basis of the individual is still the personality, with its characteristic commitment, freedom, conscious solutions.

The principle of freedom of choice and personal responsibility. One of the postulates of psychological help – sooner or later client himself has to learn to be responsible for his actions. People often turn to a psychologist with the hope to get a “ready” recipe that clearly implies specific actions required to overcome the crisis or hardship. As psychologist is often perceived as doctor, patients are trying to get from him recipes that easily relieve symptoms. This especially applies to clients who suffer from neuroses as they hold position “not to be guilty.” Neurosis is a rejection of freedom, submission of personality to rigid formulas and transformation of the individual into the machine. However, the psychologist’s recipe is designed for self-organization of the personality.

The psychologist can’t change the circumstances of the client’s way of life, but, based on the information received, he can encourage his self-organization (change of style in activity and communication, organization of routine and rest, change of family relationships, etc.). Mental health presumes sense formation of personal responsibility and freedom.

Thus, freedom, choice is a basic principle and prerequisite of personality existence simultaneously being a part of it. Common sense can inhibit impulses and support them in equilibrium until a decision is made in favor of one of them. Availability of creative capabilities and their implementation is the main feature that characterizes a person. Consultant has to suggest possible ways out of the crisis and to bring the client to independent problem-solving.

Freedom of the individual is able to grow. The healthier the person becomes, the freer he is in creating himself from life material and the bigger becomes the potential of his freedom. Thus, helping the client to overcome personal problem, a consultant helps to become more free and responsible. However, it is important to explain him complex decision-making, when he should consider all the previous experience and the impact of all factors that will help the client realize the Self and learn to use the limitless possibilities of being free by trusting yourself.

The principle of individuality. One of the problems of people seeking psychological help is that they can't be themselves, which can't prove their identities. Neurotics can't accept themselves, can't stand themselves and always want "someone else".

Our life's difficulties usually begin when we start to play a wrong role. Possible manifestations of psychological games include inappropriate behavior, alcoholism, manipulation, ignoring of one's own feelings as far as thoughts of other people etc. The psychological support should be based on the principle of identity: the individual has to develop himself, that is to use his potential, achieve his goals, and understand his purpose. Thus it is necessary to understand the psychological characteristics, or the nature of the client. A dangerous mistake of consultant is to "squeeze" the client into one of the famous categories or to include him in a certain type of personality, sometimes, the one to which the consultant belongs himself.

Consultant has to help client to find himself and his individuality. Each person stands out for its originality, uniqueness of his inner world. In order to find its own "Self" a person has to reach a certain level of unity with the environment. Thus, a professional counselor is intended to help client to find his true Self and find the courage to become this "Self".

The principle of social integration of personality. It is impossible to understand the personality beyond its social environment. It is obvious that without society person loses its meaning. We affirm ourselves not only through our friends, but also through our enemies.

Social integration is an important component of formed personality. It is believed that the problems of failure or success can only be associated with the social environment. However, ability to adapt to society is crucial for the individual. Failure to live in harmony with the environment is the main feature of the neurotic. He is suspicious, the society seems a hostile world to him, and such person moves by life as in the armored car. He thus feels lonely, while the fact of the protest means that a person is independent. Consequently, this causes jealousy, aggression, anxiety. However, this sense acts as a driving force of progress (together with the will). The challenge is to use this power in progressive purposes.

At first glance, the discrepancy is possible between personality and integration. But in essence, we form a whole with other people within ourselves. Egocentric element adversely affects the integrity of the personality structure. The more integrated a personality, the greater is her chance to realize her unique individuality.

The task of the consultant is to help clients to willingly take on social responsibility, inspire them with courage to help get rid of persistent feelings of inadequacy and direct their desires to a socially useful channel.

The principle of spirituality. Obviously, it is impossible to achieve complete harmony. A person will always feel the need for new achievements, "common comforts." Our purpose is a new structural redistribution of energy, activity, and not an absolute harmony. Complete elimination of conflict will lead to stagnation. Our task is to transform destructive conflicts in constructive tension.

Some psychologists are trying to completely erase the guilt feeling, believing that is a symptom of disorder or a neurotic reaction. Yet a strong sense of guilt is associated with neurosis. However, this feeling may be the beginning of spiritual growth if it is connected with the

realization the difference between that thing and the way it should be. Conscience is one of forms of its expression. Spiritual identity is a sign of high spirituality and source development. Thus, the individual portrait would be incomplete if we did not include there its structure spirituality.

The task of counseling is to help clients free themselves from pathological guilt and at the same time teach them to take that worthily and make steady the spiritual tension, which promotes personal growth and is inherent only to human nature.

Analysis of counseling experience: methodological guidance. There is no doubt that people in a state of tension, anxiety, strong emotions suffer from violation of the integrity of mental functions. By helping clients achieve adaptation and as a result new integrity we can make a step forward to recovery. Personality is a dynamic, not static, and its purpose is creation not existence.

The aim of the therapist is new constructive pressure redistribution, not absolute harmony. The task is to transform conflicts in a constructive phenomenon, not destructive (*Tatenko, 2009; Khomych, 2014*).

Often guilt can be quite constructive and can be a principle of spiritual growth of a person. Guilt is often inherent to the state of stress. Feeling of guilt is about understanding the difference between what the thing is and what it should be. Conscience is just a form of expression. Avoiding fault can be found in creation. Let's note that the guilt is connected with the term "freedom", autonomy and moral responsibility. Understanding our inconsistency we can find our own spirituality. Thus, the task of the consultant is to help the client free himself from pathological guilt and at the same time teach them to take that worthily and make steady the spiritual tension, which promotes personal growth and is inherent only to human nature.

Professional development of psychologist is a creative and diverse process primarily resulting experience and mentality of the social environment, its demands and attitudes, cultural organization and philosophical orientations. Contradiction of human needs and ideals extremely actualizes the profession of psychologist; and society democratization raises psychological services closer to the priorities designed to correct the effects of social factors on an individual.

The main task of a crisis psychologist is to draw attention to human individuality, facilitate the deployment of inner freedom and the preservation of personal integrity. The development of the spiritual personality is complex and controversial, so it is usually difficult, if not dramatic, to make moral choice, tune into adequate action, select the direction in interpersonal interactions. Stereotyping and limited individual experience often hinder self-development and self-actualization, and unconsciousness about main leading motives restricts the level of demand, emotional regulation, reducing the mobilization level of energy resources.

The important features of individual clinical psychologist are altruism, kindness, sincerity, organization, communicability, openness, responsibility. Obviously, in an integrated form it looks like decency, intelligence, humanity.

It is worth noting that psychologist's personal position on certain events is particularly important because it can indirectly affect another person, differentiating signs of its identity, assessing readiness for decision-making and more. Due to various circumstances, sometimes it must be noted that psychological analysis or expert advice does not always correspond to his own civil position. This may be the result of an impartial attitude and deep assessment of the client's social situation, his level of cultural development.

Neurotic behavior changes of the crisis client are often caused by prolonged feelings of loneliness, alienation, helplessness, a sense of constant danger. In psychology this phenomenon is often called deprivation – a situation in which the person is unable for a long time to meet some of the basic necessities of life (e.g., significant interaction, communication). In helping

these people it is important to convince them in personal significance and value to others or even for several people, showing warmth, compassion, empathy, tolerance. It is important to be able to encourage internal resources of deprived person and push him to believe in the good and the people. However, we should not forget that it is difficult for such people to part with a person who understands and accepts them as they are. Therefore psychologist has to ensure formation of mature reference group in order not to injure an isolated personality by disappearance or detachment as far as to verify the performance of the contract requirements.

The structure of professional humanism primarily includes empathy (as the ability to feel and empathize), tolerance to the existence of other views and positions, optimism (belief in significance and prospects of psychological assistance), flexibility and deliberation in the choice of the means of influence, reflection of own capabilities. Value of individual person's life, its openness and integrity are the key benchmarks in the professional activity of psychology.

Enhancing professionalism, especially in the provision of specialized care can lead to some impoverishment of their own values and interests of psychologist; development of inertia, banality or rush for experimentation, search of difficult and interesting cases, "insights." Proper therapeutic group work may be the preventive measure, where the open discussion or supervision (professional assistance of trusted experienced specialists) takes place.

In modern practical psychology prominent place is occupied by projecting i.e. activities aimed at the prediction of the results of psychological effects, as well as forecasting of possible changes in the mental development of the individual. In this case psychological intuition and social perception specialist, get special value as far as his optimism.

It seems extremely important in modern psychologist practice to focus on creativity, which is realized through independence in the judgments, open mind, high tolerance for difficult and uncertain situations, developed desire to know the beauty, social maturity and ability to experience a broad palette of feelings.

Humanistic oriented psychologist must respect the free choice of the client. Ability to choose can cause a feeling of satisfaction, pride and responsibility for his own life. The task of psychologist is only to coordinate the requests and opportunities to help understand the adequacy of the selected environment, create the need for love to all living, to nature, to being, to himself.

A psychologist can help to understand the subjective value of human existence and their own vision and sense of life. Loss of value orientations can lead not only to poverty and depression, but bring to the world of spiritual vacuum, lack of freedom, dependence on situational guidelines. In professional activity psychologists have to influence on the individual.

In working with clients in crisis it is particularly important to adhere to ethical principles of work. So, helping people, it is vital not to harm them and their families, not to restrict their psychological space. This principle implies altruism, professionalism and caution in the use of methods of influence and respect for the individual who is going through a difficult period of life.

Adhering to the principles of humanism, the consulting psychologist must strive for relations based on equality and respect for the individual. It's a very important principle of voluntary participation of the client in the consultation process. It is clear that the effectiveness of work will be much higher provided that the client is aware of the importance of the meeting with a psychologist, trusts him, and sees sense in psychological care. An important ethical principle of counseling is an empathic attitude and unconditional acceptance of the client. In this perspective, the professional humanism plays the important role as far as the ability to accept people as a primary value that deserves a happy life.

Empathy is the deep feeling that provides emotional unity of personalities, when one person dissolves to another, identifying herself with her and penetrating her experiences. Humanistic psychologists believe that in this state the complete understanding is reached (*Rozvytok osobystosti v riznykh umovakh sotsializatsii*, 2016; *Khomych*, 2014). Success of the therapist depends on his ability to follow the movements of the client's soul. It is most often seen in conversation and listening.

3. Conclusions

Status of humanistic psychologist calls for caution, for the maximum responsibility. It is important not to turn a meaningful impact into ordinary psychological pressure that restricts, leaving a feeling of insecurity and fear. Using different types of relationships with clients, psychologist has to carefully use manipulative influence which certainly creates a situation of dependence, reduced activity, reinforces the scenario ban. It is important to anticipate adverse processes and prevent the formation of deep internal conflicts.

The purpose of a psychologist is to understand the client according to his individual development model and experience. Psychologist's own experience can help to understand the client's problems, but it has only indirect importance. The psychologist can't transfer his experience to the situation of the client, who asked for help, as there is a high risk to get captured by his own experiences, "undeveloped" traumas that provoke desires, motivations, attitudes to "give advice", and also require psychological analysis of his own problems.

The consultant can use only tested and safe impact technologies, trying them on in each case to individual clients. The use of experimental or too questionable methods leads to unjustified risk. During the process of impact on client we can carry out only a temporary influence on his personality, which is mediated by the power of ideas, beliefs, a certain level of social courage. Remember that the client has personality traits that he is proud of, their own beliefs that formed over the years, experiences that are often dramatic. Therefore, caution and "environmentally friendly" conduct, sticking to certain limits as far as mindfulness have to be a sign of professionalism and skill of a psychologist. In order not to transfer and project their own problems, psychologists should periodically undergo professional supervision (communication with an experienced psychologist about difficult situations or ambiguous feelings).

In the process crisis counseling it is important that the client doesn't have any sense of guilt that he uses someone. It is therefore not necessary to work with relatives, old acquaintances, with whom it is difficult to set professional boundaries and spend additional energy to their psychological defenses, their own ambitions and projections.

References

1. *Rozvytok osobystosti v riznykh umovakh sotsializatsii (2016) [Personality development in different conditions of socialization]: kolektyvna monohrafiia / Za red. L.O. Kalmykovoi, H.O. Khomych. Kyiv : Vydavnychi dim «Slovo» / [in Ukrainian]*
2. *Suchasnyi psykhologo-pedahohichnyi slovnyk (2016) [Modern psychological and pedagogical dictionary] : [avt. kolekt. za red. O. I. Shapran]. Pereiaslav-Khm. : Dombrovska Ya. M. [in Ukrainian]*
3. *Tatenko V.O. (2009) Suchasna psykhologhiia: teoretychno-metodolohichni problem [Modern psychology: theoretical and methodological problems] : navch.posib. Kyiv : Vyd-vo «NAU-druk». [in Ukrainian]*

4. Khomych H. O. (2014) *Spetsialni sfery konsultuvannia [Special areas of consulting]: navch. posib.* Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi : Dombrovska Ya. [in Ukrainian]
5. Khomych V.F., Khomych H.O. (2022) *Psykhologichnyi imunitet ta yoho zberezhennia v umovakh informatsiinykh zahroz ta vyklykiv [Psychological immunity and its preservation in conditions of informational threats and challenges].* Visnyk Natsionalnoho universytetu oborony Ukrainy. Rozdil: Pytannia psykhologii. Vypusk 3 (67). 126–135. [in Ukrainian]
6. Shapran O.I., Khomych H.O. (2023) *Aktualni problemy suchasnoi pedahohiky ta psykhologii [Actual problems of modern pedagogy and psychology] : navchalno-metodychnyi posibnyk dlia mahistrantiv, aspirantiv, naukovo-pedahohichnykh pratsivnykiv.* Pereiaslav : Dombrovska Ya. [in Ukrainian]