

Assessment 1 - Case Study (Essay Format) Choose ONE of the following case studies and critically explore how you might use a therapeutic approach with the client. You should make recommendations for future action and support

The following essay will be exploring case study 1 in more detail. The case study consists of two parents who lost their eight year old daughter to leukemia around 12 months prior after only being diagnosed six months before her death. The mother is experiencing a hard time grieving the loss of her daughter, however she does have three other children and parents that live in the same city although her relationship with her mum is distant. There are various therapeutic approaches that can be applied within therapy to clients - assessed on their needs. Therapists use therapeutic approaches in order to be able to identify the difficulties their clients are facing (American Psychological Association, 2021). The psychodynamic approach aims to pay attention to how experienced life events, past and present relationships influence how you feel and how they influence how you make decisions in life. The therapist will try to identify the difficulties the client faces when trying to distract themselves from experiencing negative thoughts and emotions (Harvard Health Publishing, 2011). The humanistic approach is a person centred approach and explores their individual qualities. The approach comes with assumptions that people are able to work towards achieving their potential (Mcleod, 2020). Cognitive behavioural therapy is another therapeutic approach which involves talking to help make improvements to people's lives by making changes to how people think and behave presently. Cognitive behavioural therapy can be used to help treat mental and physical health problems however, it is generally used when treating anxiety and depression (*Overview - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)*, 2021).

The therapeutic approach that will be explored in more detail throughout this essay will be the Psychodynamic approach. This approach was chosen as it is the most appropriate

approach for this situation as it particularly focuses on how experienced life events, relationships in past and present influence present feelings and behaviours. Psychodynamic therapy can be conducted as an individual, in a group, as a couple or as part of a family and can be carried out short-term or long-term which makes the approach flexible in multiple aspects. The therapist will identify the difficulties that the client has faced previously or is currently facing to gain awareness of their life. According to (*Core Principles of Psychodynamic Therapy Approach*, 2018) therapists explore four main factors of an individual which include; emotions, thoughts, early life experiences and their beliefs, this helps the therapist to establish frequent patterns that arise in the individuals life. This then supports the therapist and client with constructing a plan of coping mechanisms going forward to prevent these patterns from arising. Building a therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client is vital in order for the therapist to assess the real life interaction with the client which can demonstrate to them how the client communicates with other people including; family and friends (Knight, 2017). Research from (*What passes between client and therapist?* | *The Psychologist*, 2015) states that transference is vital when participating in therapy as it allows the therapist to understand the client and their emotions better, embedding transference into therapy can help the therapist better understand the experiences the client has faced in early life relationships and how that has impacted them as a person today.

Relating to the case study being explored psychodynamic approach is the most appropriate approach to carry out as Joanne lost her sister who was 13 years old when she was only seven years old due to leukemia, Joanne then went and lost her daughter who was eight years old after only being diagnosed with leukemia six months prior to her death. From the information provided it does not state whether Joanne sought any professional help after losing

her sister only that approximately a year after losing her daughter she found herself to be struggling to handle everyday life and is finding it difficult to cope with the loss so suggestions were given to her that she seeks professional help. Research from (*Grieving the Death of a Sibling is one of the most neglected types of grief*, 2019) states that losing a sibling at any age will have an extensive impact on people's lives. When a child loses a sibling it can affect them differently from an adult depending on their developmental level and understanding of death. Losing a sibling as a child can negatively impact long-term development, health, behaviour changes and self esteem levels, still pretending to play with deceased sibling, it can also leave them with negative emotions - sad, lonely, afraid, they're not good enough. Children who have a close relationship with their sibling are found to have a more intensive time of grief than children who were more distant from their sibling (Fletcher et al., 2017). Using the psychodynamic approach it allows the client to express how they feel to a therapist to help them better understand their thoughts and emotions that influence their behaviours they carry out. Research has suggested that this approach is beneficial to use with clients living with mental health difficulties as it suggests that it has a positive impact on people with mental and emotional distress. It allows the clients to reflect on what they've expressed, how they feel and their behaviors, it also allows the client to gain a deeper insight to their condition and how they can find ways that are most effective for them and it will be beneficial for the client in order for them to work on their emotional growth for them to be able to understand their emotions and how and when to express them. This is beneficial for the client as they'll understand why and how they have this condition and gain a deeper understanding of how they can control their emotions and how to express them when they feel as though they need to. As our mental illness affects the way we speak, think, feel and act it is important to understand exactly what is going on and why as it

supports them in how to be able to control it overall, how to handle stress, communicate and relate to others and helps them to make healthy choices in their life. It is also important for the therapist to inform the client that mental health and physical health are both equally as important to take care of as they are linked closely together as; if an individual lives with poor mental health it can decrease their exercise levels, make them have lower energy levels, poor sleep, poor diet and overall have an unhealthy lifestyle. This can then result in the client developing physical health problems later on such as; heart disease, diabetes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). In this particular situation the therapist would approach Joanne and speak about her childhood and when she lost her sister when she was young and how it could have emotionally affected her long-term. They would speak to her about how she dealt with her understanding of her sister dying, her relationships with family, what support she sought, how she coped. They could then further discuss the relationship with her mother as the case study states she has support from her parents but the relationship with her mother is distant, the therapist could explore why the relationship is distant and how she feels about this. Then they could explore further and better understand how and why she feels as though she can't carry on with daily activities and how she is struggling to cope. The therapist can also explore what support she has sought and if there is anything in particular that she thinks could be beneficial to her mental health. They will explore all options of support available, discuss feelings, thoughts and behaviours, how she feels towards her other children, if she thinks that they are coping okay and if she has any close relationships with family and friends in order to express feelings. They will develop goals throughout sessions and aim to achieve these by set dates and discover whether they've made any improvements throughout, psychodynamic therapy can be carried out on a short-term or long-term basis - until needs are met.

Losing a child is a life event that will have a profoundly negative effect on a parents life as parents aren't meant to lose their children. Parents who lose children at a young age will experience a more negative impact as they are actively involved in their children's daily activities such as; bathing, changing, putting to bed and waking up, helping with homework. So, when losing a child it can leave the parent feeling empty, lonely, sad, guilt, despair, unfairness, overprotecting other children, feelings of wanting to die and that their life has no meaning (*Grieving the Loss of a Child*, 2012). Every parent will deal with grieving differently but, most have a very difficult period depending on their role in the child's life, and gender. Some parents may feel that the grieving process doesn't seem to get any easier overtime and struggle for long periods which can lead to mental health problems such as; depression, anxiety. This can leave the parents feeling as if they have no purpose in life and feelings of wanting to harm themselves in order to stop them. The loss of a child can also break up relationships between the parents depending on how they cope with grieving as some individuals will turn dependent on alcohol/drugs and some will isolate themselves, stay home and struggle to carry out daily activities, suffer from developed mental health illnesses.

Future recommendations for action and support would be to continue with professional counselling to see if it benefits her in any way. If one type of counselling doesn't seem to be making any beneficial impact on her mental health and life then maybe explore various other therapy methods to see which one suits best. Speaking openly to friends and family can also beneficially impact your life when experiencing grief as you can become close to them and help them cope with their loss. Support groups could be another recommendation for her to attend as it can allow her to socialise with people who are experiencing the same or similar situations and open up about how they feel and their personal methods on their coping mechanisms. The

suggestions could then lead them to having a beneficial impact on her life (*Support groups*, 2016). Another recommendation could be to alter lifestyle choices and introduce more exercise and healthy eating in order to promote good health, improve mental health and ease mental health symptoms. Online support groups are also available for people experiencing mental health problems which are available 24/7 for the public for guidance and support. The aim of this is to support individuals experiencing mental illnesses by making them aware of their condition in detail and suggest coping mechanisms going forward. Also going to your GP to get diagnosed for grief which they can then treat you with appropriate medication if they find it is suitable for the individual.

References

American Psychological Association. (2021). *Different approaches to psychotherapy*. Apa.org. <https://www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/approaches>

Berzoff, J. (2003). Psychodynamic theories in grief and bereavement. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 73(3), 273–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377310309517686>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Learn about mental health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

Core Principles of Psychodynamic Therapy Approach. (2018, June 20). Goodtherapy.org. <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/psychodynamic>

Cortina, M. (2010). The Future of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 73(1), 43–56. <https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.2010.73.1.43>

Fletcher, J., Vidal-Fernandez, M., & Wolfe, B. (2017). Dynamic and heterogeneous effects of sibling death on children's outcomes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(1), 115–120. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1709092115>

Gatta, M., Miscioscia, M., Svanellini, L., Spoto, A., Difronzo, M., de Sauma, M., & Ferruzza, E. (2019). Effectiveness of Brief Psychodynamic Therapy With Children and Adolescents: An Outcome Study. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2019.00501>

Grief Symptoms & Treatment | Push Doctor. (n.d.). Wwv.pushdoctor.co.uk. Retrieved November 16, 2021, from <https://www.pushdoctor.co.uk/what-we-treat/mental-health/grief>

Grieving Parents: Support Groups & Resources. (n.d.). Children's Minnesota. Retrieved November 16, 2021, from <https://www.childrensmn.org/services/family-services/bereavement/bereavement-support-groups/>

Grieving the Death of a Sibling is one of the most neglected types of grief. (2019). HealGrief. <https://healgrief.org/grieving-the-death-of-a-sibling/>

Grieving the Loss of a Child. (2012, July 2). Cancer.net. <https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/grieving-loss-child>

Harvard Health Publishing. (2011, August). *Types of psychotherapy - Harvard Health*. Harvard Health; Harvard Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/types-of-psychotherapy>

helpguidewp. (2019, January 7). *HelpGuide.org*. HelpGuide.org. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>

Is Psychodynamic Therapy an Effective Approach to Treatment? (n.d.). Verywell Mind.
<https://www.verywellmind.com/psychodynamic-therapy-definition-uses-effectiveness-5094933>

Knight, Z. G. (2017). A proposed model of psychodynamic psychotherapy linked to Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 24(5), 1047–1058. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.2066>

Natural Therapies Submissions - CP. (2013). Health.gov.au; Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phi-natural-therapies-submissions-containerpage/>

Overview - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). (2021, February 10). Nhs.uk.
[https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/overview/#:~:text=Cognitive%20behavioural%20therapy%20\(CBT\)%20is](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/overview/#:~:text=Cognitive%20behavioural%20therapy%20(CBT)%20is)

Sublette, M. E., & Novick, J. (2004). Essential Techniques for the Beginning Psychodynamic Psychotherapist. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 58(1), 67–75.
<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.2004.58.1.67>

Support groups. (2016, July 30). The Loss Foundation.
<https://thelossfoundation.org/support-groups/>

What passes between client and therapist? | *The Psychologist*. (2015). Bps.org.uk.
<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-28/july-2015/what-passes-between-client-and-therapist>