

Describe and discuss Egan's (2002) 'three stage model' within the helping process.

In present day society the high volume of individuals suffering with mental health struggles is substantial, yet many do not disclose their struggles with other people, whether that be because they do not wish to, or they do not know how to express what they may be feeling. The benefits of expressing how you feel in relation to mental well-being is evident, thus stating the importance of discovering a way in which to help individuals speak their mind, to discuss how they feel and discover a solution to any problem that they may present. This was a subject that was noticed by a profound professor Gerard Egan; after many years studying and teaching philosophy and psychology, Egan produced the well-known workings of 'The skilled helper'. This book, used internationally throughout the counselling field, molded the way in which we can help individual's tackle their worries, helping them to understand their own minds, before they themselves discover a solutional process to eliminate the negative thoughts, 'with the aim of helping clients develop their problem-solving abilities and their opportunity-development strategies.' (Counselling Tutor, 2022). The model created by Egan is separated into three different stages; the first stage being to outline the individual's current circumstance, what is happening that has made them seek outside help. Stage two requires the individual to express what they desire their situation to be like instead of the current circumstance, thus introducing stage three, helping the individual to identify a strategy or plan themselves, to improve the problems they may be facing. Throughout this essay, we will go into depth about the process of each stage in relation to the model; the skills required to use such method, also whether the three-stage model is an effective way in which to help individuals in need of guidance.

Building the framework for problem management was essential to the field of counselling, Egan discovered the importance of teaching people how to help themselves in tough situations in the mid 1970s, developing said model, thus, paving the way in which those of the profession can help with their cliental today, though Egan's model is categorised as an eclectically based solution focused model, sourcing back from Carkuff's method of high level functioning helpers. Defining the term 'high level functioning helpers', is that of building an interpersonal relationship with the client from the helper's point of view; building rapport and showing that of personal emotions, such as empathy, respect, concreteness, which helps in turn to build trust within the relationship, thus helping the process of treatment. The nature and quality of these interpersonal relationships may greatly influence the outcome of treatment, since it is only when there is a strong therapeutic relationship that there is a commitment to the treatment process (Mattingly, 1991a; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). Egan's work can also trace back to other psychologists such as Carl Roger's; familiarities in regard to showing the importance the core conditions can have in the helping process, the use of the core conditions such as empathy and congruence, shine through in the three stage model that Egan produced, as it was evident to Egan that it was an effective way of building a trusting relationship with the client. 'He added to the ideas of Carl Rogers by taking the work of other psychologists and constructing a theory of helping based on the skills required at different stages in the helpful change process.' Sanders (2002, p. 73). Adding his own way of thinking to said method, Egan has been known for taking a different approach to help better

individuals circumstance; he believed there were other ways in which to help than to simply use that of already documented research, outlining it was more beneficial to be in real world environments, 'He believed the challenge for psychology was to get out of textbooks and into social settings.' (Steven Lucas, 2018). Egan practiced his skills in many locations, giving more emphasis to his ideas, leading to the development of the three-stage model, knowing that from experience his process for problem prevention had more grounding and evidence to back his theory. 'Most of the counselling work that Egan did took place within a variety of organisations and institutions worldwide, he described this work as his fourfold approach.' (Steven Lucas, 2018). Egan also believed in the importance of social influence; 'behaviour that one person causes in another, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer, other people and society in general.' (Minds, 2019), this is due to the effect the helper can have in relation to the client, such as if the helper is confidently disclosing personal information to said client, it may in turn make the client feel more comfortable and trusting to allow them to vocalise their circumstance and concerns, he also expressed that his method was not that of a cure, but a prevention technique. 'Egan considered his methods to be more about prevention than cure.' (Steven Lucas, 2018). After outlining the aspects, he believed to be important to help in this field of work, Egan then adjusted Carkuff's theory, building the three stage model; this was conducted of three major steps to take in the process of problem management, each step built upon essential skills to consider. 'Effective helpers use a mix of styles, skills, and techniques tailored to the kind of relationship that is right for each client. And they remain themselves while they do so.' (Egan, 2014, p.44). S.O.L.E.R essential skills in the counselling field is that of a guideline for those who wish to help their clients as much as possible, 'It is a method of actively listening to people, It can be a very effective way of listening to people in a counselling situation, but also in conversation generally.' (ACS Distance Education, 2019a). The definitions being S, sitting squarely, showing your attention to solely on the client, O, open posture, making the client more comfortable in your presence, L, leaning towards client to show active listening, E, eye contact, attentive gesture, lastly, R, relaxing body language and relaxed behaviour, to show calm energy towards your client, ensure there is no rush for them to express their worries; All of which are the key guidelines Egan wished to include in his model to ensure maximum results. Stage one consisted of the exploration of the client's current circumstance, allowing the client to express what may be on their mind, why they have come for help. During this stage, the helper must ensure they are using some of the key skills; showing signs of active listening to build the trust required, such as leaning towards client, ensure no judgements are being made, affirming gestures such as nodding to confirm that they are listening, also paraphrasing and reflection to eliminate any confusing. The most important part of stage one from the helper's perspective is to know what the most important situation is in which to focus on, narrowing down the key issue, asking questions to then have the knowledge to move on to stage two. 'Probes, used judiciously, help clients name, take notice of, explore, clarify, or further define any issue at any stage of the helping process.' (Egan, 2014, p.120). The second stage is that of challenging the client, widely known for Egan's work to differ from other methods, as it is uncommon to question or challenge the client's point of view, 'Effective helpers are not only understanders (listening, processing, sharing empathic highlights) and clarifiers (probing, summarizing) but also reality testers (challenging)' (Egan, 2014, p. 176). Asking questions during this stage is crucial as it is necessary for stage three. Questions such as 'What in particular about this is a problem for

you?', 'What does she/he/they think or feel about this?' (Counselling Tutor, 2016). Ensuring the client feels that they have support to make changes to their situation, the answers given from these types of questions then allows for stage three to be put in to process as you have now identified the core problems, that can have a sufficient action plan put into place to positively change the current circumstance. 'Possibilities need to be turned into goals because helping is about solutions and outcome. A client's goals constitute his or her agenda for change.' (Egan, 2014, p.29). Asking more direct questions, while leading the client to find the solutions themselves they feel they can produce, is the next stage, questions such as 'What are the best ways for you to move forward from this?', 'What will you do to achieve your desired outcome?', 'What time frame do you have to achieve said goals?'; leading the client to put forth a productive plan of action to find a solution to their problem in a more clear directive form, thus, the three stage model gaining the term the solution focused model. Lastly, reviewing the circumstance is what would follow; checking to see if the solutions are being executed by the client as planned, to discover if the process has been beneficial to the client, ensure not to be judgemental as the helper, solely actively ensuring to produce a positive outcome. 'To avoid both naivety and cynicism, helpers should pursue a course of upbeat and compassionate realism' (Egan, 2014, p.18). When it comes to clients, the very best helpers have always been learners. They instinctively know that they cannot know everything about everyone but don't find that fact self-defeating (Egan, 2014, p.53).

Through exploring the method put forth by Egan, it has been widely reviewed as an extraordinary way to help those who struggle with certain aspects of life; yet some have outlined criticism towards the model in relation to it's narrowed minded approach, Ashencaen Crabtree and Baba (2001) assert that 'all Western counselling modalities focus on the individual, and their needs and goals. They argue that in some cultures, people see themselves less as an individual and more as a member of the wider community, prioritising its collective needs over their own.' As well Egan himself stating 'Inevitably, the helper's personal culture interacts with the clients, for better or for worse (2014 p. 45). Although, it is evident that most theories and methods will have their faults, it can not outshine the profound results the three stage model has had on individuals in our society. The internationally known method of problem management is used in a variety of professional setting, from teachers, teaching assistants, doctors, dentist; 'It has been approximately thirty years since Egan (1975) introduced his acronym S.O.L.E.R as an aid for teaching and learning about non-verbal communication. There is evidence that the S.O.L.E.R framework has been widely used in nurse education with little published critical appraisal' (Stickley, 2011), also many individuals in our society practise this technique in day to day life without realising they are in use. Since the development of 'The skilled helper', there have been many renditions to the first book, all outlining the same framework, yet simply adding more ideas on how to better the idea to cater to the modern day society; rendering that the basic framework laid out by Egan has been substantial for the counselling field. All methods in this field are uncertain of the results they will produce as every individual desire a different form of help, yet this method has a clear indication of widely positive results. Moving forward, many professional in this field is sure to build onto this method, as Egan as done so with others; ensure more help for other individuals in the future.

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