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Introduction

Sue Wheeler

Psychodynamic counselling is rooted in psychoanalytic theory and practice. It is taught throughout Britain and other countries worldwide on counselling and psychotherapy training courses. It draws on the work of Freud, Jung, Klein, Winnicott, Kohut, Erickson, Guntrip and many others, a rich wealth of material that helps us to understand the functioning of the human psyche, the stages of human development, intimate relationships and mental health. The theory provides us with the potential for insight and understanding in working therapeutically with individuals, couples, groups or organisations when things go wrong or when expectations are not fulfilled.

In fact there is such a wealth of theory to refer to that for a counsellor training course of limited duration, it is a major task to decide what is essential to the curriculum and what must be left out. There is also the problem of distinguishing between what is appropriate for five times weekly analysis, compared with brief psychodynamic therapy in a GP practice. The diverse schools of psychoanalytic thinking also challenge the trainer, particularly when no particular body of knowledge is favoured and an integration of theory is attempted.

We are also compelled to take account of the modern world in which diversity abounds. Searching classical psychoanalytic literature for references to race, culture or disability is not always rewarded. Searching classical psychoanalytic literature for references to gender identity, sexual orientation and the emancipation of women reveals plenty, but much of which is not acceptable in a world that embraces diversity and seeks to afford equality for all. It is possible to find reference

to some aspects of religion and certainly to psychotherapy with older people, but in the context of the modern world, in multi faith societies and with life expectancy ever increasing, there is room for more contemporary ideas. Indeed, the social context of the twenty first century, that provides the backdrop for the hopes, fears and aspirations of our clients, warrants attention, as people and organisations are shaped by the social systems that prevail.

The intention of this book is to re-examine various topics that might be valuable to the counsellor in practice, when faced with someone who is in some way 'different' in the consulting room, from a psychoanalytic perspective. The intention is to fill in some of the gaps left by other psychoanalytic writers, by providing some thoughts about how psychoanalytic ideas can be applied to counselling that meet the demands of the modern world.

This book should be essential reading for all counsellors and psychotherapists in training and for experienced practitioners who need to ensure that they are up to speed in thinking about issues of difference that affect their practice. It is only in the past decade that equal opportunities legislation and the need to be proactive in thinking about diversity have begun to make their mark on counselling and psychotherapy training. Many experienced therapists will not have been introduced to the kind of issues discussed in this book. Complacency is no longer acceptable and this book will provide good continuing professional development material, to bring the reader up to date.

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