

My journey as a counsellor

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Reflecting on the first weeks of practicum, I informed my supervisor that I was conflicted about my base theoretical orientation. She was helpful and asked me to visualize a counselling house. She asked me what my main room would be, known as the primary focus. She also had me reflect on when integrating different modalities, what other rooms I would like to have in my counselling house and to focus on the language I use during sessions with my clients. My main room was Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), where I started integrating different rooms and models, such as narrative therapy.

At the beginning of the practicum, I used a lot of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for my clients experiencing anxiety. I was comfortable with that approach because it was evidence-based, structured, and directive. However, I challenged myself to step out of my comfort zone and explore other modalities, as I wanted to work from an eclectic approach suitable for my client. I then integrated the narrative approach, normalizing clients' feelings and stories. Additionally, narrative therapy is a beneficial approach to help restore grief and loss experiences by finding new meanings to their stories.

Additionally, some good insights I gathered during supervision was to allow my client to write a letter to express her sorrow and experiences. Essentially, she will step into the other person's shoes and write a letter to herself as if she were the person she had lost. The idea was to allow her to process what has occurred and where she can get in touch with what she needs to hear back. Hopefully, this will help my client let go of what happened by creating a release ceremony for herself. A release ceremony could be as simple as ripping the letter into pieces and letting the wind take it, putting it into the river, or having it contained in a jar. The goal would be to help my client craft meaning from her storyline (Sharf, 2012).

The next step would be to invite my client to describe her experience in a new storyline using a mantra she has processed (Standish, 2013). For example, creating a meaning like “I survived this experience” and “I learned from this experience.” If my client has those coping statements, she can process what happened.

As a practicum student, there were times when I doubted my competence in this rewarding field. However, by reflecting on my characteristics, I started thinking more about what I could bring to my role as a therapist. Hence, I started exploring different modalities, such as Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), Narrative Therapy, Person-centered therapy, Psychodynamic, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to enhance my toolbox.

I am looking forward to taking the EMDR course over the summer so that I can support clients who are impacted by trauma.

