

Reality Therapy and School Counseling

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Reality Therapy is an effective tool for school counseling because it provides a focused method for students to examine their current state and to determine if it is helping them reach their desired goals. Choice Theory is the cornerstone of Reality Therapy which was developed by Dr. William Glasser in the 1950s and 1960s. Choice Theory states that an individual does not control his or her situation, but an individual does control how he or she responds to a situation (Peterson, 2000, p. 41). Much of Dr. Glasser's early work was done in a school for delinquent girls. His initial usage of Reality Therapy helped to lower the school's behavioral referrals dramatically (Henderson & Thompson, 2011). According to Palmer Mason and Duba (2009), Reality Therapy is helpful in assisting the client in examining two basic ideas. "The first assumption is that their present behavior is not getting them what they want; the second assumption is that humans are motivated to change when they believe they can choose other behaviors that will get them closer to what they want (Palmer Mason & Duba, 2009, p. 6)." This method of thinking provides a helpful connection between feelings, thoughts, and actions and goals that many students would not think of on their own. Teaching students to more fully understand the connection between their current state and desired state is a useful lesson that is applicable to numerous aspects of life. This will help students become more self-aware of their own feelings, thoughts, and actions and how they affect their goals.

I selected Reality Therapy for student KL because I wanted her to make the connection between her lack of action and her poor grades in school. KL frequently states that she wishes she would achieve higher grades in school, yet she often fails to complete her work on time. She says that she is distracted at home, and she does not have a set schedule in the evenings in which to complete her homework. I want this student to take action that will move her closer to her goal of academic success.

In a school counseling environment Reality Therapy can be used to help students reach their goals because it teaches people to examine the relationship between their actions and their goals. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) focuses school counseling in the areas of Academic Development, Personal/Social Development and Career Development. Reality Therapy can be used to further the goals of students by improving actions and behaviors in each of these areas. Palmer Mason and Duba (2009) believe that Reality Therapy is uniquely advantaged to work well with the ASCA model because it builds excellent rapport between counselor and counselee and it helps the counselee learn to make better choices, thus improving his or her self-esteem (Palmer Mason & Duba, 2009, p. 10). Reality Therapy has the capacity to be used to solve many different types of concerns that students bring to school counselors.

This method of therapy is also useful in a school counseling setting because goals can be achieved with it relatively quickly. Results can often be seen with ten or less sessions (Henderson & Thompson, 2011, p. 309). This is a very important advantage for any method a school counselor would use since it is often difficult for school counselors to see students for numerous sessions due to high case loads and limited time resources. A large component of school counseling is academic goal setting. Reality Therapy can help students look at what they are currently doing for classes and determine if this behavior is sufficient or needs to be changed to achieve the goals they want.

Reality Therapy can successfully be used in a school setting by school counselors. It helps students redirect their feelings, thoughts and actions to achieve their goals in a positive, forward-thinking way. Reality Therapy is compatible with setting goals in the domains of Academic, Social/Personal and Career Development that are promoted by ASCA. This method is efficient in that results can be seen in a relatively short amount of time. Reality Therapy can

be an excellent tool for school counselors in helping students set realistic goals to improve their academic performance.

References

- Henderson, D. A. & Thompson C. L. (2011). *Counseling Children*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.
- Palmer Mason, C & Duba, J. D. (2009). Using Reality Therapy in Schools: Its Potential Impact on the Effectiveness of the ASCA National Model. *International Journal of Reality Therapy*, 29 (2), 5-12.
- Peterson, A. V. (2000). Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice Theory & Research*. 28 (1), 41

Reality Therapy Rubric Based on Peterson (2000)

Student's Name: _____ Evaluator's Name: _____

Skill	Demonstrated	Not Observed
Informed Consent/Confidentiality Statement		
Establish Rapport		
Goal – What do you want?		
Current Actions – What are you doing/feeling/thinking right now?		
Self-Evaluation – How is this helping?		
Change – How can you do better?		
Plan – What do you want to do to move you closer to your goal?		
Commitment – Scale 1 to 10		
Schedule Next Meeting		