

Counseling Theories Comparison Chart

Theory name	Emphasis on human nature	Root psychological problem	Therapeutic approach
Psychoanalytic	Conflicts within the unconscious shape thoughts, feelings, and behaviors	Unresolved childhood experiences, defense mechanisms	Dream analysis, free association, exploration of unconscious
Adlerian	Strive for superiority, belonging	Feelings of inferiority, lack of social connection	Encouragement, tasks to build self-esteem & social connection
Existential	Freedom and responsibility in the face of absurdity	Anxiety about creating meaning in life	Finding meaning & responsibility in choices
Person-centered	People are inherently good and capable of self-growth	Negative self-image, incongruence between ideal & real self	Unconditional positive regard, empathy, genuineness
Gestalt	Focus on present experience, self-awareness	Unfinished business, blocked emotions	Awareness exercises, integrating unfinished business
Behavior	Learned behaviors influence well-being	Unwanted behaviors reinforced by environment/negative social modeling	Conditioning techniques, exposure therapy, skills training
Cognitive behavior theory (CBT)	Thoughts, behaviors, emotions interact	Unhealthy thought patterns, learned behaviors	Cognitive restructuring, exposure therapy, behavioral techniques
Reality	Meeting basic needs for mental health, people have control over themselves	Unmet basic needs, distorted perceptions	Fulfilling basic needs, reality testing
Feminist	Focuses on gender roles & power dynamics	Gender oppression, societal expectations	Empowerment, challenging societal norms
Postmodern	Challenges grand narratives, emphasizes social constructs	Dominant maladaptive narratives lead to negative identity construction	Recognizing client strengths and the language creates meaning, deconstructing narratives, exploring power dynamics
Family systems	Individuals function within a system	Family dynamics, unhealthy communication patterns	Family therapy techniques to improve communication & interaction

Reference: Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Client information	
Name:	Age:
Gender:	Date:
Reason for referral:	
Client goals:	
Counseling approach(es):	
Reasons for theory selection	
Explain why the selected theory is relevant to the client's presenting issues:	
Describe how your selected theory or theories align with the client's goals:	
Describe why you believe this approach will resonate with the client:	

Session planning

Use this space to plan how you will implement your chosen therapeutic approach, including exercises, activities, discussion techniques, and the intended outcome of each.

Session notes

Use this space to record the success of the planned techniques or activities, any observations, and any adjustments you made to your selected theories.