Counseling & Helping Relationships

This is the largest content area on the exam. Learn each theory's founder, view of people, key terms and techniques, then practice choosing the response a counselor from that theory would give.

> **Where it shows up on the NCE:** Counseling Skills & Interventions (the largest NCE domain); Treatment Planning; Core Counseling Attributes.

Individual theories

Theory	Founder(s)	Key concepts	Techniques
Psychoanalytic	Freud	Unconscious; id, ego, superego; defense mechanisms; transference	Free association, dream analysis, interpretation
Analytical	Jung	Collective unconscious, archetypes, persona, shadow, anima/animus	Dream and symbol work
Individual (Adlerian)	Adler	Social interest, inferiority, lifestyle, birth order, fictional finalism	Early recollections, acting "as if," spitting in the soup, push-button
Person-centered	Rogers	Congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy (core conditions)	Reflection; nondirective stance
Existential	Frankl, May, Yalom	Meaning, freedom, responsibility, death, isolation	Logotherapy, paradoxical intention (Frankl)
Gestalt	Perls	Here and now, awareness, unfinished business	Empty chair, top dog/underdog, exaggeration
Behavioral	Skinner, Wolpe, Bandura	Reinforcement, extinction, shaping, modeling	Systematic desensitization, token economy, exposure
REBT	Ellis	A-B-C-D-E; irrational "musts"	Disputing irrational beliefs, homework
Cognitive therapy	Beck	Automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, cognitive triad, schemas	Socratic questioning, collaborative empiricism
Reality / choice theory	Glasser; Wubbolding	Five needs: survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, fun	WDEP: Wants, Doing, Evaluation, Plan
Transactional analysis	Berne	Parent, Adult, Child ego states; games; life scripts; strokes	Script and game analysis
Solution-focused	de Shazer, Berg	Focus on solutions and exceptions, not problems	Miracle question, scaling, exception questions
Narrative	White & Epston	People are not their problems; dominant vs. preferred stories	Externalizing, re-authoring
Motivational interviewing	Miller & Rollnick	Ambivalence; change talk; spirit of collaboration	OARS: open questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries

Theory	Founder(s)	Key concepts	Techniques
DBT / ACT	Linehan / Hayes	Dialectics, distress tolerance / acceptance, values, defusion	Skills training / mindfulness and committed action

Family systems

Approach	Founder	Key ideas
Bowen	Murray Bowen	Differentiation of self, triangulation, multigenerational transmission, genogram
Structural	Salvador Minuchin	Boundaries (enmeshed vs. disengaged), subsystems, joining, enactment
Strategic	Jay Haley, Cloé Madanes	Directives, paradoxical interventions, power and hierarchy
Experiential	Virginia Satir	Communication stances: placater, blamer, super-reasonable, irrelevant; congruence

Skills and process

Microskills (Ivey)	Attending, open and closed questions, paraphrasing, reflecting feeling, summarizing, confronting discrepancies.
SOLER (Egan)	Squarely face, Open posture, Lean in, Eye contact, Relaxed.
Carkhuff empathy scale	Five levels; level 3 is “interchangeable” (accurate) empathy, the minimum for helpful responses.
Stages of change	Prochaska & DiClemente: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance (relapse may occur).
Crisis intervention	Ensure safety first, assess risk (e.g., C-SSRS), stabilize, then plan and connect to support.
Defense mechanisms	Repression, denial, projection, displacement, reaction formation, rationalization, sublimation, regression.

Exam traps

- Match the technique to the theory named in the question stem, not to the one you prefer.
- Rogers’s core conditions are necessary and sufficient in person-centered theory.
- Systematic desensitization (Wolpe) pairs relaxation with a fear hierarchy (reciprocal inhibition).
- Safety comes before insight in any crisis question.

Quick self-check

1. Which theorist uses the WDEP system?
2. The miracle question comes from which approach?
3. Name Rogers’s three core conditions.
4. Enmeshed and disengaged boundaries belong to which family approach?
5. What does OARS stand for in MI?

Answers: 1. Reality therapy (Wubbolding, building on Glasser). · 2. Solution-focused brief therapy. · 3. Congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy. · 4. Structural (Minuchin). · 5. Open questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries.

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