ECLECTICISM IN COUNSELLING FOR BEREAVEMENT: A CASE

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Abstract

Bereavement is an experience that most people will experience some point in lives. Sometimes psychological intervention would be beneficial if the grief is intense and prolonged, or when there are other emotional pain, irrational beliefs and unresolved issues involved. In this case study, the client, a 27-year-old Malay university student, experienced intense grief and guilt after her father passed away a month earlier. Her relationship with her father had been cold and distant as a result of his gambling problem ever since she was five years old. The client was in great remorse and was blaming herself constantly since his death for having rejected him when he was alive. The counsellor adopted an integrative approach of technical eclecticism to use techniques and strategies flexibly from different psychotherapies, including empty chair and catharsis from Gestalt therapy, externalizing the problem from narrative therapy, and visualization as well as anchoring from Satir model, to assist the client while basing her practice and selection on a coherent theory of personality from humanistic psychology which emphasized self acceptance and self worth, human strengths and resources, as well as phenomenological realities. The techniques from different schools of psychotherapies were used mainly to help the client to enhance her self worth and self acceptance, to activate her strengths and resources in coping, and to help her reframe her phenomenological realities.

Keywords: Eclecticism, counselling, bereavement, psychological intervention

1.0. Introduction

Everyone suffers from losses some point in life. The loss could be tangible or intangible. Tangible losses could include the loss of a beloved person, a valuable thing or an asset while intangible losses could be the loss of a relationship, a privilege or the opportunity to fulfill a dream. In fact, throughout the life span, people are experiencing losses and facing grief as a result. Children experience the loss of total attention and privilege when a younger sibling is born. Adolescents may lose an important friend, a beloved pet, or a close kin. Adults may lose a job or a beloved person in close relationship. In late adulthood, people lose health and youth, old friends and spouses to death, as well as the opportunity to realize one’s dreams. All losses bring about grief (Buntin, 1985). However, some losses may be more difficult to deal with than the others. Bereavement is a state of losing someone because the person has passed away. It is a particularly difficult loss to deal with for most people, especially when the relationship is close or when there is unfinished business involved. Therefore, bereavement is often an issue that brought people to counselling. Individuals have feelings of grief and possibly other feelings with regards to the deceased in bereavement.

For many people, the pain in bereavement can be so intense and disabling that it greatly disrupts the life and functioning of the grieving individuals. As a result, an individual may try to escape or disconnect oneself from feeling the pain and from grieving, consciously or unconsciously, through various means such as trying to carry on life as if nothing happens, to keep oneself busy or through various unhealthy addiction. Our social norms also tend to discourage people from experiencing and expressing emotional pain, viewing negative affects and emotional instability as weak, crazy, self-pitying or threatening. In addition, the grieving individual may also feel the need and responsibility to support surviving kins by suppressing his or her own grief to act strong.

As a result, individuals have difficulty in experiencing and expressing their grief for the loss, thus resulting in an inability or unwillingness to mourn. Nevertheless, many psychologists believe that the inability, or unwillingness to grieve affect healing, and may form a core part of a range of psychopathology (Kiesler, 1996; Seligman, 2006).

Findings of past research supported this proposition. Bereaved parents with unresolved grief were found to have worsening mental and physical health 4 to 9 years later (Lannen et al., 2008). When people refuse or are unable to grieve, the loss becomes an unfinished business being avoided, rather than being faced and with closure found. As a result, the unfinished business remains powerful in the background from the perspective of Gestalt therapy, clamouring for completion, thus affecting a person’s effective functioning and resulting in a range of psychopathology (Seligman, 2006). This may be the reason why grief is one of the four potential problem areas interpersonal therapists stresses on and assesses in counselling and psychotherapy (Kiesler, 1996).

1.1. The Definition of Bereavement

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary (2005), bereavement is the state of having lost a relative or close friend because they have died. It is characterised by grief and emotional pain (Kubler-Ross, 1969). When individuals express these sadness and grief, they are mourning for their loss.
2.0. Counselling and Psychotherapy For Bereavement

People react to the death of a closed one differently. Grief is a normal feeling and response of bereavement (Buntin, 1985). When someone is close to the deceased or when the person experiences more losses, or when there is unfinished business involved, bereavement may be highly challenging for individuals. Sometimes, bereavement can cause serious problems, such as prolonged and intense grief, depression, drug or alcohol abuse, intense guilt, irrational thoughts of being responsible for the death and extreme despondency in individuals. When these happen, professional help is required.

Even though some psychologists believe that everyone grieves in his or her unique ways (Joyce, 1984), others believe that there are a few common processes which people tend to go through (Buntin, 1985; Kubler-Ross, 1969).

According to the latter, denial is usually the first response for individuals in bereavement. They usually feel shocked, disbelief and emotional numbed. During this time, individuals may actively deny what have happened or subconsciously forget what have actually happened. After some time, most people would be able to accept the loss as real. Only then the healing begins and the person moves on to grieve for the loss. At this stage, individuals tend to feel angry of what happened. Sometimes, they also feel guilt as there are regrets, secrets and unresolved issues. As people process through negative emotions and cope with the changes brought upon by the death of a loved one, they reinvest themselves in other attachments. During final stages of grieving, individuals begin to pick up their lives again (Kubler-Ross, 2005).

Grief work often involves helping the client in accepting the loss and engaging in self-care as well as coping, while dealing with emotions that arise from time to time and developing a new positive identity for oneself which may include being a survivor after the loss (Kato & Tracci, 1999).

2.1. Applying Eclecticism Approach in This Study

Technical eclecticism was adopted in this case study in order to benefit flexibly from the strength and diversity of the vast valuable techniques and approaches different schools of psychotherapy have to offer. Unlike unsystematic eclecticism which uses techniques from different schools of psychotherapy without a coherent theory of personality, technical eclecticism has a theory of personality and human nature that guides conceptualization of the case and selection of various techniques and strategies (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993).

In this case study, the underpinning theory of personality and human nature was drawn from humanistic psychology, which was based mainly on the work of Virginia Satir, and Carl Rogers, stressing the importance of self worth and self acceptance. According to humanistic psychology, every individual is unique and has an innate capacity to grow (Satir et al., 1991). People must be studied holistically and it is their subjective world from people's own perspective that is important. In order to do so, they can count on their valuable innate capacities and resources, such as love, connectedness, choice, creativity, freedom, responsibility, humour, spontaneity and ego transcendence (Corey, 2012). In addition, enhancing self awareness and self-worth is an important component of humanistic psychology to psychotherapy.

According to Carl Rogers (1959), an important authority of humanistic psychology, as individuals develop, they develop an awareness of themselves. With this self awareness, they need positive regards from people around them in the form of being emotionally and physically touched, being loved, being valued and cared for so as to develop self-worth, or positive regards for themselves. If individuals believe that others value them and love them, they will come to believe that they are lovable and develop a sense of self worth. Self worth is a fundamental factor for an individual to become a fully functioning person.

Virginia Satir and colleagues (1991) held a similar view on human development that early social interaction, particularly in the family, influences how an individual views the world, oneself and others, as well as how the individual copes. These early views and patterns will tend to persist into adulthood and are often no longer adaptive. A good psychotherapy will be to renew individual’s experience and perspective to release them from maladaptive patterns of the past. Even though the past influences an individual, Virginia Satir and colleagues (1991) believes that positive change is always possible.

In addition, similarly to Carl Rogers, self-awareness and self-esteem are also viewed by Virginia Satir and colleagues (1991) to be fundamental for a person to become highly functioning. Therefore, one of the main tasks of psychotherapists using Satir model is to enhance self awareness and self esteem in clients. Acceptance and appreciation of oneself and the past is also an important part of Satir model to promote inner harmony that heals and transcends pain and conflicts (Satir et al., 1991). In addition to that, interpersonal psychotherapy was used in conjunction with humanistic psychology to conceptualize the case and guide the intervention in this case study as it has the strength of providing a systematic framework to help individuals cope with issues in four interpersonal problem areas. Moreover, it does not contradict with humanistic psychology which also emphasizes the importance of social interaction and relationship to an individual.

As for the various counselling strategies and techniques in this case study, they were based on an integrative approach of technical eclecticism which were drawn from a variety of different theories of psychotherapies whenever deemed appropriate. For instance, the strategies and techniques of empty chair technique, relive of the past from psychodynamic therapy, finding closure for unfinished business and catharsis from Gestalt therapy, externalizing problem from narrative therapy and reconstruction of relationship with the deceased from interpersonal therapy were utilized flexibly to help the client in this case study.

3.0. Methodology

3.1. The Respondent

This study is an action study using two sessions of counselling with the client. A respondent was 27-year-old...
4.2. Counselling Processes

The counsellor shifted between nondirective client-centred approach and directive approach to achieve the counselling goals. Besides supporting the client through empathic listening, helping her to express her regrets and releasing her emotions, the counsellor tried to lead the client towards developing new perspectives towards unresolved issue of the past and new relationship with deceased father, thus enhancing self acceptance, self-worth and inner strength.

4.2.1. First Session

During the first session, the client tried to appear calm but her mood quickly went down when she began talking and she was fast to burst into tears several times. Her speech was slowed and laboured while her voice tone was low and monotonous. She looked frequently on the ground and kept her body tight and closed. At times she seemed to be emotionally flat. She also mentioned in the beginning of the session that she felt hot while she was in an air conditioned room.

From the client's verbal and nonverbal messages, the below negative emotions were identified. Some of the verbal messages the client gave during the counselling sessions are as follow:

Intense guilt and anger towards herself - "I cannot forgive myself for what I did to my father." "I felt suffocated"

Regrets - "But it's too late."

Great sadness and grief - "You cannot just forget about him..." 

Anger towards gambling: - "I hate people gamble!"

Anxiety - "I am really nervous you know...because I am really not willing...to talk about it...just like you want to ignore it"

Fatigue - "When you remember, you feel tired"

4.2.2. Rapport Building and Problem Exploration

Rapport building is usually the first task in the counselling to build trust in the client so that the client can openly express herself and share her concerns. The therapist started the first session by checking on the client's feelings. After knowing the client was nervous about the session from her verbal and nonverbal messages, the therapist decided to stress even more on rapport building before touching the key issue.

The therapist relied upon Carl Roger's Person-Centred Approach in building rapport with the client. The client's anxiety, concerns and emotional pain were listened to by the therapist empathically.

The client's previous experience with counselling was also explored. The therapist was trying to make a psychological contact with the client in a way that the client could sense the therapist's psychological presence, congruence and genuineness, unconditional positive regards and empathy through her verbal and nonverbal messages which mainly consisted of "I am here", "I am listening", "I understand" and "I care". Other nonverbal messages of the therapist included gentle and focused eye contact, appropriate facial and bodily expressions.

From time to time, the therapist reflected the client's content, intention, thoughts and feelings, such as anxiety and psychological pain. One example the therapist tried to
acknowledge the client’s loss and pain was by saying: “This is a great loss to you. For the pain, I think you used a very good word, suffocating.”

4.2.3. Goal setting

The therapist probed into the client’s initial goals by asking: “Do you have anything you would like to get out of the session, for yourself?” Two goals were then set for the counselling sessions. During goal setting, the client voiced her intention and view. The therapist then helped her to phrase them into goals and sought her agreement. The two goals agreed upon were: (i) to make the client’s pain more tolerable and bearable (ii) to help the client forgive herself.

4.2.4. Education on Mourning and Bereavement

The therapist was concerned that the client, like many others who suffer from losses, did not have the understanding of bereavement and would suppress her emotions in the process of mourning. A number of psychotherapy models assume that the inability, or unwillingness to grieve forms a core part of a range of psychopathology (Kiesler, 1996; Seligman, 2006). Therefore, the client was briefed on the general stages of bereavement, consisting of denial, bargaining, depressed, and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 2005).

In addition, the nature of the grieving process which cannot be rushed, but can be facilitated was introduced to the client, hoping that the client would be more gentle to and accepting of herself, and her emotional swing during the mourning period. However, the uniqueness of each individual in the mourning process was also stressed by the therapist. The therapist was told by the client that she was in the anger phase. When the client cried and when she talked about other family member’s crying back home, the therapist sensed that the client perceived crying and sadness more as disturbing and unproductive. Therefore the therapist tried to change the client’s view on crying and emotional release by encouraging the client to let her tears and time do the healing when the client wept and when she tried hard to suppress her tears.

4.2.5. Structuring

The therapist structured the counselling process with the client, including the language, time, frequency of the counselling process. The responsibilities of both therapist and client were also clarified. Confidentiality was assured and the limit of this confidentiality were explained.

4.3. Information gathering and Problem Exploration

Right from the start of the counselling session, the therapist was trying to gather as much information as possible, indirectly, either verbally or nonverbally, by listening to the client without much questioning. All these information were important and necessary for the intervention at a later phase.

The client’s personality, feelings, thinking, resources, values, yearning, relationship with others and frame of reference on various issues were constantly and actively listened to and analyzed by the therapist throughout the whole counselling process.

As the therapist was guided by the humanistic approach, particularly that of Virginia Satir (1991) and Carl Rogers, she emphasized and explored the client’s self concepts, resources, phenomenological realities, family structure and dynamics within the family. Family structure and members’ particulars, such as the nature of father-mother relationship, parent-child relationship, dynamics of various subsystems, similarities and differences among members, personal strengths and yearnings were collected.

4.3.1. Releasing intense negative emotions, finding closure for unfinished business

When the client expressed great remorse in not having treated her father well, not letting him know that she loved him, and how much she would want to seek his forgiveness, the therapist decided to apply the empty chair technique of Gestalt therapy to help client deal with her unfinished business, which was to express her remorse and love, and to ask for forgiveness.

The therapist helped the client to make her visualization more vivid by asking about details of the visualized father, such as the colour of his clothes. When the client began to feel her sadness and wept, the therapist reminded the client that it was alright to let her emotions flow by saying: “It’s OK to let your emotions flow because sometimes, if they are suppressed inside, it is even more painful.” When the therapist sensed that the client again tried to hold back her emotion, the therapist said: “It’s OK to let your tears flow out, they have been inside you for weeks already.” The client said these as she wept: “Papa, I am sorry. Papa, I am sorry... Papa, you know I love you... I am so sorry that I did not show you my love. I neglected you in the past... (client continued to cite a few past incidences).

You tried to fix the mistake. You tried to make a joke with me but I didn’t respond. I am so ashamed of myself (expressing own emotions in here-and-now). I knew that you cried because of my behaviour. I know it’s too late to say I am sorry. I am sorry (seeking forgiveness and expressing remorse) ... If I can turn back the clock, I would... (client continued to express her love, yearnings and regrets by saying what she would do if the clock could be turned back).” As stressed by the Gestalt therapy, the therapist asked questions to facilitate client’s experiencing herself in a here-and-now manner.

For instance, the therapist asked: “How are you feeling right now?” After the empty chair was used, the client expressed a relief in her emotion. “I feel relieved... I saw my father kept smiling at me... When I asked for forgiveness, I felt that he did forgive me.”

4.3.2. Reframing: retelling story

The first attempt to help the client shift her frame of reference to forgive herself was made before the empty chair. Instead of seeing her own past response and relationship with father as a selfish, wilful and cruel act, the therapist carefully probed the possibility of the client to perceive it as her protest to the feather out of the love and strong bond for her mother. The effect was unclear but it seemed to have helped the client feel a little better and therefore being more open with the therapist to expresse
her remorse which led to the implementation of empty chair technique.

After the empty chair technique was carried out, the client experienced relief in her emotions. However, even though intensity of the anger towards oneself and guilt was reduced, the empty chair did not help the client forgive herself, on her part. This prompted the therapist to again help the client reframe her old self-defeating perspective to a fairer and more comprehensive one, which would incorporate more elements and bring on self acceptance.

In doing so, the first effort the therapist helped the client to was to retell the story by leading her to realize she too had given her father great gifts in life. The fact that the client had made the father very proud as the brightest child in the family and that the client resembled her father in many ways which should have carried even greater meaning to the father, seeing his good qualities being actualized by the client, was emphasized and reminded by the therapist.

Examples of therapist’s comment included “From what you said, it seemed like you’ve made him very very proud. You were the only child...child that gets into university. Especially to someone who was doing hard laboured work. It seems like you have made him very proud, in his limited life.” The therapist also tried to lead the client to see the positive things that the client had given to her father despite her rejection to him and that things happened for a reason. The therapist knew that she had to do this carefully or the client might perceive it as the therapist was trying to persuade her or to judge her father. Therefore the therapist stressed that they were not judging her father. The therapist also posed some questions to prompt the client in accepting the past and forgiving herself better such as “Can you accept there is regrets in life?” “Can you accept that things don’t always go the way we wanted?” “Can you accept yourself for not being perfect all the time?” when it was deemed appropriate.

The therapist made another attempt to help client see the reasons behind her past act. While the client was talking about her mother whom she deeply respected and loved, the therapist grabbed the opportunity to say: “It seemed like you were angry because your mum had been hurt. We are not judging your father. But it cannot be denied that he has caused a lot of hurt, harm on your mom’s side. And your relationship with your mom is so close, you saw what you dad had done...that’s why you behaved that way.” Nevertheless, the client, though verbally agreed, was still reluctant to genuinely accept the reasons for her past attitude towards her father.

### 4.2.3. Reframing: alternative narrative and externalizing problems

The therapist detected that the client, cognitively, could see things from a broader perspective but emotionally, she was very reluctant to adopt this perspective as to her that would mean that her father deserved all the rejection he went through.

She had just lost her father and therefore it was too heartbreaking for her to think in that way. She was overwhelmed by great pain recalling how her rejection caused him disappointment and hurt. The therapist took a quick turn by deciding to adopt another technique from narrative therapy, externalization of problem. It seemed like the client needed someone and something to be accountable for the painful past and regrets. It was very obvious that there was anger inside the client and there were regrets. She seemed to be stuck by thinking that she was accountable or the father deserved that. And the last thing she wanted to do was to blame her father. Therefore, by externalizing the problem, the counsellor helped the client to separate her father from gambling so that she could blamed gambling but embraced her father. In this way, neither father nor herself did not have to be rejected. Part of the dialogue using externalization of problem was as follows:

**Therapist:** “It is not because of you, it is because of the gambling. From what I heard, you wanted to be a good daughter, you wanted to love your father, it is the gambling that came in the way.”

**Client:** “That’s why I hate it so much...I hate all the things...anything to do with gambling, I hate it...”

Client burst into tears and said: “I cannot stand people gamble...” It seemed to be helpful, at least in relieving some of the emotional burden of the client, as the client began to express her anger towards gambling and then she expressed feeling better emotionally. More importantly, she seemed to focus more on gambling rather than she herself to be accountable for the problem and regrets.

### 4.2.4. Anchoring

Anchoring is a technique often adopted by therapists adopting the humanistic approach of Virginia Satir (1991) to reinforce positive change in clients by imprinting the good feelings, positive thoughts, self worth that follow the change into the memory of clients. It often takes the form of visualization and relaxation which was one of Virginia Satir’s routine methods.

In this case, the therapist adopted anchoring mainly to provide the client with warmth and hope. She did that by connecting the client with her father’s love, emphasizing the eternity of the relationship even though the person had passed away, and instilling hope that this great pain would be over. The content was as follow: “I invite you to go deep into your heart, and deep breathe.

I would invite you to tell yourself, in your heart: I had wanted to be a good daughter. It was gambling that come, came in the way. It is a great loss to me and it’s a very difficult time for all of us in the family. Everything will take time. I believe one day, this pain will be gone but father will always be in our hearts. He will not be forgotten. He is always in a very special place in our hearts, and his love will always be in me, that I can share with others, including my future children.” The client wept. As she stopped, her expression was softened and her eyes were brighter.

### 4.2.5. Second Session:

During the second session, the client showed significant improvement in her moods. She appeared calm with smiles on her face and confidence for herself. Her speech and
nonverbal expressions were lively. Her voice tone was much more expressive, interesting, determined and powerful than the previous session. Her eyes were bright and her facial expressions were softened and relaxed.

Recounting Positive Aspects and Strengthening Self Worth

The therapist checked on the client's progress after the previous session. The client reported significant progress in forgiving herself. The therapist worked towards enhancing the client's self-worth by pointing out the client's strengths heard throughout the story. The client then went on to recount the positive changes brought on by her father's death, including the growth of her and her younger brother. Revisit the past

The therapist asked for more childhood stories from the client in order to better understand the client and help her forgiving herself. The client also expressed anger towards people who gossiped and looked down on her family when she was young. Through questioning, the therapist led the client to take a close look at adversities during her growing years, her unmet needs since young and that things happened for a reason. The client burst into tears when the counsellor said, "Things happened for a reason, including how you treated your father." When the client expressed anger towards others who had gossiped and resented her father, as well as her inner struggle of shame brought on by her father and the yearning to protect her father, the therapist listened empathically and validated her emotions. The counsellor then moved on to help her deal with her unfinished business by adopting the empty chair technique from Gestalt therapy and externalizing the gambling of her father based on narrative therapy.

4.3. Externalizing the problem

The therapist seemed to be stuck in the struggle to either blame herself for rejecting her father or think that her father deserved her rejection. Neither way was beneficial for her. Furthermore, she was very reluctant to blame her father or think that her father had himself to blame. Therefore, the therapist externalized gambling as a separate entity from the father, so that the client did not have to choose between herself and her father to blame by reframing the story as "it was gambling that came in the way."

4.3.1. Empty Chair

The therapist proposed a conversation with gambling for the client using empty chair technique from Gestalt therapy and she accepted it. The client managed to express her hidden anger very well in this activity and experience dramatic relief. Part of the dialogue by the client is as follows: "Mr Gambling, you destroyed my childhood dream. You made me think that I am unworthy."

You made my father weak. My father is not responsible because of you...my family is broken because of you." "If you were a guy, I'll kill you...you know, I will kill you." "I know he wanted to change...but you keep on interfere with his dreams. Because of you, my father, in the end of his life, cannot fulfill his hope...it's all because of you. And because of you, I felt guilty of my behaviour towards him...it's all because of you...and I really really hate you! If you are a human, I'll kill you."

The therapist guided the client to continue her conversation with "gambling" in order to in still hope, find meanings from the misfortune and recount her own strengths brought on by "gambling". Part of the example was "Because of you, I become a more caring and emphatic person. I am sensitive to other's needs. You only made me a better person....You have made me a stronger person." This activity seemed to activate a sense of strength in client.

4.3.2. Alternative Narratives and Connection with the Father

The therapist was aware of the love the client had for her father. The therapist believed that if a father could inspire this kind of love, there was also much gentleness and charm underneath his problem behaviour. Therefore the therapist created a chance for the client to connect with her father by appreciating him. The therapist mentioned: "Even though in face of gambling, your father did not fail to keep his love. Your father did not fail to keep his humour. Gambling did not take his life totally. In face of gambling, he was still humorous, charming and loving. He was struggling but he did not lose himself totally." The client was led to visualize putting the love of her father in a corner of her heart and feel comforted by that.

4.3.3. Anchoring

The therapist used anchoring from the humanistic approach of Satir model to reinforce client's change. Lastly, the therapist guided the client to appreciate herself for remaining positive throughout her growth despite adversity in her family. This activity aimed to enhance the client's self-worth and self-acceptance, thus reducing guilt and self-blame in her.

4.3.4. Analysis

In this case, besides grief brought upon by the death of the father, the client also faced the risk of suffering from complicated grief if unfinished business was not death with. This was mainly due to the reason that the father had wanted to be close to the client while the client rejected him due to the father's gambling. It seemed like the client felt heartache for what her father went through, including his disappointment, as a result of her rejection.

It was likely that she also grieved for her lost opportunity to be close to her father and have a loving relationship with him, which may be a secret yearning deep inside many children, no matter how old they are and what destructive things parents have done. Therefore, the client was blaming herself harshly for having rejected her father, despite what he did to the family.

One of the main ways the counsellor helped the client was through expressing herself, including her remorse, wishes, anger, guilt and love. This seemed to be important for the client as she was buried in deep emotional pain. Her emotions were painful and intense, mainly due to self-blame and grief. By helping her to express and release these negative emotions, she experienced emotional relieve which enabled her to move closer to forgiving herself. This assistance from the counsellor also helped in earning trust from the client in the counsellor and the counselling process.
Nevertheless, as the client used to be confident and assertive person, this was done without much hassle. For others who are less self-assertive, more effective assistance may be required. Therefore, a counsellor should equip herself or himself with means to work with the client's emotions, rather flexibly and creatively. In addition, self expression and the release of emotions may be one of the first few key things a counsellor may want to consider working with clients, especially grieving individuals.

Gambling is an activity prohibited by Islamic religion. In addition, the local context is considerably religious as religious teachings and rules were generally taken very seriously. Therefore, the client seemed to have experienced shame when she was growing up. As a result, she also had a great deal of anger towards others who gossiped about her family. By empathizing with her plight and guiding her to express as well as release her anger, she was freed to utilize her inner resources and strengths in more constructive ways, rather than trying to suppress the anger.

The counsellor tried to facilitate self acceptance and forgiveness in the client mainly through two ways: helping her to view her own behaviours and judge them fairly, and realizing the wonderful gifts she had given to her father. By viewing and judging her own rejecting behaviour in the actual context of this imperfect world, she came to accept the reason behind her rejection to him. Her need to find a culprit, which is common among people who suffer, was met by identifying the culprit as the gambling, rather than her father or her. In this way, she did not have to choose between accepting the father while rejecting herself, and vice versa. The counsellor also worked to help her realize the gifts she had given her father when he was alive, which included being excellent in her studies using the potentials passed down from her father to her genetically, thus making him proud when he was alive.

Based on observation and the client's feedback, the therapist managed to achieve the two goals set with the client to significant extent: to feel better and to forgive herself. It seemed evident that the first goal was achieved as the client reported feeling better emotionally and was less disturbed in her daily life. As for the second goal, the counsellor was aware that it might be a long journey as certain amount of guilt might resurface from time to time, coupled with the grief of losing her father.

Nevertheless, from being suffocated by self-blame and guilt initially, the client was able to view the event from a different perspective, appreciate herself and thus “begin” the journey of forgiving and accepting herself. The client commented days after the session that she kept hearing the sentence of forgiving and accepting herself. The client expressed as well as released her anger, she was freed to utilize her inner resources and strengths in more constructive ways, rather than trying to suppress the anger.

In addition, another aspect that counsellor failed to work with the client would be to address the client’s expectation for herself to care for and support other family members. Although close kinship and familial support are norms of the local collective society, still the counsellor could have explored with the client her role and boundary in the family. This may be even more meaningful as the client had been the confidant for her mother even since she was young, thus bearing excessive burden incompatible to her role as a daughter in the family.

The issue how the client's need and self expectation to support, to care for and to be strong for the others in the family could interfere with her own life could be an area to work on with the client.

However, as a novice, the counsellor was relatively adept in gasping crucial issues and conceptualizing the case, sensing the needs of the clients, as well as formulating a feasible direction and plan. Besides professional training, the counsellor accreddited intensive reading, including reading articles produced by people in bereavement, as an important mean for her to better understand grieving individuals. An important piece of personal learning the counsellor gained from working with the client was to cherish the people around her so that when it is time to say goodbye, there will be fewer regrets, but a lot of love, comfort and precious moments.

5.0 Conclusions

Two goals set by the counsellor and the client together. They were to help the client feel better emotionally and to forgive herself for what she did to her father. An integrative approach of technical eclecticism based on the theory of personality from humanistic psychology, in this case study, emphasized the resources, self-worth and phenomenological realities of the client, while selecting appropriate techniques flexibly from a vast pool of different schools, such as the empty chair technique and the strategy of catharsis from Gestalt therapy, and externalization from narrative therapy to assist the client in activating her resources, enhancing her self-worth, achieving closure and reframing her phenomenological realities.

The therapist was guided by Person-centered approach in building rapport and listening. Trained in the humanistic approach of Virginia Satir, the therapist also capitalized on and enhanced the client's strength and self-worth for positive change. A reconstruction of relationship with deceased father as proposed by interpersonal psychotherapy also facilitated the achievement of the goals. Intervention strategies relied heavily on both narrative therapy and Gestalt therapy. Catharsis was encouraged using the empty chair technique to release intense negative
emotions and suppressed thoughts. Empty chair techniques were also used to help the client connect and reconstruct a new relationship with deceased father to find closure and inner strength.

Unexpressed emotions, love and yearning were also being voiced by the client. It did help in reducing the intensity of bottled up negative feelings but it seemed insufficient to change the client perspective of herself. The narrative approach, especially the externalizing of problem and alternative narratives, played crucial role in shifting client’s perspective towards self-acceptance.

The experiential and positive orientated steps lead the client to realize what she had given her father that the therapist adopted was also helpful in enhancing the client’s self-worth, which was the crucial element to trigger self-forgiveness. As a result, even though there was much room for improvement, the two counselling goals were largely achieved.

References