

My Approach to Helping People

Theresa Qualls Counseling

Many of us were taught to ignore our hearts. As children almost all of us endured instances of overwhelming emotional pain. And if emotional pain was frequent enough, or severe enough, eventually we learned ways to shut down our hearts. We also deduced things about our hearts that weren't necessarily true. Things like: expressing my feelings does no good; no one knows how to help me when I'm afraid; my tears are a burden to others; I'm too sensitive.

Anxiety, depression, self-hatred, uncontrolled anger, addiction and other mental health symptoms are the archeological remnants of our young, emotional selves. These symptoms are remnants of our hearts, our inner child. The young, sensitive 'you' was shut down in childhood, but not completely. The mental health symptoms you now experience are evidence that your heart is still crying for the attention it needs. The little, emotional 'you' still needs care and explanations of what happened. Your heart needs to know that its emotions and desires are welcome and wanted.

I believe psychotherapy is uniquely equipped to help us find our hearts. As we sit with a professional and allow them to know us, our younger parts and shut off emotions get to be re-parented. Then our hearts hear a different truth— that our desires matter, that our feelings give us data that we need to make good decisions and to form healthy relationships, and that we may still be in need of care for some of those early wounds. As we receive care in the therapeutic relationship, unacknowledged hurts get validated, lost parts of ourselves get reintroduced, stories we've told ourselves get rewritten, and unwanted symptoms lesson and even dissipate.

My approach in clinical terms is 'psychodynamic' or 'psychoanalytic' in that I will focus on these areas as I listen and respond to you ...

EMOTION

... I will pay attention to feeling and emotion and help you to trust and interpret these

AVOIDANCE

... I will notice and study the ways you have learned to avoid painful truths

THEMES

... I will help you follow particular recurring themes in your story, and be curious about your role in them

DEVELOPMENT

... I will help you make links from present symptoms to past experiences

ATTACHMENT

... I will invite exploration of early attachment patterns/needs to help give you insight into your relational style and current relationships

WORKING ALLIANCE ... I will notice how we form a relationship together in the room and use our therapeutic relationship as a tool in understanding you

MIND ... I will invite exploration of your mind's life ... fantasy, dreams, unconscious motives, etc.