

Volume XXXIII
No. 2

Spring 2014



International Journal of
Choice Theory® and
Reality Therapy

THE WORK OF BRANDI ROTH

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Abstract

This article, the fourth in a series describing the work of many members of William Glasser International organization, formerly The William Glasser Institute, focuses on the work of one outstanding instructor, Brandi Roth, PhD. For instance, she has written about how to help parents and students select appropriate schools for the students' further education as well as utilizing reality therapy with clients whose reputations are known to the general public. In addition she has co-authored with Carleen Glasser a book about using role-plays as instructional tools. On a personal level, she has provided consistent support and encouragement for other instructors and trainees who seek to teach and practice reality therapy.

This article is the fourth in a series that provides information about the wide variety of contributions made by many talented individuals to the teaching of reality therapy and choice theory. The exclusive focus of the current article is the work of Brandi Roth, Ph.D., Los Angeles psychologist, and senior faculty member of William Glasser International (WGI).

The series' first article reviewed books and articles on using measurement instruments, reality therapy applied to alcohol abuse, student achievement and responsibility, and various aspects of choice theory (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2010). The second article in the series explored educational resources for use with elementary school students, parenting applications, the value of role-play and choice theory applied to relationships (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2012). Part III of this 4-part series reviewed several resources for parenting, student motivation, choice theory with addictions and elementary school resources (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2013). The authors state, "This series . . . serves the purpose of demonstrating the (great) number of authors that have contributed to the theory and practice of choice theory and reality therapy founded by William Glasser, MD in his groundbreaking work beginning in the 1960's, especially his book *Reality Therapy* (Glasser, 1965)" (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2013, p. 51).

Continuing the Legacy

The fact that the work of so many dedicated teachers, counselors and therapists remains unknown or at least undocumented and underutilized is hardly a secret. We believe that if reality therapy, the life work of William Glasser, is to survive, grow and flourish in the future both within and outside of the William Glasser Institute the recognition of the continuous work and contributions of many professional people will be required.

Brandi Roth provides the institute with a quiet, enthusiastic model for the members of her generation and the next. Her determination for teaching reality therapy and using it in her unique psychology practice illustrates the diverse applications of reality therapy and its theoretical basis choice theory.

Brandi's Contributions

In the book *Contemporary Issues in Couples Counseling* (Robey, Wubbolding, & Carlson, 2012), Brandi describes issues faced by a therapist working with prominent people: their possible exposure to the public, the possible involvement of children, the impact of adverse publicity and the possible referral to other professionals, such as mediators.

The self-perception of high profile clients can be a special issue. Their fawning fans might see them differently from the way they see themselves. She states, "Celebrities can live in a smaller universe with a big power differential. Their prominence can mean they are highly recognizable, highly valued, or in a position where people submit and acquiesce to them" (p.159). On the other hand, the partner of the celebrity may not enjoy the same notoriety and feel like an outsider to the spotlight thereby creating jealousy.

While few therapists provide services to internationally known celebrities, many counselors encounter people who are well known on the local level: politicians, business and community leaders, and others well known to the public. Consequently, many of the same issues emerge. In the words of Brandi Roth, "The therapist's goal in couples counseling is to facilitate a happier, more satisfying, and better functioning relationships through increased understanding of one another and positive changes in behavior" (p. 171). Her excellent insights based on decades of experience can therefore be generalized to many other counseling and therapeutic relationships.

In the introduction to Brandi's masterful handbook *Role-Play Handbook* (Roth, 2006), Glasser states, "The core of teaching students to counsel with choice theory is practicing role-play under the supervision of a faculty member of the William Glasser Institute", (p. 3). Beginning with role-play demonstrations by a reality therapy instructor and proceeding to small group or one-to-one practice of counseling or conferencing skills, a creative supervisor reinforces the principles of choice theory and helps workshop participants extend their knowledge and skills in the use of reality therapy. Brandi and her co-author Carleen Glasser have given us a comprehensive treatise for teaching basic and advanced intensive trainings. For instance, she presents an activity for teaching the quality world that she calls "Quality World Mapping". Workshop participants identify their quality world pictures of the fine arts, e.g., the visual arts. She mentions her own such pictures: the Impressionists, such as Monet and Manet, and her favorite musicians, Debussy, Rachmaninoff and others. Her creative activities abound for teaching choice theory and reality therapy.

Her system of multilevel self-evaluation is especially insightful: asking the student specific questions to aid in his/her self-evaluation, offering feedback and *then* taking the process to a deeper level by asking the participant to evaluate the feedback by deciding what part of the feedback was most useful. Regarding the content of role-plays, the authors provide a wide array of possible starting points, ranging from school situations and mental health issues to management concerns, such as an employee denied a promotion, an employee chronically late for work, and others.

Especially striking is her innovative way of triggering role-plays: begin with an obituary from the newspaper, or an article from a magazine that focuses on relationships. These starting

points can be played out in an unlimited number of ways depending on the ingenuity of the student.

A special value of this eminently useful book is her distinction between choice theory and reality therapy. She accurately labels choice theory as the explanation of human behavior and reality therapy as the method. She foreshadows the Glassers' description of choice theory as the train track and reality therapy as the train (Glasser C., & Glasser, W., 2008).

This down-to-earth and comprehensive handbook deserves official recognition by the WGI as a training instrument for supervisors and instructors. It illustrates the fact that the accomplishments of Brandi Roth add to the achievements of all of us in William Glasser International and they contribute to the legacy and life work of William Glasser.

In the book *Secrets of School Success* (Roth & Van Der Kr-Levinson, 2002), Brandi and co-author Fay Van Der Kar-Levinson provide parents with practical information and tools to better help their children have a positive and enjoyable school experience – from Kindergarten through High School. Refreshingly, the emphasis is as much on developing self-respect, emotional well-being and social success, as it is on academic achievement.

Included are tools and ideas for supporting the child more effectively in their teenage years; including tackling issues related to homework, time management and extracurricular activities, as well as dealing with the inevitable emotional ups-and-downs of “teenagerhood”, and in conjunction with this, helping to foster independence and develop problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

Indeed, the same provision of practical tools, ideas, information and resources is also to be found in *Choosing the Right School for Your Child*, a book by the same two co-authors, written first in 1995, it was revised in 1998, and again in 2008. It delivers a guide for parents to become more knowledgeable and better resourced about their children's schools and, further, empowers parents with the information – in a very systematic and organized way – to learn to evaluate schools, their priorities and their teaching styles, and most importantly, to ascertain which kind of setting would be best for their child, whether it be in a private, public or alternative school, and even in consideration of special programs offered by many of the public schools; such as magnet schools.

Again, the provision of experienced and knowledgeable ideas, practical tools, detailed information, valuable resources, and well-researched references, is absolutely outstanding.

Interview with Brandi

Below are five questions we asked Brandi to respond to. The answers are in her own words.

1. What do you think is your contribution to the WGI and to other professional endeavors?

I have been implementing Bill's ideas since my college years. My husband, Bruce Clemens, and I, discussed using Reality Therapy concepts on our first date. When Bill wrote *School's Without Failure* I taught first-grade students ways to collaborate with class meetings. It has been a pleasure to be a long time student and then faculty

member of the William Glasser Institute. I have made a number of contributions that I feel proud about. My greatest joy with the Institute is the collaboration and collegial nature of the faculty and the participants. I have lasting friendships and memories from WGI trainings, conferences, and seminars that I have taught. I have applied these brilliant ideas in four domains: personally, in counseling, in the workplace, and in school settings.

2. What do you think your contribution is to Dr. Glasser's legacy?

I have the privilege of co-authoring a role-play handbook with Carleen Glasser. Bill Glasser and I gave a role-play demonstration at the Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference. The role-play, a woman who was depressing, was videoed and presented to a sold-out audience of colleagues. Bill commented to me that he felt the role-play went very well (high praise indeed). It is a lasting joy that I will always be able to show that videoed role-play. I have written a number of articles and handbooks for parents, couples and individuals. I wrote a relationship counseling seminar handbook with Dr. Clarann Goldring, *Relationship Counseling with Choice Theory Strategies*. Of all the professional training that I have had as a teacher and as a psychologist, Choice Theory is what I use most. Clients frequently express appreciation as they implement these helpful ideas based on Bill's work.

3. You have been one of Carleen and Bill's best friends. How do you think this relationship has impacted you?

The opportunity to be long-time friends with Bill and Carleen has been and will always be a treasured part of my life. Bill demonstrated his ideas best by living them. Traveling the world and teaching with Bill and Carleen was always interesting, enriching, creative, and an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. I have always been endlessly curious, often generous, and delighted with life, especially living in the world with family, friends and wonderful people. The cornerstone of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy is relationships and connections. The opportunity to study Choice Theory ideas, to teach them, to use them, to enjoy them and to build confidence in them by knowing and working with Bill, Carleen and the WGI faculty has been incredible.

4. Describe what you think the direction of the Institute should be.

The brilliance of Bill Glasser's Choice Theory and Reality Therapy has also been enhanced and extended by many other contributors. The WGI is comprised of talented and devoted faculty and participants who continue to learn and promote Bill's ideas and teach them with integrity. The greatest tribute and gift to Bill's legacy will be the members of the WGI staying connected, collaborating, and continuing their commitment to teaching these helpful ideas. Present and future neuroscience and research will inevitably validate and perpetuate Bill Glasser's genius.

5. Who in your life has contributed the most in helping you to achieve your happiness and goals?

Without the love of Bruce Clemens, the happy life I have led would not have been possible.

Summary

By writing extensively about instructing and practicing choice theory and reality therapy Dr. Brandi Roth continues to contribute to the continuation of choice theory and reality therapy and the legacy of Dr. Glasser. Moreover, her psychology practice is unique in that she has counseled a wide variety of clients, including celebrities. Her guidelines for working with well-known people can be generalized to the work of other therapists and counselors. On a personal level she provides support and encouragement and is a pre-eminent example for other faculty members of William Glasser International.

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