

# Counseling theory



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Feminist Counselling Theory Feminist counselling theorists take the position that “ gender role expectations” profoundly influence human nature and development. (Lerner, 1993) The feminist counselling theory proceeds from the concept that men and women are characterized on distinct social levels. It therefore follows that, psychological development models that are based entirely on the male psychological development are inadequate for addressing the female’s identity development with respect to connectedness and interpersonal relationships.

In order to address the specific psychological complexities of females, feminists counselling theorist have formulated five primary therapeutic doctrines.(Cole, Rothblum, and Enns, 1997) They are; 1) the personal is aligned to the political, 2) remain committed to social change. 3) maintain egalitarian relationships, 4) respect and honor female experiences and opinions, and 5) oppression of all types are recognized and acknowledged. (Cole, Rothblum, and Enns, 1997) Tied to these doctrines is the feminist’s counsellor’s desire to cultivate change, equity, crossing interdependence with independence, empowerment, self-nurturing and an appreciation for diversity. (Cole, Rothblum, and Enns, 1997)

In adopting the feminine counselling theory I would approach from the concept that human nature dictates that the gender differences are a consequence of the socialization process. I would emphasize that multi-cultural ideology applies equally to all persons regardless of race, culture, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, ethnic origins and individual competence. I would also emphasize that human nature is influenced by both contextual factors and environment and that human development is always under construction as it is a lifetime process allowing for constant

change.

The counsellor's objective in pointing out the general view of human nature is to cultivate an open mind in the patient/client. By having an open mind, the client can put aside bitterness and can come to view these social obstructions as matters that she can cope with and overcome. The counsellor's collective goal is to help the client gain a measure of self-appreciation and self-value. This is accomplished by stressing the view of human nature as the catalyst for women's difficulties in the socializing process. By taking this approach, the counsellor encourages the client/patient to view counselling as a strategy for coping.

The coping strategy emanates from imparting insight into the general view of human nature so that the client/patient learns to form a commitment to changing the environment, as opposed to adjusting to it. The idea is to foster egalitarian relationships, rather than relationships characterized by hierarchy. In other words, the counsellor perpetuates the concept that the view of human nature is the catalyst for the submissive and often oppressive nature of the ascribed role of women in society. Rather than accept this characterization or become depressed by it, change it by departing from ascribed role. Advocate change by changing internally and external change will follow. This strategy is akin to personal empowerment.

The counsellor is required to be emotionally connected to the client in order to effectively garner proactive responses. The feminist counselling theory which requires an analysis of the interplay between gender and power however, can be constrained by the particular client's own built-in biases and prejudices. In emphasising the constructs of the view of human nature and coping mechanisms, these biased walls will have to be broken down. This

may be difficult because biases are created over time and can be a form of indoctrination. Once the walls are broken down however, the counsellor can begin to connect with the client and begin the process of building independence, self-nurturing, self-appreciation, self-value and empowerment.

### Bibliography

Cole, E.; Rothblum, E. and Enns, C. Z. (1997) *Feminist Theories and Feminist Psychotherapies: Origins, Themes and Variations*. Psychology Press.

Lerner, G. (1993) *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy*. New York: Oxford University Press.