

Adolescent counseling and the significant aspects of counseling our youth

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Adolescence is a developmental stage that is broken down into three stages. During this time, adolescents have a difficult time trying to find who they are and who they want to become. This is a time that adolescents may need to turn to someone else for help and guidance. For this reason Adolescent Counselors are extremely important and it can be both tricky and rewarding. There are many different important aspects that pertain to Adolescent Christian Counseling such as Rapport, Trust, Respect, Warmth, Empathy and Genuineness. To provide the appropriate and effective counseling to adolescents these aspects must be taken seriously.

There are many different ethical guidelines to follow when dealing with adolescent minors that can be complicated but must be followed. Biblical values and personal values must also be intertwined into adolescent Christian counseling. To ensure one is a Competent Christian counselor, tools given to the counselor should be taken seriously and used in an efficient manor. Adolescent Counseling and the Significant Aspects of Counseling Our Youth “ Adolescence is the developmental stage that liesbetween childhood and adulthood” (Feldman, 2011, p. 350).

The Encyclopedia ofFamilyHealth, (2011) divides adolescence into three phases: “(1) early (10-13 years, marked by rapid physical changes with the onset of puberty), (2) middle (14-16 years, marked by the rise in importance of peer group values), and (3) late (17-mid-20s, marked by years of college or work after high school, increased decision-making capacity, and transition from full family financial dependence to limited monetary support and a goal of economic independence)”. As you can see there are many transitions that

adolescents make during this time, which may be difficult for them to face alone.

During this time adolescents are also trying to find themselves and who they are. Feldman, (2011) states, " During adolescence, questions like " Who am I? And " Where do I belong in the world? " begin to take a front seat" (p. 382). At times these questions are too much for our youth to handle so they seek counseling as a way to get through the tough times and explore themselves. Adolescents handle their struggles in different ways and have different methods in coping. Clinton & Ohlschlager, (2003) believe there are three common ways adolescents deal with their struggles. " They (1) hold them in, (2) act them out, or (3) work them through"(p. 68). Counseling is particularly important with those adolescents that want to work through their problems.

They are ready to take responsibility for what has happened or what they are going through in their lives and they want to move forward and work through the struggles. Having the ability to help these adolescents is why the topic of adolescents is extremely important in counseling. Adolescents find it difficult to open up to people because of the fear of being judged looked at differently or what they say going back to their parents. They need someone they can trust, from an appropriate bond with and open up to. ' Bond' describes the system of positive attachments between the client and therapist, including trust, acceptance and confidence" (Campbell & Simmonds, 2011, p. 196). The bond that a counselor has with a client can set the tone for what is to come and rather or not the adolescent will open up to

them. Warmth, Genuineness, Empathy, Respect, Trust, and Rapport are among the other important aspects of counseling adolescents. To have the ability to effectively counsel adolescents a counselor must have the ability to understand the adolescent and where the feelings they are having are coming from.

This does not necessarily mean the counselor must agree, they just have to understand and be willing to look at it from the adolescent's perspective. "The most important instrument you have to help adolescents is you (Parrott, 1997). Who you are as a person is critical in determining the effectiveness of your counseling" (Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2003, p. 571). Understanding the client is not the only thing that is important to counseling adolescents. There are many different legal issues and ethical concerns in relation to counseling our youth and they are determined by the state the counselor lives in.

You must be aware of rather or not the state requires an adolescent to have parental consent, the age they can consent to treatment for themselves and what types of treatment they can consent to. You must be aware of whether or not you should speak to the minor about informed consent and to what extent confidentiality takes place (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011, p. 187). There are many ethical concerns when treating minors and they should all be taken into consideration to be able to effectively counsel the adolescent as well as ensuring the counselor is following guidelines.

The counselor's values need to be a part of the counseling relationship with adolescents as well. Being a Christian Counselor one must be " deeply

committed, spirit guided, servant of Jesus Christ, that applies their God-given abilities, skills, training, knowledge and insight to helping others move to personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability and spiritual maturity" (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011, p. 44). With that being said, the values of the counselor and the adolescent will help point the counseling sessions in a direction that the counselor as well as the client agrees with.

Fostering an alliance with children may be more difficult because children rarely refer themselves for treatment, can be reluctant to enter therapy, infrequently recognize the existence of problems or agree with adults on therapeutic goals (Campbell & Simmonds, 2011, p. 196) Being able to share values with them and believing in the same things can help the client be more open with you therefore allowing you to help them. Major Themes Warmth Accepting where your client is coming from is a very important aspect in counseling, especially when dealing with adolescents. The key to nonpossessive warmth is acceptance. It is an attitude that does not evaluate or require change; it simply accepts the thoughts, feelings and actions of the client" (Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2003, p. 572). Adolescents want to be heard and to feel as if the people around them care and accept them for who they are. It is very important for counselors to make each client feel important and make sure they know that they matter. When adolescents feel as if they matter and that they are important, they will open up to the counselor making it easier to work through problems and the search of who they are.

Adolescents are always searching for who they are and when a person in an important role can accept the adolescent for who they are, the adolescent

may begin to accept themselves. Genuineness Just as a counselor can tell if someone wants to be in counseling, an adolescent can tell if you want to help them or not. Counselors want to be honest with their clients, show that they care and make it known they care about the wellbeing of the client. Counseling is sometimes a long process, therefore you need the adolescents to stay connected to you and feel as if they are accomplishing the goals you have set in counseling.

When topics in which a counselor does not agree with come up, or when a counselor feels as if progress is not being made, they need to be truthful with the adolescent. “ When counselors are genuine with clients that means they are being real with their clients and informing them accurately about the helping process. Rogers believes that genuineness is one of the important factors required to help people grow. Counselors need to be real and honest with clients in order for clients to see how they need to change and start making the steps to do so.

Counselors need to be willing to be open with their clients and not afraid to challenge them when appropriate” (Smith, 2013). Adolescents are on a constant search for who they are; helping them find who they are often requires counselors to challenge their thoughts and actions. Being honest and showing that the counselor genuinely cares about the adolescent will help the therapeutic process. Empathy A client wants their counselor to understand what they are going through and have been through in their life. Understanding what the client is feeling and letting the client know you understand is very important in adolescent counseling.

Adolescents want to be heard and they want you to understand the feelings they have to try and make sense of them. “ As a counselor acquires an empathic understanding of a client, this awareness may contribute to effectively formulating and executing a range of therapeutic interventions” (Clark, 2010, p. 353). It has been shown that Peer Counseling is often very effective and expressing empathy is one of the main reasons that peer counseling is so effective (Geldard & Patton, 2007, p. 42). If Counselors need to possess the ability to relate to the client’s issues, concerns and feelings the way their peers do the counseling will be effective.

Being empathetic to the clients needs, will allow the client to feel more comfortable and open up. Respect Respect is something that every professional relationship must have. “ According to Gerard Egan, respect is the foundational value of counseling. Without it, the counseling process is likely to fail. Respect is not just an attitude we have towards someone; it is also a way of talking and acting. Respect is shown to someone when we honor a person through word or deed just for who they are, and it involves honoring their rights too” (Smith, 2013).

Every person has the right to have their own beliefs, counselors must have the ability to respond in a respectful manner to those who do not have the same beliefs or values in which the counselor has. Respecting an adolescents beliefs and values can help and adolescent from withdrawing emotionally from the counseling process. Trust Trust is an important factor in every relationship we have in life. “ In counseling there are two foundational prerequisites to counseling children; 1) Understanding your clients

developmental level and 2) Building rapport and establishing trust with your client”(Adams & Paxton, 2013, p.). Trust will take a client a long way in counseling and it is important that counselors not break that trust. Therefore they must be open and honest when it comes to informed consent and what the counselor can and cannot keep confidential. Adolescents face a lot of different battles as they grow into young adults and they may be shy, emotional and uncomfortable sharing certain aspects of their life. “ When adolescents feel that they can trust an adult or advocate, or healtheducationteacher, they know that their feelings are being considered and understood” (Thompson, 2011, p. 18).

Every counselor needs to form a therapeutic alliance with his or her client and trust contributes a great deal to the ability to develop that therapeutic alliance (Therapist Perspectives, p. 198). Rapport Rapport has been described as “ the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people” (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 96). Building a rapport should be one of the first goals in adolescent counseling. The fact that most adolescents do not want to be in counseling and are forced to be there makes first impressions extremely important. Counselors should begin building a rapport and establishing trust with their clients right away.

When clients feel comfortable with their counselor and can relate to them they will open up to them. With adolescents this may make them see that counseling could be good for them and could be a positive way of getting them to come back to counseling and continuing the process. Important Legal and Ethical Issues When working with adolescents there are many

different ethical and legal dilemmas that come into play with the counseling process. It is extremely important for every counselor to become familiar with their states laws pertaining to minors.

In most states minors must have informed consent from either the parent or legal guardian, if that consent is not given the counseling must be court ordered (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011, p. 187). The law requiring minors to have the consent of their parent or legal guardian makes it difficult for counselors to keep what is talked about in counseling confidential. Therefore it is extremely important that every counselor be open and honest with his or her client and have them sign informed consent forms, therefore you know they understand the boundaries of their relationship.

Counselors also have the responsibility to ensure that the adolescent clients understand the therapy process, if a client does not understand how the process works; the counselor is legally obligated to explain it to them. The ACA, 2005 states “ When counseling minor clients or adult clients who lack the capacity to give voluntary consent to release confidential information, counselors seek permission from an appropriate third party to disclose information. In such instances, counselors inform clients consistent with their level of understanding and take culturally appropriate measures to safeguard client confidentiality. There are certain situations when working with minors that may not require a counselor to have the informed consent of the parent, nor do they have to release the confidential information. Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011, p. 187 state “ Informed consent of parents or guardians may not be legally required when a minor is seeking counseling

for dangerous drugs or narcotics, for sexually transmitted diseases, for pregnancy and birth control, or for an examination following alleged sexual assault of a minor over 12 years old”.

For instance in Virginia, a minor has the right to seek counsel when deciding if they would like to have an abortion or give their child up for adoption without consent of a parent or legal guardian (Smith, 2013). Counselors also need to include the adolescents in the therapy process and explain the different goals of therapy to them. Therapy is a relationship between the client and the counselor, and rather or not the client wants to be their they still need to be an active part of the process for counseling to be effective.

Counseling adolescents becomes a lot easier when the adolescent, the counselor and the parents and or guardian come to an understanding. Because counselors are legally obligated to share information with the parents if asked, adolescents often do not open up to the counselor in fear of their parents finding out information. Having an agreement between all parties in the beginning of counseling about what information will be given to the parents may help the adolescent open up. However there are situations in which it does not matter what agreements have been made.

The counselor is legally obligated to inform the parents if the adolescent is planning to harm himself or herself or someone else. However there are also laws that go the other way, meaning that if a client is at risk of harm if information is relayed to the parents or guardian, then the proper authorities need to be informed and the parents or guardians do not need to be

informed. Ethics and issues in counseling can be very difficult. It is up to the counselor to stay up to date with the Ethical Guidelines pertaining to their field as well as the ethical guidelines in their state.

It is also important to document everything therefore if a parent or guardian comes and says that the counselor failed to give information pertaining to a minor the counselor is covered. Documentation includes having client's notes, and informed consent forms signed by both the adolescent and the parent or legal guardian. The counselor knowing and understanding their boundaries are key to effectively counseling and following ethical guidelines. Biblical Values The AACC Ethics Code has 7 foundations or biblical values that Christian Counselors should follow to be a successful Christian Counselor.

The first Foundation is to ensure that each counselor follows ethical guidelines, Christian counseling practice and caregiving activities. The second Foundation states that Christian Counselors should maintain a positive and committed relationship with the church. The third foundation is to maintain a spirited route to encouraging those to mature and develop a relationship with Christ. The fourth foundation states that Jesus Christ should be their first love, and respect everyone they come across in their career. The fifth foundation is to believe in the bible and what the bible says.

The sixth foundation is to follow the religious rights of people. The last foundation is to represent Christ, the church and honor their commitments and obligations in both social and professional settings.

Christian Counselors have been given the gift to help people through their troubled times. When helping adolescent's Christian counselors must remember that they are guiding the future of our world. Christian counselors must stay close to the bible and close to Jesus Christ, ensuring that adolescents know and understand his word.

Adolescents spend their time looking for who they are and their place in this world. It is the job of the Christian counselor to ensure each adolescent knows what their future can hold for them as long as they believe in God and the plan he has. By following the Foundations of Christian Counseling in both counseling sessions and in their non-professional lives, it becomes easier for the counselor to guide individuals down the right path. Personal Reflections I believe that Christian Counselors are one of the most important people adolescents can come into contact with.

I believe that rather the adolescent wants to be there in the counseling room or rather they are forced to be there, that progress can be made as long as the counselor tries their best. Adolescents are looking for themselves, they are trying to find who they are and who they want to become in life. They need guidance and they need unbiased guidance at that. If the counselor knows him or herself and knows the foundational values of their practice, I believe they have the ability to guide each and every adolescent in the right direction. Adolescents look for ways to grow and someone to look up to.

In their times of need they need someone to talk to that will respect them and help them through their situations without judgment. This is why I

believe that first a counselor must build a good rapport with their clients. They must then look to build their trust and respect. Adolescents are more willing to open up when they believe you respect them and are not judging the decisions they have made in their lives. I also believe that it is very important to empathize with what they have gone through in their lives and what they are facing.

The old saying, " Do not judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes" comes into play with adolescent counseling. The counselor may not know or understand everything the adolescent has done, but to be able to empathize with them is the key. Adolescents face many different problems in the world today, rather it is the struggle of getting good grades in school, having to play sports and so forth to get scholar ships or dealing with the hardships of their parents divorcing and so forth.

There are a lot of problems that adolescent's face that they did not ask for. They are left with the burden of so much that sometimes they just need an unbiased, professional to talk to and guide them through. Having the ability to do what the adolescents need you to do. It is also important to follow the ethical guidelines can sometimes put the counselor however in a bad place. This is where I believe that being open and honest with both the adolescent and the parents are the best way to provide a trusting relationship with your client.

When I become a counselor I plan to dedicate myself to helping individuals with their hardships want to have the ability to work with the adolescent

groups and help them through the troubled times they have faced in their lives. I believe that if I can follow the path in which God has led me down to this point, I will be able to do so. I believe that through my education of learning how to respond to different situations in counseling, learning the different ethical concerns and what the ethical guidelines are through my schooling that I will also become a Competent Christian counselor.

I plan to use every tool given to me because it is my dream to help the young adults in need and guide them to a better, more Christian tomorrow. Conclusion Counseling adolescents can be an extremely difficult and taxing job. However having the ability to do so can help so many young adults in their journey to develop. Knowing your client, having a good rapport with them, developing a positive trusting relationship and a bond that cannot be broken is key to helping these young adults.

Adolescents need guidance and they sometimes do not know where to get the appropriate guidance they need. Devoting your time to helping these individuals is such a reward. In doing so a counselor must ensure they are following the appropriate guidelines when working with these clients. They must also make sure they are using their personal values and biblical values in a professional manor to help guide. They must also remember, the most important instrument in counseling is the counselor (Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2003, p. 571).

References

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