

Components of counseling: ethics and minorities



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What is professional counseling? Discuss the most recent trends in counseling.

In order to define professional counseling, it would be very easy to simply state how our textbook defines counseling. “ Professional counseling is a service in which counselors work with individuals, couples, or families for the purpose of promoting optimal mental health and functioning.” (Nugent, Jones page 2). Our textbook further states, “ Counselors are prepared to engage in multiple roles to meet the variety of counseling services required by the public. Their primary role is counseling individuals, groups, or families regarding personal, interpersonal, social, cultural, or career concerns. Professional counseling is a process during which counselor and client develop an effective relationship, one that enables the client to work through difficulties.” (Nugent, Jones page 2). This definition should be augmented to eliminate the term “ service”. Being a professional counselor is not merely a service but should be looked at as a responsibility. A counselor should be tasked with the responsibility of providing the highest degree of commitment to aid and provide the client with the tools required to achieve optimal mental health. The latter of this definition which addresses the relationship between the client and counselor should be emphasized and outlines more closely what the responsibility is of a counselor. There needs to be a strong bond between the client and counselor in order to achieve the goals pursued. If there is a disconnect; or the client does not feel the counselor is truly devoted to aiding their needs then the client will not reach what is needed for their mental health.

Changes in the trends of counseling have come about due to the change in our society. The days of a traditional family are no longer. “ The growing pluralism of cultural traditions, languages, and ethnic and racial backgrounds of Americans is now the rule, not the exception.” (Nugent, Jones, page 2). Counselors today must deal with the fact that nearly anyone can be identified as *at risk* (Nugent, Jones 2009). In today’s profession of counseling there are more definitive roles and specifically outlined identities. This is most evident when defining a school counselor. Unlike previous decades, there is now a definitive guideline to the role of a school counselor. This is outlined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA created a model which outlines the duties and responsibilities for a school counselor. The duties state specifically how a counselor can organize, design, and implement an appropriate counseling program for students.

The improvement of technology and accessibility to the Internet has brought about another trend in counseling. Nearly every agency uses some form of technology in their practices. These can be seen in training and Internet-based courses. Although counseling via the Internet is not a preferred method there are advantages. Just as there has been a development in defining a school counselor there has been a development in organizations that establish guidelines for Internet counseling or *eCounseling*. The National Board for Certified Counselors and the Center for Credentialing and Education created a document that outlines such guidelines for Internet Counseling. This document is entitled “ The Practice of Internet Counseling”. (Nugent, Jones, 2009).

Elaborate on the components of the counseling profession. Include the following in your response: professional associations and counselor credentialing (licensing and certification).

The components of the counseling profession are very simply;

- Professionalism
- Ethics
- Legal Issues

Professionalism is defined “ as an internal motivation to perform at the level of best practices that represent the ideals of the profession, enhance its image, and promote its development” (Nugent, Jones, page 16). There are a multitude of various professional associations;

- Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education (AACE)
- Association for Adult Development and Aging (AADA)
- Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC)
- American College Counseling Association (ACCA)

These are merely four different associations in which our text identifies 19. Each association specializes in its own area of study in aiding its clients. These associations have also established criteria for various types of credentialing and accreditation procedures. Here are some of the accreditation programs;

- Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Problems (CACREP)
- Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

- Commission for Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE)
- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)

Each state passes its own licensure laws in order to protect its citizens' health, safety and welfare (Nugent, Jones 2009). It is illegal for anyone to identify themselves as a licensed counselor or practice counseling if they have not completed their states licensure requirements.

Similar to licensing, “ a certificate is verification that a counselor has met certain qualifications for education and/or work experience, or a certain score on a specified examination.” (Nugent, Jones page 21). There are two main types of state certification; school counseling and substance abuse counseling. Every state certifies and credentials school counselors. Substance abuse counselors have different levels of certification through their state agencies.

As in any field of study there is a professional code of ethics and standards in counseling to protect the public from incompetent or unethical counselors. The underlying code of ethics relates to;

- Dual or multiple relationships,
- Sexual involvement with clients, and
- Values.

Dual or multiple relationships occur when a counselor has a nonprofessional relationship with a client outside of the counseling session. This is argued that a relationship that does not include sexual or romantic interactions, could possibly be beneficial to the client. An example would be for a

counselor to attend a formal ceremony such as a wedding, or visiting a client's ill family in the hospital.

Sexual involvement with clients should go without saying however; there are unscrupulous counselors that violate this code of ethics. "The ACA Code of Ethics states, 'Sexual or romantic counselor-client interactions or relationships with current clients, their romantic partners, or their family members are prohibited'" (Nugent, Jones page 23). There is a stipulation that allows for counselors and clients to engage in romantic or sexual relationships after a period of five years following the final counseling session or professional interaction.

"Values are standards or ethical guidelines that influence an individual's or group's behavior, attitudes, and decisions" (Nugent, Jones page 23). It is a counselor job to aid the client in identifying different courses of action or behaviors in order to maintain accepted values within the client's social interaction.

A counselor must be aware and familiar with various legal responsibilities. First of all, privileged communication is right between client and counselor that allows for the client to speak freely and open in order to reach the optimal mental health. Basically stated, a client can discuss anything with their counselor and the counselor is not required to divulge what is stated during counseling sessions. The only exceptions to this legal right would be when a client is danger of harming themselves or to others, abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, court ordered disclosure, or client waiver of the privilege (Nugent, Jones 2009).

What are some of the personal qualities of effective counselors? Briefly present four (4) major categories of professional competencies for counselors.

Effective counselors are open-minded individuals that continue to grow within their profession and understand the need to seek counseling or guidance to aid them in order to benefit their clients. Three basic qualities of a counselor are;

- *Empathy* – the ability to feel the emotions of another human being regardless of whether or not you have actually experienced these emotions.
- *Congruence*- the ability to be honest or *genuine* with a client
- *Unconditional positive regard*- Displaying a positive nonjudgmental attitude toward the client. Allowing the client to feel warm and accepted.

The four professional competencies for counselors are;

- *Knowledge about counseling theories and strategies*- Counselors need to be educated in the various different theoretical approaches and be able to identify which approach would be beneficial to their client's needs.
- *Interviewing skills*- Interviewing is a basic component of the counseling process. Counselor's need to develop effective interview skills which can be further broken down into *listening and attending skills, facilitating skills, and link to theoretical orientation.*

- *Assessment and diagnostic skills*- The ability to gather information and devise a plan to reach the goal intended for the client.
- *Sound ethical judgment*- Abiding by and exercising the ethics required by counselor's in order to serve their client in the most ethical and professional manner possible.

Discuss special issues in counseling the following ethnic groups: Hispanics and Asian Americans. Then discuss special issues in counseling women and individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Asian Americans are comprised of many different Asian countries. It is important for the counselor to identify which Asian country their client is from and understand the cultural influences from that specific country. Countries that comprise the Asian society are; the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Viet Nam, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand. Each country and culture has differences that exist in socioeconomic status and employment. Understanding these differences and the specific country will aid the counselor in providing the best counseling session for the client.

In the same manner as Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans are also a very diverse culture within itself. Hispanic Americans are comprised of Mexico, Puerto Rican, Cuba, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Central and South American Countries. Even within the United States, the Hispanic culture is very different based upon the region in which they live. California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Florida, and the East Coast of New York and New Jersey all have various cultural differences within the Hispanic culture. With either Asian or Hispanic cultures, the challenge for the counselor is to understand

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the type of client they are aiding and to follow the cultural needs of that client.

References

- Nugent, F., Jones, K. (2009). *Introduction to the Profession of Counseling* . Pearson Merrill Pub.