

A Tripartite Model of Counseling

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"Counseling is the intentional insertion of oneself into the personal life/lives of an individual or group with the expressed purpose of affecting change. This insertion, while deliberate, is predicated upon adequate training, the receipt of professional qualifications, and the adherence to an established code of professional ethics."

Now what does this mean, especially from the point of view of pedagogy? What, if anything, is the heuristic value of a statement like the above? As a big fan of metaphor and its value as a pedagogical as well as counseling tool, I ask students to view the above as the description of the seat/step on a three-legged stool. I identify the three legs supporting the stool as "personality theory," (i.e., a theoretical explanation of human behavior), "counseling theory," (i.e., how does a counselor effectively counsel), and "counseling/clinical techniques," (i.e., counseling's `tricks-of-the-trade'). I then suggest that the stability of this three-legged stool (or tripartite [eclectic?] model of counseling) is significantly greater than that of a BI- or partite model.

Occasionally a student will, in an attempt to inject a bit of levity into the class, indicate that s/he prefers the stability of a four legged stool to which I suggest that the individual learning all human beings bring to

the Counselor Education training table may suffice (this usually leaves room for a few chuckles about one leg potentially being a bit wobbly).

I suggest that with such a view of counseling, a student can recognize Bandura's Social-Learning Theory as a realistic view of personality, usefulness in explaining human behavior and at the same time relate to

Roger's Person-Centered theory of counseling as a vehicle for interacting with a client, all the time employing techniques that come from a Behaviorist's "cookbook" for between session homework. A student can see the usefulness in Jung's analytic theory, the Social Psychological theories of Adler, Fromm, or Horney, or Allport's views on the psychology of the individual while employing the counseling model of a different theorist and techniques as disparate as guided imagery, re-scripting one's role in a relationship, and assertiveness training. The mix-and-match potential of this heuristic is staggering.

While many of us probably find ourselves eventually subscribing to a view of counseling supported by a harmonious scoring of personality and counseling theory and related techniques as we mature as counselors, I suspect that there is some variance in this trio of supports within all our personal views of counseling. Students usually respond to the above perspective on counseling with a sense of being empowered, "So I don't have to learn which theory is right, just which are useful?"

To return to the discussion at hand, while Prochaska and DiClemente's "Transtheoretical" model may be most compatible with the above suggested working definition of counseling, I argue that counselor educators might be careful to avoid employing a definition of counseling that is correct in its precision, but less than useful in its application.

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