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AUTHOR Kegley, John F.
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ABSTRACT

A counselor's values are inherent in all that he does with a client, ranging from selection of the counseling modality to the decision to terminate facilitative intervention. Value-free counseling is a myth, and recognition of this fact is the first step in arriving at a clear conception of what counseling can, or should, be. A counselor can be considered an advocate for what one can become. In this sense, counseling is a political, value-laden process to create tolerant personalities and safeguard human rights. Whatever means and modalities are employed in counseling to facilitate the development of the tolerant personality, the process must be a liberating one that releases the mind and emotions from ignorance, prejudice, partisanship or superstition, that emancipates the will, stimulates the imagination, broadens the sympathies, generates empathy and makes the client a citizen of the world. (Author/PC)

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THE MYTH OF VALUE FREE COUNSELING

by
John F. Kegley, Ed.D

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The Myth of Value Free Counseling

John F. Kegley, ED. D. Community Coordinator Montgomery County, Maryland, Public Schools. Counselor Educator, V.P.I. at Reston.

It has often been cautioned that counseling should be kept free from values. As to the counselor's attitude towards the "failures" of the client, this caution is correct. Furthermore, the counselor is cautioned not to impose or even transfer his own values upon the client; but that does not mean that the problem of value can be avoided. In fact, values of the counselor are inherent in all that the helper does with the client, ranging from selection of the counseling modality to the decision to terminate facilitative intervention. Value free counseling is a myth. Recognition of this fact is the first step in arriving at a clear conception of what counseling can, or should, become. This recognition also suggests possibilities for delineating values that the client might discover and realize and which lend themselves to self-actualized personhood as an outcome of counseling. These values suggest what an individual can become, with counseling serving as a significant means to faciliate this process of becoming.

Counseling, Values, and Choice

Sometimes, as counselors try to encourage clients to be more precise and critical in their verbal expression, they will admonish, "Now be careful ... are you stating a fact or expressing a preference?..." We must differentiate between factual statements and value assertions." Insofar as this contributes to the honest recognition that certain "realities" and perhaps unpleasant "facts" are present which must be included in an objective appraisal of the situation, it is certainly worthwhile. But, unfortunately, this distinction sometimes creates a discontiunity between so-called "cold, hard facts" and the warm preferences, desires, and values

we live by and with. This emphasis forces distinction and categorization, leading to either-or, dichotomized thinking. It leads the client to separate mind-cognitive-fact sets from emotion-affective-value sets, creating a schizoid interpretation and appraisal of the forces that one has to contend with in his life space. This process, by emphasizing fact over feeling, limits the client's personality of a major aspect of the psychological make-up helpful in making choices. In the final analysis, a person makes a choice because he values something more than something else. Thus it is not only nonsensical, but disruptive to well being to mask value assertions. The counselor and client alike must be aware of the importance and place of their value orientations.

All of us engage in valuing. We prize and despise, esteem and disdain; we are far from indifferent about our experiences. The fact of valuing is about as basic and pervasive a fact as one is likely to come upon in the collective culture of Western civilization. There is not even a strong tradition that encourages us to adopt an impartial, disinterested, bystander approach to life. Experience is not only cognitively full-bodied, but also value laden. We assert our values, depending on their importance to us at a particular point in time. We assert values whenever we choose, prize, cherish, publicly affirm, act and act on repeatedly (Raths, Harmin, Simon, 1966). Values involve how one feels about others, how one feels about self, what identifications one holds highly, ones moral percepts, ethnic and religious beliefs, emotional needs, and motivations. Hence, values are at the core of making decisions affecting one's life, and to the extent that one is able to make choices is the extent to which one is free - to be all that he is capble of being.

The counselor's task is to create a trusting atmosphere where the client can explore and ascertain his value structure and that structure's relationship to his environment. The counselor also recognizes his own value system. This system is transferred to the client in the process of counseling by such

choices the counselor makes as the counselor's philosophical view of mankind, the counseling modality selected with its accompanying premises, the counselor's view of what the client is and can become, his expectations, his view of a fully functioning, self-actualized human being, and his belief system (political, religious, etc.). The counselor, directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, imposes value considerations on the client - whenever and wherever he enters into an intimate, trusting interactive relationship with the client. And, of course, personal-social counseling is dependent as to outcome upon the relationship.

The problem with values originates in the assumption that values are not inherent in objects, events, actions, persons, etc., but are judgements determined by outside factors - by religious, metaphysical, scientific, or social convictions. The arbitrariness, uncertainity, ambiquity of these convictions is mirrored in value judgements, and all criticism and skepticism as to them is an expression of dissatisfaction with their relativity. It does not suffice that the differences in contents to which values are ascribed are considered as due to the differences in individuals, or in cultural, environmental, or histroical influences. Our inner experience, the focus of the counselor's attention and concern, when we think of values , is in principle a feeling of something definite, absolute and essential for one's life, for existence. This concern with values is the main thrust of the work of the counselor. One cannot deal with self without dealing with values.

The Client's Value Laden Concerns

All human beings have to suffer and endure suffering. This is due to our difficulty in relation to nature, particularly in relation to other living things, and especially in relation to other human beings. How this suffering is presented to the helper may be as numerous in differentiation as there are personalities in the world. However, certain broad spectrum, philosophically

based life concern patterns may be discerned (Russell, 1959):

1. What am I doing here? (Place and purpose, origin and existence).

2. Am I good? (Worth, ethics, morals, self-esteem).

3. How can I know for sure? How can I go about knowing?

4. Can I change my life? (Freedom to decide and act; the capacity of the will; social restraint and its relation to human rights).

5. How can I tell what is true/real? How can I be sure? Whose reality, when?

If we take Aristotle's dictum that the ..."unexamined life is not worth living", we may suppose that most persons do some philosophizing some time in their lives. Counseling is the natural setting in which these concerns are addressed. The implications in nearly all these questions are axiologic or value concerns.

Generally, client counseling concerns are not raised or presented to the counselor so directly. But consider some of the following value questions (Postman and Weingartner, 1969) typically presented to or by counselors, remembering that values are indicated by goals or purposes, aspirations, attitudes, interests, beliefs and convictions, activities, worries, problems, or obstacles (Raths, 1966).

1. How do you want to be similar to or different from adults you know when you become your ego ideal?

2. What, ir anything, seems to be worth dying for?

3. What seems worth living for?

4. How can "good" be distinguished from "evil"?

5. At the present moment, what would you most like to be or be doing? Five years from now? Ten years from now? Why? What might you have to do to realize these hopes? What might you have to give up in order to do some or all of these things?

What are some of mankind's most important ideas? Where did they come from? Why? How? Now what?

7. What do you worry about most? Which of them might you deal with first? How do you decide?

8. What are the conditions necessary for life to survive? Plants? Animals? Humans?

9. How many symbol systems does man have? How come? So what? What worth? Which good? Which bad?

10. What other "languages" does mankind have besides those consisting of words? What use? What good? How? Where? When? For whom?

Are these types of concerns not the work of the counselor? Are they not indicative of value orientations of both counselor and counselee?

Individuals can live "successfully" when they are helped by others and others are helped by them in dealing with value laden concerns. Oftentimes, the help comes merely by posing and exploring value alternatives. This involves self-disclosure of affect for both partners in the sharing process. Ultimately, counseling serves by helping clients recognize their unity and interdependence with others.

The Counselor's Values

One means of determining values associated with such a generic term as counseling is to identify those characteristics that counselors as a collective body ideally should hold. Character depiction might include the following interpersonal skills (Hipple, 1972).

1. ability to active listen to others in an understanding way
2. awareness of feelings of others
3. appreciation for differences in others
4. trusting
5. warm and affectionate
6. opening and revealing with others
7. high personal level of self-esteem
8. self-understanding and highly introspective

9. willingness to discuss feelings and emotions (his and yours)

10. welcomes feedback: give and take

11. tolerance for reaction to conflict and antagonism from others

12. tolerance of opposing opinions from others

13. high tolerance to expression of warmth and affection from others

14. tendency to build on previous ideas of others

15. tendency to seek close personal relationships with others

Additional characteristics commonly associated with the ideal counselor might include:

ethical, intelligent, reliable, sensitivity to needs of others, accepting, sense of humor in dealing with the human predicament, tactful, knowledgeable, curious, insightful-perceptive, resourceful, advocate of human rights, industrious, reliable, humble, integrity, and creative.

This paragon of ideal counselor characteristics is by no means complete. The descriptors merely suggest some of those personal and interpersonal skills deemed helpful and useful to successful counseling. Their importance here is in the value orientations that they suggest. This represents one means of delineating counselors' values by identifying the ego ideal of the profession.

Getting in touch with the values we would like to attribute to counselors is a worthy and useful undertaking. For one, by sharing these characteristics with the client, the counselor is demonstrating his attempt to show where he is coming from. Secondly, after counseling sessions have reached the terminal stage, it might serve as an instrument to gather feedback to the counselor. Furthermore, since the relationship is so important in counseling, it serves as an accountability function. Finally, descriptors of this sort might serve as a means of suggesting to the counselee what the counselor's overt and covert hopes for him might be - for what we hope for ourselves, we transfer to those whom we seek to help.

Counseling For What

Nowhere is the evolution of the values of counseling more clearly seen than in the conceptualizations of individual growth, and human potential. Our hierarchies of values reflect the concepts of limitless development and increasing integration. The actualizing of human potentialities is envisioned as progressing through a dynamic process of stages of development to higher levels, always more complete. Each facet of the human being may be developed in turn, or several may unfold and grow simulataneously; and each interacts with the others in a constantly expanding whole.

Unfortunately, for the past fifty years or more, we in the helping professions have been preoccupied with a conception of human adjustment or mental health stated as a function of the norm. Previously, our standards of what constitutes adjustment have been statistically defined in terms of the bell-shaped curve. Hence, the well-adjusted were those who clustered about the mean. Those who departed from the average were deviates from the mean -abnormal. Helathy adjustment thus became syhonymous with average. Such a view of human health seems to require, on the one hand, the discouragement of difference, individuality, and creativity, and on the other hand, encourage the "institutional man", conformity and the most banal forms of togetherness. On such a basis, we should have to classify some of the greatest figures in history as maladjusted, e. g. the humanitarian figures of Socrates, Christ, Ghandi, King, and Einstein.

The fullest possible flowering of human potentiality is the business of counseling - not adjustment to the norm of society. It is apparent that what we need is a conceptualization of the supremely healthy personality - not in terms of averages, but in terms of ultimates. To establish goals we need to see beyond what man is and know what man can become.

Those of us in the helping professions want the individual to lead the good life and become a good person in all respects. What is counseling's cosmic view of the character of such a person?

The highly evolved, self-actualized person is human in the fullest and most complete sense. This person has:

> a respect for life; a vision of what life is and can be; a developed value system which prizes openness contributing to acceptance and appreciation of new and different personalities and experiences; a knowledge of self and a knowledge that personal choices can be made - which is a measure of freedom; evolved beyond coping or even creative autonomy to a personalized search for "meaning" - a time when the individual makes decisions of conscience and chooses ethical principles which appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistancy while remaining altruistically responsible to others; attained a transcental state where everything appears as it really is - infinite; the capacity to experience interpersonal relationships intensely; regard for the species as basically and potentially good; disentangled judgements of, or language about, human life from status and material values, from its uses to self and others; means of moral judgement that is universal and impersonal; demonstrates brotherly love; propensity for continuing to lead a life of creative expansion, rather than narrowing visions and interests; maturity to the extent that he has resoved basic life conflicts.[1]

The integrated personality, the highest level of evolvement and hallmark of maturity, has been described (Erikson, 1950):

> It is the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions: it thus means a new, a different love of one's parents.... Although aware of the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human striving, the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his own life style against all physical and economic threats. For he knows that an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history; and that

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[1] Erikson's developmental crises: Trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs. shame; initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority; identity vs. role diffusion; intimacy vs. isolation; generativity vs. stagnation; integrity vs. despair.

for him all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of integrity of which he partakes. The style of integrity developed by his culture or civilization thus becomes the "patrimony of his soul", the seal of his moral paternity of himself. Before this final solution, death loses its sting.

If this vision of the highly evolved person is what we are counseling for, value free counseling is a myth.

Implications for Human Rights

The counselor is an advocate for what one can become. Ultimately, what one ideally could become, all should become. If all were indeed self-actualized individuals we would have a nation-world of tolerant-accepting-affiliative personalities and the need for such documents as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights would become academic (other than to guide and reaffirm). In this sense, counseling is indeed a political, value-laden process to create tolerant personalities and safeguard human rights. What might be the nature of these personalities (Allport, 1954) as they come to be:

Tolerant personalities feel welcome, accepted, and loved as they behave and experience with others. As children they learned that punishment was neither harsh nor capricious and in early development they did not have to guard every moment against impulses that might bring parental wrath. Threat orientation was lacking and the keynote to their life was security with others rather than fear. As the sense of self-hood developed, the child learned to synthesize his own pleasure seeking tendencies (id responses) with the demands of the outer situation, and with his own developing conscience. The ego learned to find sufficient gratification without resorting to repression, and without the guilt that leads him, through projection, to lay blame on others.

Tolerant personalities exhibit mental flexibility and reject either-or, dichotomized, two-value logic; he does not bifurcate his environment into wholly proper and improper categories. Rather, experience is interpreted in shades of gray. Furthermore,

distinctions are not made between roles of sexes, groups, cultures, etc.

Tolerant personalities do not need precise, orderly, clear-cut environments before they can proceed with a task. They can tolerate ambiquity in social-personal relationships and settings.

Bothe specific teaching (learning from social environment) and temperment combine to produce the desired affliative outlook found in tolerant personalities. The greater number of forces pressing in one positive direction, the more tolerant the personality will be. These forces include temperament, family atmosphere, specific parental and significant other teaching, diversified exoeriences, and school and community influences. When these forces create a feeling of security in the individual's ego, there is less of a tendency to externalize conflicts with others. Hence, projection and extropunitive transactions are unnecessary.

Whether the tolerant person is militant or pacifistic, he is likely to be liberal in political views i.e. - wants progressive social change and is critical of the status quo. His toll in life is meliorism - to make things better.

Tolerant personalities are empathic - have social sensitivity, appreciate the affect that others are experiencing. Being empathic, they can trust their skill in dealing with others.

Knowledge of ones self tends to be associated with tolerance for others. The ego-ideal of tolerant people often calls for traits that they themselves lack; whereas prejudiced people paint as their ideal pretty much the sort of person they are now. Tolerant people, being basically more secure, can afford to see a discrepancy between ego-ideal and self-image. Tolerant people are inward, introspective, while prejudiced people, by contrast, are outward in their interests, given to externalizing their conflicts and finding their environment more absorbing than themselves.

We find, also, that tolerant people, being self-insightful have developed a sense of humor. Aesthetic and social values

are highly developed. They tend to be inclusive more than exclusive with others. They are self-loving, which is compatible with love of others. One's self-concept can be judged by his self-esteem, which is indicated by his ability to trust others. A person cannot love others if he cannot love himself. Security makes for realistic handling of conflict in social transactions with others. Secure people exhibit a trusting and affiliative philosophy of life.

The philosophy stresses brotherhood, universalism, and acceptance of myriad belief possibilities coexisting simultaneously. A Hindu principle reads "Truth is one - men call it many things". Irreconcilable differences between contrary sets of absolutes (e.g. religious doctrines) can be feasibly accomodated and intergrated, when viewed from a perspective of commonality of mutually shared life concerns expressed from different frames of reference. Such a person respects and appreciated the universal rights of others.

Whatever counseling means and modalities are employed to facilitate the development of the tolerant personality, the process must be liberating, one that releases the mind and emotions from ignorance, prejudice, partisanship or superstition, one that emancipates the will, stimulates the imagination, broadens the sympathies, generates empathy and makes the client a citizen of the world.

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