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ABSTRACT

Adult counseling is assuming increasing importance in counselor education and training. Most important is the developmental aspect of growth all through life, since adulthood is not a static period but can be as fraught with conflict and choice as childhood or adolescence. Outlines describe some important differences between young people and adults, various psychological and educational adult problems and several necessary adult coping factors. Issues and trends in adult counseling are presented, along with some predictions for the future of adult counseling. A reference section is included for further in-depth study and review. (Author/BMW)

COUNSELING ADULTS FOR LIFE TRANSITIONS

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Preface

This is the first in a series of publications on adult counseling to be produced by ERIC/CAPS. This initial publication is intended to review basic concepts and ideas about adult development and current trends and developments in adult counseling. The second volume, slated for publication in early 1981, will analyze both adult counseling programs and programs designed to prepare persons as adult counselors. To obtain data for the second volume, we plan to visit and survey adult counseling programs throughout the country. A major goal will be to identify the physical and human factors associated with programs that have demonstrated successful performance.

The third book in the series, planned for early 1982, will synthesize present knowledge about adult counseling and present a multi-stage model for the development and installation of adult counseling programs in different settings. Included in this volume will be a guide to significant adult counseling resources and a discussion of promising adult counseling practices and procedures. Hopefully, these three volumes together will fill the existing need for a basic, comprehensive source for those who would be adult counselors or who are responsible for the design and implementation of effective adult counseling programs.

Even the best retrieval efforts fall short of providing all that is pertinent and relevant to a topic. Though we have searched and will continue to search diligently to identify programs and resources of merit, we feel that the search, once started, will be never-ending. The ERIC/CAPS Clearinghouse is assigning the highest priority to adult counseling. You can be a significant contributor to this development by sharing with us information about your work in adult counseling or referring us to someone whose work you admire.

GRW and LB

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Emphasis throughout this manuscript is on the developmental aspect of growth all through life, and on the theory that adulthood is not a stable, static period but is as fraught with conflict and choice as is childhood or adolescence. Because this is so, many adults require counseling to help them through times of crisis or change. Adult counseling is still in its infancy but, with the "graying of America," is assuming increasing importance in counselor education and training. This publication, the first in a planned series of three, outlines some of the important differences between adults and young people, describes some of the psychological and educational problems of adults, discusses major life transitions commonly experienced by adults, and suggests three factors that are necessary if adults are to be able to cope effectively with times of transition in their lives. The latter half of the manuscript discusses issues and trends in adult counseling and presents some images of what will probably occur in adult counseling in the years ahead. An extensive reference section at the end provides a list of resources that can be extremely helpful to readers who wish to pursue in greater depth any of the ideas or concepts presented in the monograph.

Introduction

Although "adulthood" has never been precisely defined, we may assume that it constitutes approximately 45-50 years of the life span--the time between the end of adolescence (age 20?) and the beginning of old age (age 65-70?). Curious, then, that behavioral scientists over the years have produced myriad bulging tomes of theory and comment on infant, child, and adolescent development, and lately on problems of the elderly, but have largely ignored the largest portion of living. The prevailing view has been that "being an adult" means that one has come to terms with life, copes successfully with crisis and change, and is generally in command of his/her world. Indeed, in examining developmental phases in career behavior, some theorists have called this period of life the time of "crystallization" (Ginzberg, et al., 1951), "establishment and maintenance" (Super, 1953), and "stability" (Miller & Form, 1951).

Behavioral and social scientists are paying increasing attention to the adult years as a focus for research and study. The long-held view that few changes of significance occur during adulthood is giving way to the recognition that these years can be a period of change and conflict, as well as of opportunity for continued personal growth. Recently early researchers in vocational behavior have modified their theoretical formulations to suggest that individuals continue to make choices throughout their working lives as changes occur in their situations and/or goals. In addition, contemporary theorists now recognize that career development (i.e., development in one's work life) cannot be isolated from physical, emotional, or intellectual development; in fact, the term "career development" is now generally accepted to mean development in all aspects of life--work, education, leisure, personal characteristics. Thus, a great many variables enter into the making of critical life decisions: values, needs, interests, abilities, expectations of self and others, educational background and training, family influences, personality factors such as motivation, lifestyle preference, level of aspiration, and willingness to take risks--to name but a few. Each of these variables overlaps with others,

and all are interrelated so that decision-making in one area of life influences and is influenced by every other. Add to these factors the impact of sociological change and of important environmental change such as divorce, serious illness, the empty nest, and changes in occupational role or status, and it becomes clear that an adult is a complex person indeed. It is no wonder that adults often experience feelings of self-doubt, uncertainty, and anxiety about the future, and need assistance from time to time in resolving life problems.

Adulthood Vs. Youth

When does adolescence end and adulthood begin? Knowles (1962) says that the difference between young people and adults is in their role, a move from dependency to independent self-direction. Zahn writes that "Adults are not merely tall children. They differ from the young in many ways that influence their learning. They have different body characteristics, different learning histories, different reaction speed, different attitudes, values, interests, motivations, and personality" (Thompson, 1967, p. 2). Webster says that one who is "adult" is "fully developed and mature: grown-up." Troll (Seltz & Collier, 1977) in her extensive discussion on the topic, suggests a "process" definition that takes into account physiological, cognitive, and personality processes. Rather than look at adulthood as a "state" or a "place," she prefers to think, "What happens?" or "What changes occur?"

Chronological age is the visible criterion, but even age as a determinant of adulthood depends upon the cultural environment. Participants in a workshop on "The Training of Counselors of Adults" came up with the following definition of an adult: "An adult is an essentially self-sustaining and/or socially independent person regardless of chronological age insofar as he is regarded by society and self as fulfilling an adult role" (Thompson, 1967, p. 21). This appears to be a usable definition for the purposes of this paper, for it incorporates the concept of independence along with self-expectations and the expectations of the societal milieu in which the person functions.

Several differences between adults and young people have implications for counseling.

Experience

The adult possesses a broader background of experience than the youth. The amount, depth, and variety of adult experience will vary tremendously; but the very fa t of their having been decision-makers, self-sustaining, responsible for self and others, causes adults to organize their perceptions differently, to have clearer insights into relationships, to possess different motivations and expectations, and to have a more realistic sense of what is or is not likely to "work."

Attitude

While young people expect decisions to be made for them, or at least are generally willing to seek guidance, adults expect to be treated as adults and to participate fully in the decision-making process. Many adults, however, are unwilling to seek help or guidance believing that to be adult, to "act their age," means being totally self-sufficient and able to cope singly with whatever befalls them. For men, success in our society is equated with masculinity (Jackard, 1974) which, in turn, implies holding back feelings, handling stress without whimpering. Rigid ideas about what "fits" the role of the American male thus cause men in particular to reject seeking guidance for handling job-related or personal problems of tension, conflict, or dissatisfaction.

Adults are also likely to be more rigid in their thinking than young persons because they have had a longer time to crystallize their perceptions of self, others, and the environment. Their capacity to be more realistic can also cause them to be less optimistic about accomplishing any major sort of change. If they do desire change, however, they are also likely to be more impatient and more highly motivated than youth. "How much time will it take?" is a question frequently asked of counselors. The sense of the world moving on and perhaps passing them by lends urgency to their endeavors to make the most of opportunity as quickly as possible.

Developmental Tasks

The tasks of youth are fairly definable and are confined to a relatively brief number of years. The tasks of adulthood range all the way from launching one's career, marrying, starting a family, and moving into responsible citizenship activities, to moving up the career ladder and helping children get on

their way, to preparing for and living in retirement. Thus, the needs of adults will vary according to where they are in their life span. The lonely, single young worker will manifest far different concerns than will the person who feels trapped by job stagnation and family pressures or the achievement-oriented successful professional facing mandatory retirement.

Pressures

Whereas youth have all the time in the world--a seemingly endless string of years to learn, experiment, and risk, adults generally experience economic and time pressures from a number of sources. Family and work responsibilities often inhibit adults from moving to a new residence, job, or partner, and limit their ability to try out and/or make changes freely. People of all ages experience life problems for which they may need help from outside, but for adults the realities of longevity, seniority, tenure, and plain economics are forces which in most cases they cannot ignore. For the adult, the decision of whether to go back to school or change occupation or put an aging parent in a home or divorce a spouse must be considered in light of a host of other factors. Mistakes that can be laughed off or chalked up to experience for the teenager can be costly in midlife, and adults must necessarily weigh consequences with care.

Self-concept

Ideas about self are formed early in life and change only gradually, if at all, through interactions with others in our world. Whether our original notions of who we are are more positive or negative depends on our relationships with family and peers, and, equally important, on how we fared in school. Into every new situation we carry an image of how we will act and be reacted to, expectations which are usually fulfilled. The fact that adults have lived longer, have interacted with more individuals, and have been buffeted or soothed by the realities of living crystallizes and reinforces their self-concept to the extent that they develop fairly rigid images of what they can or cannot do and, in many cases, results in sealing off options for change. The feeling of being on the brink of life enables most youth to reach out and risk new behaviors and experiences, to enhance or change what they perceive themselves to be; for adults, experience and responsibility coupled with clearer ideas of self-limits

often close the avenues of change. Few adults are as successful as they want to be, or dreamed they would be; and while many find solace in blaming circumstances or other people, most responsible adults find the inability to fulfill their youthful ambitions to reside in themselves.

New learning experiences, especially those that are clearly "educational," arouse questions (probably unarticulated) in adults: "Am I too old to learn?" "Will I make a fool of myself?" "What if I fail?" "I've tried that before and it didn't work--why should it work now?" Or, more dismally: "I'm too old to change." "I'll fail." "It won't work." Thus, many adults find it more comfortable to stay with the known, even the unsatisfying known, than to subject their ideas of self to challenge, to risk failure, or to be considered weak in the eyes of others.

Problems of Adults

Problems in adulthood change with role change, e.g., the parent of a preschooler will reflect far different concerns than will a single professional woman, an unemployed middle-aged father, or an ailing widow. Life problems include all those associated with occupational pursuits which, in turn, include difficulties relating to upgrading oneself through training or educational experiences. Because of the trend today for increasing numbers of adults to return to school, we have chosen to separate problems associated specifically with the acquisition of new skills or knowledge in an educational setting from more broadly pervasive psychological concerns.

Psychological Problems of Adults

Anxiety about an upcoming transition. One cannot truly know the future until he/she experiences it, and fear of the unknown occupies the thoughts of many adults as they face major changes in their lives. Perception of the change as a deficit increases the probability of anxiety, such as upcoming retirement for the person to whom work has become symbolic with positive self-concept or seeing the last child leave home for the woman who has achieved her identity through motherhood. For many, tentative glimmerings of hope or excitement accompany the anxiety, but for some adults feelings of threat or uncomfortable and undesirable disruption predominate.

Misgivings about leaving the present stage in life. One of the symptoms of middle-aged and older adults is the wish for comfort, for things to remain as they are, even at the expense of gaining something better. Some adults, knowing change is impending, cling more tightly to what is and use every conceivable strategy to ward off the inevitable. Parents refuse to allow their daughter to use the car or to begin dating, seeing those activities as a prelude to her adulthood, a signal that she will soon be independent. An individual prolongs his/her stay with the company, unwilling to retire and make way for others. Leaving the known can be a bittersweet time for many adults as they realize with nostalgia and sadness that the wheel of time is turning.

Reality shock. Even when a transition has proceeded smoothly, the new stage may contain unanticipated negative side effects. The responsibility of parenthood, the young couple suddenly realize, means that their freedom is drastically curtailed. Although the divorce was eagerly sought, the father misses his children desperately. The retired person finds that "to do as he damn pleases" has worn thin so quickly that he becomes a victim of depression and despair. Particularly for adults who have fantasized the new stage in glowing terms disproportionate to actuality, the reality of the experience can cause disappointment and unhappiness.

Compound stress. Holmes and Rahe (1967) have created a "Social Adjustment Rating Scale" in which they assign numerical values to both positive and negative stress-producing life events such as death of a spouse, personal injury or illness, and beginning school. Through their research they have determined that whether the event is perceived as beneficial or detrimental, it still saps the energies of the person experiencing it. An individual's total score on the scale for a 12-month period is assumed to relate to his/her physical and mental health. Most adults can cope with one or two significant changes in their lives; it is when the number of stress-producing life events strains the individual's psychic strength beyond the limits that a breakdown in functioning can occur. Even psychologically secure individuals may require help if they experience a number of stressful occurrences without time to recover in between. We are reminded of an individual in our acquaintance whose husband's business failed, whose father became ill, who was forced to find

employment and leave preschoolers with a baby-sitter, who had to move to a less desirable residence, who became ill herself, and then learned that her husband was having an extramarital affair. It was no wonder that she experienced a period of psychological imbalance.

Arrested development. Fluid movement from one stage of life to the next requires an individual to have worked through earlier developmental stages successfully. Processes of growth and maturation most often take place gradually; readiness for leaving one developmental stage and entering another occurs simultaneously. As we have stated, in some persons the time of transition can therefore arouse ambiguous or discomfiting feelings of wanting to stop the clock as well as wanting to push the hands forward. Most adults do not consciously experience psychosocial or even physical change and development--and therein lies the problem. If they are unaware of when they are changing, they are also unaware of when they are not. The young married woman who calls her mother daily and runs home at the slightest provocation is a good example of an adult who has not achieved the independence or the commitment to intimacy and sharing necessary for a successful marriage relationship.

Adults of any age who continually place blame for their misfortunes on forces outside themselves, i.e., beyond their control, have not mastered the transition from dependency to self-direction and self-responsibility. Tardiness, procrastination, and dreams of unrealistic goals usually characterize such individuals, and they plod along encountering numerous setbacks and barriers that are of their own making. The real tragedy occurs when individuals maintain such self-defeating behaviors into the older adult years, and approach the end of life unfulfilled, feeling victimized by life.

Midlife malaise. As adults enter midlife, which we can label the period somewhere in the forties or fifties, many experience a sense of vague unease and restlessness. Men in particular become introspective, examining their past, their progress, their potential for the future. The struggle to achieve which has consumed their earlier years suddenly seems hollow; they find themselves searching in a directionless kind of way to imbue their lives with more meaning. Fear that they are deteriorating physically, that their sexual powers are waning, coupled with the realization that time is running out, causes some men to consider seriously making a drastic change in their personal or career lives (and some men do it!). They reflect on their unrealized

dreams of youth, of the opportunities they have missed to advance in career, to establish a warmer relationship with their children, to sleep with various women they have known, to travel, to experience life in the fullest sense. "Am I going to become a slippered old man without...?" "Is this all there is... shouldn't I do...before it's too late?" It should be stated here that as women increasingly become as career-oriented as men have been, it is probable that they, too, will experience the same kinds of unsettling reactions.

Family-oriented women of this age often enter the work scene for the first time, or re-enter after the children's needs have diminished. Instead of responding to what are often more affiliative leanings of their needful husbands, married women find their new freedom to be exhilarating; they become turned on to new goals, new associates, and look increasingly outward for satisfaction. As their paths diverge, each partner seeks comfort and solace in others whose needs and values are more similar. Divorce at this time thus becomes a way of resolving differences and realizing a more rewarding life-style. A fortyish man we knew was unable to cope with his adored wife's starting to work outside the home, with her new relationships and activities, and with the feeling that she was growing apart from him. We were stunned to learn that he had killed her and himself; we could only assume that it was the only way he knew how to deal with what for him was a truly intolerable situation.

Other typical responses to this time of unrest are throwing oneself into work with renewed energy as a way of obliterating less satisfying aspects of life, changing to a different career, resigning oneself to the situation and hoping something better will come up, or, as many adults do, assessing thoughtfully those aspects of life which have current value and meaning and developing new goals toward which to strive.

Educational Problems of Adults

Andragogy is not a new term, but the theories and approaches associated with it are new. Derived from the Greek words *aner*, meaning man, and *agogus*, meaning leader of, andragogy differs from pedagogy in the stem. Pedagogy means the art, science, or profession of teaching children, although present usage has broadened the meaning to the art of teaching. Literally, however, to refer to "pedagogy associated with adult learning" is inaccurate and a contradiction in terms. Teachers of adults have learned that they must disregard

some of the concepts of pedagogy if they are to be effective in their work, but only recently have a rationale and theory emerged that support their doing so.

Knowles (1978) has identified four major assumptions that undergird andragogical theory, based on differences between adults and children: (a) self-concept: a move toward self-direction, the need to be perceived by others as self-directing; (b) experience: definition of who one is by one's experiences, the need to utilize life experiences as resources for learning; (c) readiness to learn: wanting to learn things one needs to learn Vs. what one ought to learn, the relationship between adult developmental tasks and the need to learn new competencies; and (d) orientation to learning: immediacy of application of what one learns, problem-centered learning relevant to ongoing life roles and concerns (pp. 55-59).

These assumptions, supported by other authors in the literature dealing with adult education and counseling (Grabowski, 1972; Krings, 1976; Nejedlo, 1974; Thompson, 1971) provide clues for understanding some of the problems commonly experienced by adults as they pursue formal education in any setting. Identifying and understanding these concerns can help teachers of adults to organize learning experiences and resources, counselors of adults to deliver services, and administrators to develop procedures and programs that will take into account the real needs of their clients and thus be truly helpful to them.

Problems related to adult learning are often found within the person, but the institution itself is also partially responsible. While each individual adult will have concerns unique to him/herself, the major difficulties encountered by adults in seeking further education can be categorized generally as follows:

1. Fear. Many adults are worried about their basic capacity to learn. They feel that because they have been away from education for so long their minds have become rusty and they will be incapable of understanding and assimilating new knowledge. Part of this fear may stem from poor experiences in previous schooling and may be quite realistic--they were slow learners as children and they probably won't be very good learners as adults. Part may be caused by the belief that adults are handicapped in learning, that their learning ability declines with age.

Most adults underestimate their ability, and some prefer to stay away from further education rather than risk failure or be found wanting. Opting

for correspondence courses (a most private affair) or auditing of courses under the guise of not really needing the credit are ways some adults avoid public exposure of their progress. But even bright, able adults experience a waning of self-confidence and some fearful emotions as they ponder the decision to return to school; and the longer the lapse of time since the adult's last formal educational experience, the stronger the feelings of anxiety and self-doubt.

Fear is closely related to self-concept and to the need to be viewed as capable, smart, and successful, i.e., as an adult. To be adult means for many that they are expected to excel in whatever they attempt. Whereas they accept cognitively that this simply cannot be true, the belief persists to the extent that poor performance in school is equated with lack of worth as a person.

2. Traditional teaching modes. Because they have lived longer, adults have accumulated a reservoir of experiences that create a mind set toward learning different from that of younger persons. Practically all adults are used to being involved in or responsible for making decisions that affect what they do. They have developed skills in self-direction and independence that can cause them to resist traditional teaching methods such as lectures, audiovisual presentations, rote learning, or assigned reading. Adults need to know why, and are unwilling to pursue learning tasks just because the teacher says they should. "Ought to" is not in most adults' vocabulary when it comes to formal education.

Differences among adults widen as they get older, that is, as their life experiences have varied, and, as we have said, most adults define themselves through their experiences. The need is strong for adults to utilize their past and to relate what has gone before to present learning. In many ways previous life experiences provide a rich resource in the learning process, a broadened base for acquiring new knowledge. Not to tap into the adult experience, not to respect and value the years of living, not to utilize the resources present when any group of adults gathers is akin to devaluing the adult person.

3. Impracticality and irrelevance of learning tasks. Whereas most youth are willing to learn and to regurgitate what they have learned in accordance with graduation requirements or teacher whim, older persons generally seek

new skills or knowledge out of needs related to ongoing developmental tasks. They want to learn more effective methods of parenting because they are or are about to be parents. They want to acquire skills in coping with midcareer change because they are presently dissatisfied in their jobs, looking for an "out." They seek divorce counseling because they are experiencing trauma associated with marital separation. They pursue training in administrative skills because they are going to be promoted to management. Or, they subject themselves to the rigorous requirements of a graduate program because of meaningful, long-range career or personal goals. In short, adults are ready to learn, and they want what they learn to be useful in their present circumstances. No theory, please, no philosophy that will waste my time--teach me what I need so that I can perform or cope better in my life.

4. Unrealistic expectations. Few individuals, after they reach adulthood, are willing to "start at the bottom," for most of their activities relate to things they already do well. Many who do take the plunge and enter a new learning experience bring expectations either of easy success or of failure, and initial lack of skill or the necessity for hard work can be very frustrating or threatening. The time required to achieve desired goals may be longer than anticipated, or the goals themselves may be really unclear in the adult's mind. Lack of information or misinformation about a course or training program can also cause adults to hold unrealistic expectations concerning what they will learn, how fast they will learn it, how they will be different as a result of the experience, and how they will be able to apply the new skills or knowledge to their situation.

5. Inadequate educational background. Particularly for older adults with limited years of formal schooling, the return to an educational or training program can be most difficult, and even younger adults in this category experience problems. Chances are that such persons have not learned how to study, have probably had unpleasant or unsuccessful school experiences, and may not even read very well. For these individuals to re-enter the educational milieu takes a great deal of courage, determination, and motivation of a high order, plus willingness to begin by pursuing nitty-gritty basic learning tasks.

6. Unnecessary red tape. Standing in long lines, trekking from building to building, filling out countless forms (even for one course), having to take

a physical examination, or mingling with a boisterous throng of young people can discourage adults permanently from returning to school. Many feel alien already, and such requirements magnify the sense of not belonging, of being on foreign turf. Even such innocuous statements on the application forms as "Parents names" or "Do you smoke?" can make adults impatient, causing them to perceive the whole registration process as unnecessary and stupid, perhaps even symptomatic of the learning itself, and eventually to withdraw entirely.

7. Value conflicts. To return to school or to a training experience of any kind with other adults is to encounter new attitudes, new values, new ways of thinking. Adults have rather well-defined value structures (examined or no) which generally become more rigid with age. Because they have associated with "their own kind" for years, many adults have simply not come into contact with current life styles, and they lack understanding of contemporary behaviors and attitudes. The "culture shock" which results can be very real indeed and can have negative effects on learning. Particularly is this true when the instructor appears to reflect the values of a different generation in speech or mannerisms, but the conflict also can occur among and between class members as they engage in discussions and interactions. The art of understanding and valuing opinions of others, especially when they differ from one's own, is a skill many adults need to learn, and the enforced closeness of being members of a learning group often points it up dramatically.

Transitions in Adulthood

Basic to the idea of development in any sense is growth and change. While the developmental approach historically has been applied to childhood and adolescence, a life-span perspective is now emerging that is bringing attention to the issues and life transitions experienced by the middle-aged and aging. Levinson (1974) in his study of 40 males suggests that a new developmental stage occurs every seven years. Bocknek (1976) identifies four periods of adulthood: young, established, middle, and senescent. Neugarten (1968) discusses how human beings relate their development to time, to cues received from changes in their physical selves, their careers, and their families--and to a time perspective that changes from "how long I have lived" to "how long I have left to live." Other theorists have classified adult change using such reference points as cognitive functioning, personal orientation, and ego development.

Whatever the classification one chooses to adopt, the compelling evidence that development occurs throughout the life process and that adulthood is not synonymous with stability and decline allows us to state categorically that resources and potential for growth exist at all ages. Bocknek (1976) asserts that all of us experience a "developmental imperative," wherein the need to change is an urgent internal force that may be perceived as "challenge, opportunity, threat, or vague unease" (pp. 37-38). It is heartening to learn that a frequent corollary to this imperative to change is the discovery of new potential: "With the children gone, I feel I want to make something new of myself." "I did that well--I'm going to try that again!" "They drove all that way just to listen to my ideas!"

Certain transitions are characteristic of practically all adult groups--occupational transitions from first job to growth on the job to new job(s) to retirement; marriage, parenthood, empty nest, continuing concern for grown children; shift in time perspective from future-oriented to past-oriented, including feelings about death; changes in self-concept as individuals face successive life experiences. When predictable events happen appears to be crucial to people's ability to cope with them. If they occur as expected, or "on time" as Neugarten (1965) so aptly phrases it, adults appear to take them in stride, even though they may experience temporary psychological disturbance--events such as the death of aging parents, children leaving home at the end of high school, retirement at age 65. It is when events happen "out of sync," such as being fired from a job at age 50, losing a young child, or not finding a marriage partner by age 33, that the potential for psychological trauma is increased.

The transition itself, predictable or not, is not the issue, for many individuals sail blithely through the vicissitudes of life, and the same event may cause one individual to tack and shift direction to advantage, and another to founder. What is critical is the response of the person, the feelings aroused by the event, the effect on feelings of personal worth and self-esteem. In this respect life transitions become integrated with life themes, which include such affective states as loneliness, the search for autonomy or personal fulfillment, lowered self-concept, learning to share, and intimacy. Resolving life transitions successfully means coming to terms with the feelings engendered by change, regrouping, setting new goals, and moving forward with confidence and renewed strength.

In discussing life transitions, we are thus focusing more on potential problematic response than on the life event, more on the stress-producing qualities of the change for the person experiencing it. From this perspective, then, we will describe the following life transitions which are typical of many adults in our culture:

Divorce

Half of all American marriages end in divorce, and 70% of couples who live in large cities divorce (U.S. Public Health Service, 1977). Americans historically have equated divorce with failure and, until the last decade, have been intolerant of divorce in both attitudes and laws. Social and religious tolerance have increased in recent years, but our negative emotional attitudes still linger. Such recent statements as, "Divorce is the death of a marriage: the husband and wife together with their children are the mourners" (Fisher, 1974); or, "The divorce fever seems to pick off marriages like some medieval plague" (Olds, 1977), view divorce in a morbid light. And this tragic perspective is echoed in many of us when we hear that two people we know have decided to end their marriage.

Such attitudes do not help persons who are divorcing. Most adults still value the permanence and exclusivity of marriage, and to realize that "it's happening to me" can arouse deeply emotional feelings of having done something wrong, of having failed at a critical developmental task. A study of 96 families, both intact and going through divorce, confirmed that divorcing persons felt more anxious, depressed, angry, rejected, and incompetent the year following divorce than did persons whose married life persisted (Hetherington, et al., 1976). Carter and Glick (1976) state that "widowed and divorced persons... may tend to be more vulnerable to serious mishaps, self-inflicted wounds" (p. 349).

Kessler (1977) has identified seven emotional stages commonly experienced by divorcing persons, all of which have implications for counselors: disillusionment, erosion, detachment, physical separation, mourning, second adolescence, and hard work. (The reader is referred to Kessler, 1977, for more detailed descriptions of each stage.) Suffice it to say that ignorance about divorce is lessening as the subject becomes more openly discussed; and research is presently being conducted into causal factors, developmental effects, and appropriate therapeutic interventions.

Loss of a Significant Other

Reactions to death can vary considerably in their "nature, sequence, depth, and visibility" (Sinick, 1977, p. 72). Hickey and Szabo (1973) have created a list of variables that affect reactions to death, the first of which is "the degree of importance the deceased had in the life of the survivor" (p. 6). In this monograph we are not concerned with survivors who are presumably bereaved, who feel that they must feign bereavement, to whom the death brings a sense of relief or even joy. Rather, we are dealing with the reactions of persons who are genuinely anguished over the death and for whom it is a life event with critical consequences.

Typical responses of persons bereaved by the death of someone cherished are feelings of shock, anger, denial, guilt, remorse for things unsaid or undone, sorrow, loneliness, ambiguity about the future, and personal vulnerability. The more intimate the ties, the more profound the emotional reaction; the more unexpected the loss, the longer the grieving period. Other factors that can contribute to feelings of helplessness or inability to cope are the changes in life style or role necessitated by the death, the physical and emotional state of the bereaved, and the degree of dependency that will result from the loss.

Career Change

Changing jobs is an accepted reality in American life. Why people change jobs ranges from extremely negative reasons: dissatisfaction with work, working conditions, colleagues, pay; lack of opportunity for creative activity or upward movement--to very positive reasons: advancement, enhanced social status, new challenge, the chance to satisfy higher-level needs. It is the negative causes for change, which also include feelings of stagnation, of "I've done it all and I'm bored," that are apt to be disruptive to a person's sense of identity.

In addition to personal proddings for change, sociological, economic, and technological developments support the need and the opportunity for individuals to try something new. The longer life space, early retirement, disruption of families, the women's movement, new occupational specialties--all these factors cause individuals to question the utility of developing a single set of skills and staying in a job for life.

No decision to change jobs is made in isolation. Rather, it must be considered in light of an individual's life situation. Does the new job entail

moving my family? Must I delay my chance for retraining until the children are out of school? Do the important people in my life support my decision? The foregoing questions involve pressures from the environment. Equally important are the inner feelings of the potential career-changer. What new skills will I need? Will I be competing against younger people? Can I do it? Is this really what I want?

Some persons engage in orderly careers (Kimmel, 1974), i.e., advance steadily in the same general profession through the ranks until they reach a post of seniority and prestige. An example of this might be an individual who is trained in an educational field, becomes an instructor in a college, attains the status of full professor in a university, and eventually becomes Head or Dean. Or a factory worker who becomes foreperson, rises to middle management, and then assumes a full administrative role in the organization. Other individuals pursue what Kimmel calls disorderly careers, switching from one field to another--from being a car salesperson, to working in a marina, to undergoing a training experience in grinding optical lenses, to owning a millinery store. In this particular time of declining school enrollments, to use a most current illustration, we are witnessing a dramatic shift of many individuals from education to the business world.

Whether the career move is consistent or haphazard, the change still involves the person's integrating him/herself into an array of new relationships, roles, and expectations, and is liable to be at least temporarily upsetting. A common crisis point during the occupational cycle occurs during the middle years in an occupation. At this point an individual typically becomes introspective in reference to progress made toward anticipated goals and time left to attain them. If the assessment reveals a serious gap, this often becomes the time for contemplating a career change. In fact, the literature dealing with midlife places its major focus on occupational change (Walz, 1978). Neugarten (1968b) labels this period a time of "taking stock," of deciding whether one is "on time" or "late," the result being an intensified awareness of the aging process.

The Family Cycle

Lowenthal et al. (1977) found family influence and involvement to be a dominant theme throughout adult life. Indeed, the changes in family roles,

relationships, and responsibilities as the life cycle of the family unfolds possess great potential for emotional disruption. The common progression consists of marriage, parenthood, the postparental period, and retirement. We are speaking here of the sequence of the stable family. In today's swiftly moving society, cultural norms relating to "appropriate" family organization are changing, but the normal pattern is still valued by most of us, even when we find ourselves diverging from it.

A whole host of emotions and behaviors accompanies each transition point, and many adults are able to handle each phase with a fair degree of equanimity. Responsibilities and privileges appropriate to each stage are fairly well established by the marriage partners, and readiness for each new stage normally takes place gradually during the preceding period. Many substages exist: the times of caring for preschool, school-age, and adolescent children; the time when the previously home-bound spouse seeks employment outside the home; the time of caring for aging parents and dealing with the death of parents; grandparenthood; widow or widower status.

Critical transition points typically occur for both men and women during the beginning of parenthood, the empty nest stage (middle age), and the retirement period. The last transition point is work-related and will be discussed separately, but it is listed here because of its profound impact on family life.

Becoming a parent can arouse increased feelings of responsibility and pride, and the urge to work harder to provide the best possible advantages for self, spouse, and children. It can also engender feelings of resentment and entrapment, of being controlled and constrained by circumstances for years into the future. Older couples typically look back with mixed emotions on the child-raising time of life, and women in particular experience a new sense of freedom when the children are gone (Deutscher, 1968).

The empty nest seems to bring marriage itself under critical scrutiny by both partners. Pineo (1968), as a result of interviews with 1,000 couples who had been married up to 20 years, reported a general drop in marital satisfaction and adjustment which he termed "disenchantment," as well as "a loss of certain intimacy" and a feeling of loneliness (p. 258). Deutscher (1968), however, found in his study of 33 postparental couples that 60% of both husbands and wives found the postparental period to be "as good as" or "better than" preceding phases (p. 264). Whatever our orientation, the research is clear

that the exigencies of life within and without the family cause the time of the children's withdrawal to be a critical period for each partner individually and for the marriage.

Retirement

The realization that the retirement years may comprise one-third of a person's life is creating a new body of literature on problems of the elderly, and on helping people to develop realistic and rewarding plans for their later years. Today's turbulence and ferment about early retirement is raising many questions for the middle-aged, for most people want to work and need to work for their own personal satisfaction as well as for economic needs. For example, Morse and Weiss (Loether, 1967) found that 80% of a random sample of employed men would continue to work even if they inherited sufficient funds to live comfortably without working.

Retirement can be defined as a time when reduced responsibilities are replaced by different outlets. For some, retirement is regarded as a period of potential enrichment which will provide freedom to pursue either new interests or ones kept long in abeyance, to travel, to move, even to start a new career. For others, retirement is the first "insult" of aging (Manion, 1976), and the emotional impact can lead to feelings of boredom, anomie, hopelessness, confusion, loss of the significance of living--a clinical syndrome known as Retirement Shock. The symptoms of retirement shock can produce not only unhappiness but physical symptoms as well. Researchers have found a significant correlation between the move to a retirement role and illness (Ellison, 1968), strokes (Greene et al., 1969), and suicides (Pyron, 1969).

Studies by Neugarten and her associates (1964) describe the period from 40 to 70 years as marked by a shift in perception of the environment from one that rewards boldness and risk-taking to one that is complex and dangerous. It is also a period of change from perceiving the self as having the will and energy to exploit new opportunities to perceiving the self as conforming and accommodating to environmental demands. Older adults are sensitive to changes that may adversely affect their status or dignity or impair the power and usefulness of their skills. The preretirement, retirement, and postretirement periods, then, are a time fraught with potential for psychological and emotional upheaval.

The Aging Process

Indices of aging develop gradually but inexorably, and chronological age does not appear to be the criterion for judgment. Adults first notice changes in the tautness of their skin, vision, hearing, the color of their hair, their bodily conformation. They also gradually become aware of differences in their levels of energy, sexual activity, physical endurance, competitive urge, and willingness to risk. And somewhere along the line, perhaps as the result of the death of someone dear to them, they are confronted with the fact of their own mortality. All of these physical and psychological transitions point up the fact that they are no longer simply growing, they are growing older. For a substantial number of people, these transitions are accomplished smoothly (Clausen, 1972); for others they can exert moderate or severe negative impact on self-image and self-esteem.

Responses to growing old appear to be markedly different for women than for men (though this phenomenon may change as women follow the same career paths as men and men increasingly assume roles traditionally ascribed to women). Neugarten (1968b), for example, notes that women refer less frequently to biological changes and pay far less attention to "body-monitoring" than do men, and appear to be more concerned with their husbands' health than with their own. Men, on the other hand, exhibit great concern and may actively pursue a number of strategies for maintaining their bodies at an earlier level of youthfulness. Research on middle-aged persons of a decade or so ago would indicate that men relate aging to their occupational lives, in contrast to women who define their age through changes in their family role and situation. For both sexes it appears that the dominant theme of middle age is reassessment of self, including the aspiration/achievement gap. And here women appear to fare more positively than men, for most report a new sense of freedom and opportunity at last to develop personal potentials. At this particular time, the inner strivings and emotional responses of men and women often diverge dramatically. Whereas men are feeling bereft, stagnant, and tired of the daily occupational grind, women are stimulated, motivated, and experiencing the opening of a new world.

The search for self-esteem pervades the lives of most people--to feel worthy in their own eyes and in the eyes of those they care about, to feel in control of their environment, to feel that they play a significant role in

their family and/or chosen occupation. In addition, all human beings need a sense of purpose and of continuing progress toward meaningful goals to give zest and enthusiasm to daily living. These fundamental needs of adults can be shaken severely in middle-age and later years if their life stock-taking is found wanting; and until they realign their perceptions and values to be more in harmony with what is, the transition period of aging can be difficult indeed.

Factors that Facilitate Transitions

It has been pointed out that transitions occur smoothly for a significant number of adults but engender anxiety and emotional disturbance in others. Three elements seem to be key to stress-free or stress-minimized response to change: anticipation of the transition, opportunity to prepare for the transition, and willingness to prepare for the transition.

Having previously discussed specific problems of adults, it is appropriate now to consider how these three components influence adult ability to deal with developmental transitions.

Anticipation of the Transition

Knowing that a change is coming often prohibits it from becoming what Bocknek calls a "developmental crisis" (1976, p. 38). According to Webster, a crisis is "an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life; a decisive moment... a crucial time or state of affairs whose outcome will make a decisive difference for better or worse." These statements suggest a situation that is significant as well as sudden or unexpected. Using our earlier description of development, then, a developmental crisis implies a significant and sudden alteration in the orderly process of growth and change. Examples that come to mind are the young father whose wife is killed in a plane crash, the family whose life savings are wiped out as a result of a poor investment, the seemingly virile man who learns he has a terminal illness. Shock resulting from such events can be immobilizing for the individuals involved, and can at least temporarily shake the whole foundation of their current existence.

This is not to imply that a developmental crisis is always negative. Very positive, sudden transitions have the same capacity to stun. For example, a whirlwind courtship and marriage or unanticipated movement into a position of tremendous power and authority can leave persons confused, bewildered, and numb.

Counselors often hear statements like, "I didn't even know what I was doing--I just went through the motions," or, "My memories of those next few months are so vague that I must have been in some kind of shock."

When a forthcoming transition is expected, individuals have a chance to begin the process of preparing for it, to alter gradually their attitudes and behaviors, knowingly or unknowingly, and thus lessen the possible debilitating effects of its impact.

Opportunity to Prepare for the Transition

Preparing for a transition may occur consciously or without true awareness of its happening. Throughout pregnancy parents have a chance to observe other parents more closely and fantasize parenthood for themselves. As children grow parents imagine how life will be when the last one is launched. Lingering illness or advancement in age prepares survivors for death of a loved person. Neugarten (1968a) speaks eloquently of women's "rehearsal for widowhood" (p. 96). Not that the chance to prepare causes the transition to be devoid of emotional impact--rather, it serves to temper reactions and ease the movement from one developmental period to the next.

Willingness to Prepare for the Transition

We include the term "willingness" in positive ability to cope because of the refusal of some adults to face the reality of change. Take, for example, the mother who treats her daughter-in-law wretchedly, consistently and jealously vying for her son's favor and attention. Or the 52-year old employee who perceives his employer's invitation to participate in the preretirement planning program as a threatening sign that his usefulness to the organization is ended. Or the unnaturally blond grandmother who has a face-, breast-, and thigh-uplift, wears teen-model attire, and lies about the ages of herself and her children. All of these individuals are undergoing change, willy-nilly, but are fending it off through a process of rationalization, distortion, or denial. Unless individuals are willing to participate in getting ready for change, they will remain fixated at an earlier developmental stage and probably undergo emotional trauma when reality finally hits.

Issues in Adult Counseling

Adult counseling is a service that is still relatively young and not yet established, still very much in its formative years. Its many issues remain

unresolved and the subject of continuous if not always eloquent debate. The lack of certainty, however, should not be derided. Broad professional consensus with few outstanding issues, while ostensibly a sign of a house in good order, may actually disguise a blanket of stultifying professional acquiescence, a "Don't rock the boat," "Accept things as they are" philosophy. Instead, a sense of zesty experimentation and adventurous tryout pervades many of today's adult counseling programs. And out of the questioning and uncertainty that currently characterize the field may well emerge a case-hardened approach and philosophy which will stand adult counseling in good stead in the demanding years ahead.

This discussion is presented to identify the parameters of the different issues in counseling adults, some of the salient points in each, and some interpretive comments regarding probable future trends. Resolution of these issues would neither be possible nor desirable at this stage of development.

Training and Characteristics of Adult Counselors

Adult counseling services have emerged in response to a wide variety of needs and are offered in a wide variety of settings--agencies, colleges, and community centers. The type of counselor who works in each of these settings is often closely related to the nature of the center, e.g., university adult counseling centers are partial to counselors with academic credentials while community centers often prefer lay people with broad work experience. The predominating flavor of the staffing scheme appears to be as much a function of economics as anything else. Centers with limited funds will advance compelling reasons for utilizing counselors with pragmatic orientations because the bottom line is that they cannot afford to hire fully credentialed counselors. Not to be ignored, however, is the fact that credentialed counselors probably earned their credentials in areas other than adult counseling. An imposing diploma may lend status, but some of the previous training may either not be helpful or may actually be a hindrance in counseling adults. Counseling approaches refined through extensive successful experiences with adolescents may serve to blunt the counselor's sensitivity to the different needs, interests, and concerns of adults and desensitize the counselor to inherent age bias.

At present a highly variable intermix of credentialed professional counselors, paraprofessionals, counseling aides, and volunteers exists in most centers. Making the case for the superiority of one kind of staffing over

another is tenuous, especially if the argument stems from support of a singular approach, e.g., "We only use counselors with Ph.D.'s in our center because...." The evidence, while fragmentary and incomplete, does not indicate that credentialed counselors are more effective than less well-trained, more experienced paraprofessionals. Clear support for other staffing preferences is also lacking. At the present time differential staffing based on logical reasoning regarding what functions can best be performed by what type of helper appears to be the most defensible position. Lacking definite research, it thus becomes the responsibility of the local program to develop the staffing formula which seems to work best in that particular situation. Through tryout and assessment of outcomes, approaches can consistently be developed and refined until a clear programmatic consensus exists as to what is preferable under a given set of conditions.

Two new options are the use of self-instructional modular learning resources and computer-assisted counseling. Both of these innovations have the potential to make significant alterations in staffing patterns and to maximize the use of human intervention for those problems/concerns that require interaction with another person. General adoption of these two approaches will likely affect both the size and roles of counseling staffs.

Cost-Benefit Adult Counseling

Collecting data relating to the cost of various services and programs in a national survey of adult counseling centers (Harrison, 1975) proved to be particularly difficult. The general message regarding most programs is that they are expensive and require funding beyond that obtained from client fees. One is left with the impression that if you have to ask how much an adult counseling program costs, you can't afford it. What is clear is that the most extensive and comprehensive programs benefit from generous external funding. In such cases priority frequently has been given to developing effective services, cost-effective or not.

Unfortunately, adult counseling centers generally have not been successful in winning medical-plan, third-party payments for adult clients. Funding treatment programs for illness and mental breakdowns appears to be more important than funding preventive programs that will help to eliminate them. This also means that many persons have to pay personally for such services, something they

are either loathe to do or unable to do. As at least a partial consequence of this funding pattern, relatively few persons experience the benefit of adult counseling.

A relatively unknown factor is what happens to adult counseling centers after the withdrawal or severe diminution of external funding. Do they collapse and fade away? Or are they able to create a viable support system that will sustain them after the funding sugar daddy is gone? Such questions are presently unanswerable.

Priority must be given to studying the various ways of offering services, the outcomes of using different approaches, and the costs associated with each. It is flaunting with the hackneyed to state that only those services which are effective (in client outcomes) and efficient (in dollars and cents) will survive. Since information, referral, and resource services by definition are less expensive than more intensive counseling and skill-building programs, the issue really becomes one of whether counseling and the more person-oriented, depthful-oriented interventions will survive.

Single- or Multiple-Focus Centers

Adult counseling programs are basically of two types: those that serve a single constituency or have a specific focus (women or midlife career change), and those that provide broad services to adults with a wide variety of needs. Interestingly, in the adult sphere, focused rather than comprehensive services seem to prevail. Fully one-third of the centers identified through the American Institutes for Research survey of adult counseling centers were designed to help women, although in many cases they did not exclude males (Harrison, 1975). Among the special center emphases identified by the survey were women, ethnic minorities, and men; career and life planning, and midlife career change. While the focus was not always rigid, each center seemed to have a prevailing priority in the type of client it would most likely attract.

The need for a special-population or interest-area focus is understandable. Certain subpopulations may believe that their interests and needs can best be served or only be served by a center that is clearly identified with them. Funding sources also tend to support the creation of special programs/centers rather than the expansion of the services of an existing center. Understanding

the reasons for the spectacular spread of focused centers does not necessarily mean that such a movement deserves support. A plethora of separate, special-focus adult counseling centers could draw resources away from the broader-based adult counseling center and result in an atrophy of services intended for the large numbers of adults who do not fall into any special category. Additionally, during hard times the free-standing special centers could experience greater difficulty in maintaining an adequate support level. An alternative might be to create a coordinated central service that would link together programs with divergent special interests and maximize the use of available resources--underwriting special responses where needed but also stressing the principle that counseling should serve the broad interests of the majority of adult clients without need of separate centers.

Role of Technology and Media in Adult Counseling

Long-standing debate continues within and without counseling over the role of computers and technology. Does the use of such media dehumanize the process and degrade the person? Can machines extend the resource options available to the counselor? Is using media a technological sham or an effective process for enhancing understanding and acquiring relevant information? Definitive research is lacking, but both logical analysis and experience would support the efficacy of computer-assisted adult counseling. In many instances adults need specific information or a special type of help that the computer can be programmed to provide. Perhaps a particularly noteworthy caveat of the computer is its freedom of age bias; in fact, if programmed properly, the computer may display a special sensitivity and responsiveness to more mature clients.

Basic Tenets of Adult Counseling

Responding to the needs of adults was and has continued to be an emphasis in counselor preparation and practice. From the beginning the work of Frank Parsons was directed at assisting adults to make decisions regarding themselves and the world of work. After Parsons' early start, however, adult counseling languished in popularity and occupied a low priority in funding and conceptual development. Now, as we enter the 80's, the "graying of America" has led to a Rip Van Winkle awakening and a spurt of research and developmental activities. There is little question that today adult counseling occupies a position of high priority both in counselor preparation programs and counseling services.

Adult counseling has no single conceptual base, drawing as it does from psychotherapy, educational and career counseling, and developmental psychology. Consensus is emerging, however, as to the basic tenets undergirding adult counseling practice. The following discussion provides an overview of those concepts and ideas which have been instrumental in shaping the development of adult counseling.

1. Adulthood is a time of change and uncertainty.

Inevitably adults experience role transformations which are often accompanied by crises and confusion. Some of them will be predictable and some will not. Typically changes occur in five major areas: self-concept and inner life, family life, environment, interpersonal relationships, and working life (occupation). Change in each of these areas is double-edged--it can bring new perspectives and rewards but it can also mean giving up treasured and relied-upon areas of stability. Counseling interventions can assist persons to respond more adequately to change and to capitalize on the potential in change for personal growth.

2. Adults need encouragement and support to seek counseling.

The image of counseling for many adults is not positive. To seek help is to admit weakness. Counseling is not yet socially condoned and is perceived as appropriate for persons who are ill, not for those who are struggling with a problem(s). To reach the many persons who can profit from counseling requires outreach efforts which will overcome the negative bias that they may have acquired through stereotyping or through previous unrewarding experiences. Communication which assists potential clients to image the favorable outcomes of counseling for themselves can help motivate them to seek counseling. Particularly attractive are counseling programs which have labels of high current stimulus value and social interest (career changers, working mothers, single parents) and involve a variety of experiences such as seminars, group interactions, and rich learning resources, as well as individual counseling.

3. The basic goal of adult counseling is to assist individuals to become more in control of their lives.

A frequent concomitant to change is the feeling of not being in control, the feeling of being buffeted about by external events which are frequently unpredictable and for which an individual has no apparent defense. A major

goal of counseling is to capacitate individuals with the knowledge and coping skills which provide a sense of personal power, particularly in areas of decision-making, values clarification, goal-setting, and career planning. Depending on personal need and interest, other coping skills dealing with conflict resolution, time management, and interpersonal relationship-building may be of significance as well. To feel one has lost control can be devastating. Timidity, depression, and anxiety are frequent byproducts of a felt loss of power. Counseling can help individuals to cope more effectively with life's presses and thus retain or regain their sense of power.

4. Crises offer opportunities for personal growth.

Reference is usually made only to the dark side of crises and problems. Midlife is a time of "crisis"; retirement is the beginning of "decline"--predominately negative images. Counselors need to operate on the assumption that change is inherently neither good nor bad. Change, no matter how intensive or pervasive, offers opportunity for growth. A midlife "crisis" may be the precursor of a new, more rewarding lifestyle based on a revised self-concept and enhanced understanding of available opportunities. Counselors can play a vital role in assisting clients to avoid a doomsday feeling and to understand the "opportunity value" present in even the most severe crises or problems. An individual may have to "give up something" in a crisis but, in turn, may gain new strength and personal resources for coping with future challenges.

5. A developmental imperative exists throughout the life span.

As time goes by, a compelling urge develops within individuals to change. The urge is like a demand from within. Adult counselors are frequently consulted by persons who are experiencing a vague unease and an inability to handle this pressure for change. Counselors need to help such individuals realize the source of the pressure and selectively accept or reject new patterns of behavior which are being thrust upon them. Persons of middle age may experience a strong internal urge to do something radically different, to "let go"--even at the expense of alienating persons important to them, who disapprove of anything other than the expected behavior of "someone your age." Guiding adults throughout their life span in sorting out and binding together life options into coherent lifestyles is a vital counselor intervention.

6. Formidable pressures for role conformity exist during the adult years.

As persons mature, they experience social pressure to conform to roles defined as appropriate for people of their given age and position. "Foreclosure" occurs when the individual accedes to the demand for adopting a prescribed role rather than experiencing autonomous growth (Marcia, 1966). Individuals who foreclose experience external praise and rewards for their conformity. But the price paid is the loss of realizing some of their potentials for growing and becoming. A counselor can facilitate a person's review of the risks and rewards involved in resisting foreclosure. Together, the counselor and adult client can chart a strategy which will incorporate the client's values and goals and minimize the impact of punitive societal reactions.

Futuristic Images

"You've come a long way, baby!" could be one way of characterizing progress in adult counseling in the past decade. Notable achievements have occurred in both the depth and quality of services as well as in the number of persons served. Of greater import is the as-yet-untapped potential of adult counseling. Ahead is a period of zesty experimentation based on growing consensus as to what adult counseling is. The following images are intended to stimulate the reader's creative juices, to help you image what you believe to be the important future developments in and directions for adult counseling.

Image 1: An aggressive, proselytizing stance will be adopted.

A poor public image and inadequate understanding of the goals and methods of adult counseling have inhibited its expansion. With increased support, it is probable that extensive local and national efforts will be undertaken to create a more positive image of adult counseling and provide its potential publics with a more accurate understanding of its processes and likely outcomes. Methods will probably be developed for motivating client self-referral, utilizing reinforcement and modeling strategies. Aggressive outreach will be kindled by the desire to develop favorable cost-benefit ratios, reductions in per-person costs through an increase in the number of persons using a program. A major challenge for adult counseling will be how to communicate its potential for nurturance to a needful but wary public. An inherently beneficial but under-utilized service will not long survive. The proof will be in consumer acceptance,

and adult counseling will not come of age until it is regarded by the majority of adult Americans as a viable, personally meaningful component of lifelong development.

Image 2: Self-contained, transportable learning packages will be developed.

Building upon the self-help movement, the coming years should witness rapid expansion in the number and availability of packaged resources designed to facilitate the acquisition of personal competencies. These learning packages, probably in modular form, will offer adults a wide range of choices for attaining new competencies. Central to the development of these learning packages will be the linking of video cassettes and home computers so that interactive learning modes and immediate feedback will provide adults with highly individualized learning formats. Learning at home will be commonplace. For modest fees adults will be able to retrieve specific training packages for their own home learning centers which they can study individually or with others. Perhaps the greatest excitement in the learning package approach is simplification of the logistics of learning so that each individual is able to tailor the when and how of learning to suit him/herself. Trained adult counselors will help adults to choose appropriate learning packages and integrate the learnings into daily behavior. It is a heady vision but not as far off as we might think.

Image 3: Counseling for the adult years will begin prior to adulthood and continue throughout the adult life span.

The increasing developmental emphasis in adult counseling will lead to competency-building and attitude-formation in pre-adult years to prepare persons for the stresses they will experience as adults. This early counseling will help to forestall the debilitating effects of unpredicted, off-time crises, as well as predictable but nonetheless difficult life transitions. Much as we now undergo regular physical checkups for the early detection of disease, we will regularly obtain counseling to review progress toward desired goals and identify difficulties. A "willingness" concept will also pervade counseling which will emphasize individual monitoring of stress levels and continuous upgrading of coping and behavior-management skills.

In the not too distant future adult counseling will be a natural concomitant of healthy living, aiding each individual to create a life that will bring the highest degree of personal meaning and dignity.

Image 4: Stringent standards for adult counselor preparation and practice will be established.

Increasing diffusion and acceptance of adult counseling will lead to non-ignorable demands for quality control in the training of counselors and the practice of adult counseling. Full acceptance of adult counseling as a vital component in facilitating adult development will lead to the establishment of personal and program standards of the highest quality. The breadth and depth of backgrounds of those who counsel will likely increase, but fully-credentialed counselors will be expected to demonstrate their competencies through rigorous assessment devices. Consequently, adult counselors of the future are likely to enjoy a respect and influence not always accorded present-day counselors.

Conclusion

The opportunity to play a significant role in the development of another person is a genuine privilege and a heavy responsibility. It is clear that counselors of mature individuals operate from a knowledge base and use counseling approaches that are different from those appropriate for the young. Adults differ from youths in many respects other than chronological age, and we are only now beginning to learn the most effective ways of helping adults to cope with the choices and conflicts they experience throughout their adult lives.

To date, adult counseling as a profession has not fully developed time-tested approaches or adequately met its responsibility to offer quality services. However, we have much reason for hope. Research and development efforts are moving ahead rapidly. Bright and able people are enrolling in adult counselor education programs. Consensus is developing among educators as to requisite competencies for adult counselors. Most important of all, public interest in and support for adult counseling are growing stronger.

Out of these trends will develop a vital force for aiding adult development. The vision is with us. The decade ahead will see the implementation of what is presently more vision than reality--a comprehensive network of adult counseling centers and programs across the country that will enable all who need and want counseling to obtain it.

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