

5. *that choice making need not be rational; it can be arational, making use of modes of consciousness which are not usually open to us.*

Finally, there seem to be only two times at which choice can be made -NOW and NOT NOW; I see part of my work as helping clients to understand the anxiety which bridges these times.

### References

**Kierkegaard:** see W. Lowrie, "Kierkegaard", New York: O.U.P., 1938.

**Dorothy Lee:** "Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Nonlineal". *Psychosomatic Medicine*. 12, No. 2, 89 - 97, 1950.

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Graham F. Cooper

## The Counselling Approach

There are many people around who are capable and willing to give help to those in need, and I want to write here about the processes and kind of conditions which are most likely to fulfil a person's needs. In choosing the title "The Counselling Approach" I want to make it clear that I am not just talking about counselling in a formal sense, or the involvement of a "Counsellor."

The title of this article has been taken from a film (1) which attempts to demonstrate the basic process of counselling, and, whilst it will be necessary to make some references to the qualities of the counsellor, I am using the word counsellor to simply mean the person who is offering help to another person who is in need. The use of the word counsellor in this context is in no way intended to be exclusive, nor is it intended to imply any kind of elitism by professionals. It is also worth noting that the recently-formed organisation BAC chose as its title British Association for *Counselling*, not British Association of *Counsellors*, as one journalistic article unfortunately headlined it. There is a world of difference between these two, one being centred in the counselling process whilst the other is centred in the counsellors' interests.

The concept of the counselling approach was first crystallised in my mind when I was asked to facilitate a training course for school nurses. The object of this training course was not to turn them into any kind of professional Counsellor (with a capital C), but rather to give them some insight into themselves and the concepts of human relations which would enable

them to offer more help in the process of their everyday work when approached by people with personal and emotional problems.

Perhaps it would be appropriate at this stage to offer some definition of counselling. Even a fairly quick perusal of books and articles about counselling reveals that definitions are legion, but I consider the following is one of the best, since it is straightforward and really quite simple.

*"Counselling is a process through which one person helps another by purposeful conversation in an understanding atmosphere. It seeks to establish a helping relationship in which the one counselled can express his thoughts and feelings in such a way as to clarify his own situation, come to terms with some new experience, see his difficulty more objectively, and so face his problem with less anxiety and tension. Its basic purpose is to assist the individual to make his own decision from among the choices available to him." (2)*

Some of you may feel that this definition is too "professional" and too formal for someone who is trying to offer friendly help rather than Counselling, but it does contain the idea that there is something more to the process of counselling than a casual chat over a cup of coffee, and it is by coming to some understanding of this process that we can come to offer better help to those in need.

It is my belief that the principles of good counselling are basically the same as the constructive elements of any good human relationship, and these are mainly to do with the personal qualities of the person who is offering help, the counsellor. Let's look at these in a little more detail:

The first point is that the counsellor or helper must be a very accepting person, that is to say, someone who doesn't make judgements or critical comments, (even inwardly) but simply accepts the person in need just as they come, and values this person as an individual.

Secondly, the helper should be a genuine person. By this I mean someone who has a high level of self-awareness, both of their own feelings and their attitudes and values. Such a person does not play a role when in the helping situation, but rather genuinely continues to be his/her natural self.

The helper's ability to be empathic is of paramount importance. Empathy is a word which is much used, often misused, and frequently confused with sympathy. By empathy I mean the ability to get in touch with another person's feelings through listening carefully to their words, and watching carefully their non-verbal signals so that the helper senses the other person's inner world as if it were his or her own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality. There is no diagnosis or evaluation in this process. To do this successfully, it is vital for the counsellor to be aware of his or her own

feelings so that these can be clearly separated from what the other person is experiencing. The helper must always be aware of his or her own boundaries in this respect. It is when the boundaries become blurred that we move from empathy towards sympathy, which is less likely to prove constructive.

It may be an obvious point, but I think it is worth saying that the helper must also be able to communicate. It is no good being accepting and genuine and empathic unless we can actually communicate that to the other person. And we need to be aware that we are going to be communicating with the other person non-verbally as well as verbally.

Finally, the conversation is likely to be more helpful if we can try to avoid generalisations and vagueness and ambiguities, but try to keep the conversation relevant to the one who is seeking help. Public opinion and the views of certain sectors of society may be of interest, but, in the end, the person who is seeking help is going to have to make decisions based on personal feelings and attitudes, and this is what the helper should be assisting him/her to look at.

I think it follows naturally from what has been said above that the helper is a person who does not give advice (except in the sense of giving factual information), does not try to impose his/her opinions or own sets of values and attitudes, but rather works in such a way that, in the safety of a warm and accepting environment, the person in need will be enabled to find the best solution for the problem situation.

The provision of a warm and accepting environment may sound purely comforting, but, in practice, this turns out to be extremely helpful as well as comforting, since it is only when somebody is freed from the possibility of judgement, criticism and imposed opinions that they will be able to look into themselves and find what is truly acceptable. As Pamela Guiver wrote, "No-one should have the burden of advice which they cannot take, added to the load of their other virtually intolerable problems, yet unfortunately this is what often happens as a result of words spoken in genuine good faith". (3)

Thus, by offering someone in trouble warmth and acceptance, helpful "first-aid" can be given, even if they come along with a problem about which we have no direct factual knowledge to offer.

The counselling approach, then, is based on a set of values and attitudes and personal qualities, rather than any specific techniques. Many of you have no doubt recognised here much of the person-centred counselling first written about by Carl Rogers. It is vitally important, however, to distinguish between the philosophy of the person-centred approach and the techniques of client-centred counselling. The former is applicable in a wide variety of situations, whilst the latter may not necessarily be appropriate. So the counselling approach is based on a personally-held set of values and attitudes which is not the sole property of an elitist set

of professional counsellors but rather is something to be used by any person confronted with another human being in need.

## References

- (1) *Descriptive brochure available from the author at BPAS, Guildhall Buildings, Navigation Street, Birmingham B2 4BT. Film available from Concord Films Council, Nacton, Ipswich, Suffolk IP10 0JZ*
  - (2) *Quoted in "Counselling and the Nurse" by Gaynor Nurse, HM + M Publishers, 1975 (paperback)*
  - (3) *Pamela Guiver (1973), "The Trouble Sharers". National Marriage Guidance Council (paperback).*
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# Client-Centred Counselling

## I. Introduction

Client-centred counselling or therapy (CCT) has been developing over the last three decades in which time it underwent considerable changes. These changes reflect new insights gained in the field. Most of these developments are pretty unknown and many people view CCT as it was in the 1940s - non-directive therapy (also referred to as 'grunting therapy' for the therapist was imagined to relate to the client mainly through 'Mhm', 'Huh', 'erhh', etc).

CCT is no longer defined in terms of specific techniques or modes of response but rather in terms of basic therapist attitudes. In particular all therapeutic exchanges should be aimed at the preservation of the self-respect of the client (as well as the therapist) and the communication of understanding should precede interventions which contain information or advice.

CCT follows the pattern of the legal profession in treating the person being helped as the 'client' rather than as a patient. The lawyer operates entirely as an adjunct to a process of which the client always remains in charge and this idea is densely encoded into the name of the orientation by calling it "client-centred".

## II. Development of CCT Constructs

The advancement of CCT can be divided into three historical periods: see table