



Introduction to Counseling

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Jeffrey A. Kottler | David S. Shepard

Eighth Edition



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Introduction to Counseling: Voices from the Field, Eighth Edition

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Preface



This text was originally created out of a very personal need to create a student-centered introduction to our field. We felt frustrated at times because the personalized warmth and sensitivity that are the basis of our profession have not been reflected in academic experiences. Too often, education emphasizes theoretical knowledge and scholarly inquiry to the exclusion of student involvement. It has been our intention that this book would not only meet the stringent demands of scholarship but also provide a lively and dynamic overview of the counseling profession that fully engages the student in the process.

This text speaks directly to you, the student; it challenges you to explore your personal motives for choosing counseling as your area of interest and helps you to personally integrate much of the research and theoretical concepts. More than ever before, the voices of beginning and experienced counselors are used to reflect the realities of practice, make the ideas come alive, and help you personalize the content in such a way that it becomes immediately applicable to your life. In fact, there is no other profession that not only allows you to personalize concepts to your own life but encourages you to do so; almost everything you read about in this text has implications and applications to what you do on a daily basis. You will find innumerable ways to improve immediately not only your counseling skills but also your personal relationships.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

One of the distinguishing features of this text, which makes it unique in the field, is its student-oriented focus on the *realities* of counseling practice. In addition to presenting the major historical, theoretical, and research foundations in a highly readable style, we try to engage you in a dialogue about the counseling profession, its underlying concepts, and your personal goals for the future.

It is so often the relationships we develop with people that become the foundation for a meaningful effort to change. This is as true in relationships between authors and readers as it is between a counselor and clients, or between an instructor and students. More than ever before, we strive to connect with readers in such a way that they are likely to explore the process of counseling as well as its content.

In order to make the complex conceptual ideas of counseling come alive, the book contains over 150 “Voices from the Field.” In these excerpts from interviews, beginning and experienced practitioners speak openly and honestly about the challenges they face and the ways they have resolved difficulties. They present practical advice based on their experiences. When these voices are added to those of the authors, readers are exposed to the realities of counseling practice in such a way that they can make informed choices about where and how to practice new skills and knowledge. You would be well advised to use this material as a springboard for your own interviews with practitioners.

One of the assignments we routinely give when we teach this class is to ask students to interview a minimum of 6 to 10 counselors in the field, representing at least three different specialty areas. We can think of few other learning experiences that are more revealing than talking to people who are doing what you someday hope to do yourself. Ask them for advice. Find out what they love and hate about their work. It is not unusual that you will even make contacts that may someday turn into an internship placement or even a job offer.

The end of each chapter contains a series of experiential and reflective exercises that will further help you to personalize material. These introspective activities can be used as a structured journal in which you can apply to your own life the concepts discussed in class and in the text. In addition, these activities may be helpful as questions to be explored in cooperative learning groups in class. Whether you use the exercises or not, you will find it helpful to use a journal throughout the semester to keep track of important ideas, make sense of complex ideas, and personalize material in a way that is useful to you.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Introduction to Counseling: Voices from the Field is designed for initial courses in human service programs that have titles such as “Principles of Counseling,” “Professional Orientation,” “Counseling Theory and Practice,” “Introduction to Helping,” and “Human Resource Development.” The book emphasizes the development of a professional identity, ethical standards for practice, basic process skills, the counseling relationship, personal theory building, and understanding of meaningful research. We are also especially concerned with presenting a contemporary “cutting-edge” focus on the practical realities of counseling. Too often students complain that their courses and texts did not prepare them for the daily grit and grind of what it means to be a counselor.

Particular attention is devoted to the major specialties and diverse settings in which counseling takes place, such as schools and clinics and medical, industrial, mental health, community agency, and private-practice settings. We quite deliberately

made the size of the book realistic for a semester's work and planned the number and length of chapters to be manageable for the student struggling to digest a new world of terminology and concepts.

The book is organized into four broad focus areas: professional identity factors, theoretical and research foundations, counseling applications, and issues in professional practice. Whereas the first two sections (Chapters 1 through 8) help you to learn the foundations of counseling, the latter two sections (Chapters 9 through 15) apply these concepts to the various specialties within the field. You are thus encouraged to master the field's basic theory and research, become familiar with the generic counseling skills, and begin thinking about the realities of developing a flexible specialty, making yourself marketable, finding suitable employment, and staying passionately committed to the profession.

WHAT'S NEW

One of the most exciting and disorienting aspects of counseling is how rapidly the field changes. This evolution in theory and research parallels the changes that practitioners experience so often. As professional counselors, we sometimes wish we could send “recall notices” to all the clients we've seen in the past, notifying them that however we may once have helped them, the method is now obsolete and they should return for new, improved methods that no longer resemble the ways we once operated.

Consistent with the mood of our times, we continue to emphasize a philosophy of counselor education and training that Jeffrey and his friend and coauthor, Bob Brown (now deceased), first proposed a number of years ago—one that is integrative and pragmatic and that seeks to combine the best of existing approaches. As in previous editions, the text includes detailed discussions on today's major issues: multicultural sensitivity, historical roots of our profession, current counseling interventions, licensure and credentialing, constructivist thinking, family violence, sexism and age discrimination, computer applications, managed care and brief therapies, legal and ethical conflicts, and gender issues, to name a few.

For this edition, we have added a number of new and exciting features:

- The chapter on insight-oriented theories has been significantly expanded to include attachment theory, reflecting the increasing impact attachment theory is having on our field as both a way of conceptualizing client difficulties and understanding what goes on between client and counselor in the counseling relationship.
- The chapter on addictions and psychopharmacology now begins with a new section on the basics of neuroscience. The field of neuroscience has become increasingly significant in counseling research and is shedding light on the biological underpinnings of the issues clients face. This section provides a basic understanding of how the neurotransmitter system and key brain structures work—the most important aspects of neuroscience for counselors.
- This edition now covers the DSM-5, instead of its predecessor, the DSM-IV-TR. This comprehensive introduction to the DSM-5 provides a basic understanding of how to use it in diagnosing clients, reviews the ethical issues

surrounding the use of the DSM, and, in case vignettes, demonstrates the impact the DSM can have on the lives of clients.

- The section on evidence-based practice in Chapter 7 has been revised to reflect the rapid movement in all the mental health fields toward selecting treatments whose efficacy is supported in empirical research. The section offers help to the reader in implementing evidence-based practices. Finally, it addresses the controversy over what constitutes “evidence-based,” as well as reviewing concerns raised in the counseling literature over the selection of treatments based on statistical studies.
- The role of the Internet and telehealth in the counseling field has been significantly revised and expanded throughout the text, including the section on e-therapy in the chapter on settings. Also revised are the discussion of the latest thinking on Internet addiction and treatment in the chapter on addictions; and the review of the ethical issues associated with telehealth in the chapter on ethics.
- The chapter on culture now contains stories of how actual counselors are putting social justice advocacy into action through the projects they have developed and implemented throughout the United States.
- The entire book has been completely updated with over 150 new references and expanded lists of suggested readings that include fiction, nonfiction, and films, in addition to counseling and social science literature.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Introduction to Counseling: Voices from the Field is accompanied by a wide array of supplements prepared to create the best possible learning environment for both the instructor and the student, inside and outside the classroom.

Online Instructor’s Resource Manual with Test Bank. The manual includes tips for instructors on how to best utilize this text, discussion questions and a test bank that contains multiple-choice questions.

The CourseMate for *Introduction to Counseling: Voices from the Field* brings course concepts to life with interactive learning, study, and exam preparation tools that support the printed textbook. Access an integrated eBook, quizzes, and more in the CourseMate for *Introduction to Counseling: Voices from the Field*. Go to CengageBrain.com to register or purchase access.

About the Authors



Courtesy of Jeffrey Kottler

Jeffrey A. Kottler has authored over 80 books in the field for counselors, therapists, teachers, and the public, including *On Being a Therapist*, *Counseling Skills for Teachers*, *Bad Therapy: Master Therapists Share Their Worst Failures*, *The Client Who Changed Me: Stories of Therapist Personal Transformation*, *Changing People's Lives While Transforming Your Own: Paths to Social Justice and Global Human Rights*, *Creative Breakthroughs in Therapy: Tales of Transformation and Astonishment*, *The Therapist's Workbook: Self-Assessment, Self-Care, and Self-Improvement Exercises for Mental Health Professionals*, and *Change: What Leads to Personal Transformation*.

Jeffrey has worked as a teacher, counselor, and therapist in a preschool, middle school, mental health center, crisis center, university, community college, and private practice. He has served as a Fulbright Scholar and Senior Lecturer in Peru and Iceland, teaching counseling theory and practice. He has also served as a visiting professor in New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, and Nepal. He is currently Professor of Counseling at California State University, Fullerton, and President of Empower Nepali Girls (www.EmpowerNepaliGirls.org), an organization that provides educational scholarships for at-risk girls in Nepal.

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industry, where he specialized in children's animation. He is currently Associate Professor of Counseling at California State University, Fullerton, where he does research on men's issues in counseling, couples counseling, and the use of creativity in counselor education. In addition to numerous book chapters and articles, he is the co-editor (with Michele Harway) of *Engaging Men in Couples Therapy*. He is also co-director of the Center for Boys & Men at California State University, Fullerton.

The Professional Counselor

PART

1





What Counseling Is and How It Works

CHAPTER

1

KEY CONCEPTS

Personal motives for altruism

Making a difference in others' lives

Countertransference

Informed consent

Tolerating anxiety

Personal growth and professional development

Neutral posture

Subjugating personal needs

Tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty

Process definition of counseling

Movement toward synthesis and integration

Significance of self

WHY BE A COUNSELOR?

It is both interesting and useful to begin the systematic study of the counseling profession by exploring your own motives for entering the profession. The decision to become a counselor is just as complex and multifaceted as any of the issues your clients might bring to you. You will expect—even demand—that your clients be completely honest with themselves, that they confront their self-deceptions, ambivalence, and motives behind actions. It is only fair that you attempt to be honest with yourself as well.

Students enter the counseling field, as they do any other profession, for a variety of reasons. Some people genuinely wish to save the world; others, more modestly, wish to save themselves. Many deliberately choose this field because there are so many opportunities to apply classroom and book studies to their own lives. Others quite unabashedly admit that it was a toss-up for them between going to see a counselor for their own problems and becoming one.

The personal motives behind career decisions are indeed important to examine as we begin this introduction to counseling. Such an understanding will permit a more thoughtful and clear-headed approach to the material presented. A typical class often includes students who see themselves as missionaries. They choose to study counseling because they have a strong desire to help others: to make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering. They frequently have a kind of empathy that comes from personal experience. They suffered and were saved; now the roles can be reversed. They wish to make the world a bit more civilized. Perhaps this reason belongs, even slightly, to any of us who select this path; it certainly plays a huge role in people's decisions to become a helping professional. You might be enrolled in this program for a variety of reasons, all related to making a difference in the world:

1. You have some natural talent or interest toward helping others. Maybe you have served that role throughout your life.
2. You enjoy touching others' lives, knowing that you have influenced or impacted someone.
3. You derive tremendous satisfaction from the kind of close, intimate relationships that take place in helping encounters.



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People choose to be counselors for a variety of reasons, foremost of which is that they wish to make a difference in the world, to help those who are most in need. It is through helping others learn and grow that we are often permitted to do so ourselves.



VOICE FROM THE FIELD

I always knew that I wanted to help people, though thought originally about a medical career. It wasn't until I faced the realities of what was involved in getting into and graduating from medical school that I began considering alternatives. You see, ever since I was a kid my worth was measured by what I could do for others. You might consider this part of my family culture. It is just understood that each of us will do something that involves helping others.

I would not be altogether truthful if I didn't mention that being a counselor means a heck of a lot more to me than helping people. That is important and all but so are some other reasons that I don't ordinarily admit. For instance, I have this thing

about being in control. I have often felt that way in most of my relationships, so I am excited about learning ways to build trust with people. This will help me in my work but I know it will also help me with my friends and my boyfriend. I quite like the idea that after I graduate I will be much better at getting people to like and respect me.

I am also somewhat of a busybody, meaning I like to know what other people are up to. When I find out that somebody else is having problems or doing strange things, in a perverse way it makes me feel better, that maybe I'm not so strange myself. I think it is really exciting that we get to hear about people's most intimate secrets.

4. You may have experienced a number of personal challenges and difficulties in your life and wish to use what you learned to assist others.
5. You are able to gain broadened perspectives on the meaning of life as a result of your searching conversations with others.
6. You are able to give something back to your community, to use your own learning experiences to benefit others.
7. You pass on a legacy to others as part of your commitment and dedication to service.
8. You help yourself by helping others.

Yet there are many other reasons people choose counseling as a profession. The selection could be pragmatic: Grades or test scores may prevent a move into what is perceived as a more highly competitive medical or legal education. Or the time commitments required by some disciplines may seem excessive or overwhelming. Counseling seems a reasonable compromise; the program can be completed in a few years and then the credentials will permit practice in many attractive settings.

It is also true that some people have very self-centered motivations for entering the helping professions. The counselor is able to satisfy unfulfilled nurturing needs by rescuing people with problems—and able to participate in intimate relationships as well—while always maintaining control (Herron & Rouslin, 1984; Kottler, 2010; Robertiello, 1978). Some people are attracted to counseling because they enjoy the power they can wield in influencing other people's lives (Hoyt, 2005). Counselors and other therapeutic practitioners have, in many ways, become power brokers in our society. They have become the oracles, the witch doctors, the gurus, the wizards, the mentors. In almost every culture of the world, there are professionals designated as counselors or shamans whose main job is to promote healing by harnessing forces of the natural, spiritual, physical, and psychological domains. They listen with compassion and speak with authority. They have the answers, and although they may not reveal them directly, if clients behave and do what they are supposed to, they will be gently prodded to discover truth for themselves.


 VOICE FROM THE FIELD

I had a lot of grief at a young age. Since then I've felt drawn to those who are hurting, especially those who are dying. I know this sounds morbid, but I really do like working at the hospice with cancer patients and their families. I'm so impressed with the ones who die with dignity and good humor.

Early on, I thought my motivations were purely altruistic. Hah! I know better now. I'm more realistic and honest about what drives me and also what pushes my buttons. The truth is that this work makes me feel needed. This is especially true with my dying patients. If this work ever stops meeting my needs, I'll stop doing it.

Students also select counseling for many of the same practical reasons that lead to any other career. They need the degree for a pay raise or promotion. During tough economic times they can't find suitable employment. They are after prestige and status. The courses are offered at convenient times. Tests are infrequent or the program doesn't appear too demanding. And, indeed, counseling does not at first glance seem as rigorous as training in engineering, nuclear physics, or neurosurgery.

But don't be fooled. A counseling program is about the most challenging emotional experience a student can undertake. Although some counseling programs may not create intense academic pressure, all emphasize skill mastery and performance competencies. Counseling programs are interested not only in your ability to succeed at academic tasks but also in your ability to translate book and classroom learning into action. The bottom line for success in a counseling program is what you can do and what you can deliver.

Another large part of the work you do will involve addressing your own personal reactions to your work, often called *countertransference* reactions. This refers to the phenomenon, originally described by Sigmund Freud (1912), in which clinicians lose their objectivity and clarity because of their own personal issues, which interfere with their work. Their perceptions of their clients become distorted and their interpretations polluted by their own personal stuff. While countertransference is often not addressed nearly as much in training as it should be, it is absolutely critical that you have a handle on your own biases, unresolved issues, and strong emotional reactions that may interfere with your ability to think clearly and respond helpfully to clients.

It is also important to understand that the personal reactions you have to your clients can become a therapeutic benefit, as well as a delightful side effect of being a member of the counseling profession. In one study of how prominent therapists were changed by their clients (Kottler & Carlson, 2005a), a number of leaders in the field described a multitude of new ways in which they were challenged to grow—not just professionally but also personally. In many ways, their clients became their best teachers, prompting them to make significant changes in their own lives.

Just consider, for example, some of the opinions or values you hold as most sacred. How do you feel about the death penalty, or abortion, or gun control, or gay rights, or even your deepest religious (or nonreligious) convictions? Now imagine that someone walks in your office door and presents a point of view that is the



VOICE FROM THE FIELD

I don't have kids, and I don't think I ever will. But there are hundreds, probably thousands of children, whom I have worked with during the past years. I'd like to think some of them will remember me for a very long time. Maybe until the day they die.

I know that there are several mentors and teachers who influenced me in ways that I'll never forget. They

live inside me. Their words still echo in my mind. At times I even smile when I catch myself saying something just the way that they would.

It gives me chills to think that others might someday feel so grateful for my efforts to help them. Maybe long after I'm not around anymore I will still live inside the children I worked with.

direct opposite of what you believe. Will you be able to respond to this person with compassion and caring, free from personal biases that may cloud your judgments?

The constant and often difficult inward journey necessary for growth and counseling skill development are well worth the effort. This profession offers the student more advantages on both a personal and a professional level than almost any other field. Where else can all life experiences—books, films, travels, relationships, fantasies, jobs, losses, disasters, and triumphs—help the professional to be more effective? Everything and everyone teaches a counselor to understand the human world better, to have more compassion, to be a better communicator, to comprehend more completely the intricate complexities of behavior. Every experience allows you to teach from what you know.

In one study conducted with first-year counseling students (Melton, Nofzinger-Collins, Wynne, & Susman, 2005), participants were asked to record their innermost thoughts and feelings during simulated sessions with a client. Consistently, the students reported struggles with controlling their anger and frustration when clients didn't cooperate or meet their expectations, and reported having to manage their disappointment over missed opportunities for deeper exploration. They described fears over feeling incompetent, and elation over feeling that they were helpful in some way. These are typical reactions that you will learn to deal with over time, assuming that you remain reflective and self-critical in constructive ways.

What other profession teaches skills and competencies applicable to work that can also be so easily applied to your personal world? Counseling trains people to be more passionate consumers of life. Intensive training in observing nonverbal behavior, analyzing motives, handling confrontations, and reflecting feelings helps counselors to be more attractive human beings, helps them be experts at efficiently developing trusting, productive relationships. If counselors can do that in their offices, they can certainly do it with their friends, colleagues, children, siblings, partners, spouses, and parents.

Counseling inspires the student to be a knowledgeable generalist, a Renaissance scholar, a devourer of "truth" in any palatable form. We are not restricted to our texts for learning. We read literature, history, anthropology, sociology, biology, biochemistry, education, psychology, and philosophy, and they are all beneficial—even necessary—if we are truly to understand this abstract thing called the human mind.

Counseling permits practitioners to make a difference in people's lives and to see the results in their own lifetimes. One of the ways in which we attempt to confront our own mortality is by preserving our spirit long after physical death. Certainly the principal reward for a dedicated teacher, counselor, or therapist is the knowledge that a generation of clients will remember and use the help that was offered, even after we are gone. Our profession allows us to productively face our own fears of death by leaving behind those who, because of our efforts, feel less pain.

Counselors become more wise and self-aware with every client they see. Each presented concern forces us to consider introspectively our own degree of stability. Every discussed problem reminds us of those issues that we still have not fully resolved. A client complains of periodic urges to break out of the mold and run away, while the counselor silently considers his or her own rebellious impulses. A boring relationship, fear of failure, career stagnation, sexual frustrations, loneliness, parental dependence—all subjects that are commonly presented—force the counselor to resolve them, once and for all, in his or her own life. The profession thus continually encourages its practitioners to upgrade their personal effectiveness.

Counseling enables us to appreciate how we are all interconnected. A client shares a painful experience or difficult conflict in her life, and we think to ourselves, "It's so amazing that this person's story so relates to my own life." And then we realize that it is no coincidence, but rather a reminder that despite the fact that we and our clients may have important differences in our life experiences and backgrounds, we are all struggling together to make meaning of our lives and reach our fullest potential. David Orlinsky, a well-known therapist and author, wrote, "I would even say that doing psychotherapy provides an opportunity to worship, to celebrate our fundamental and energizing interdependence. There are moments in therapy when this energy and human beauty meet ... and where, when they meet, a healing influence resonates in all directions, into the therapist as well as the patient, and to others closely involved in the patient's life" (Orlinsky, 2005, pp. 1005–1006).

At this very moment, you may want to examine your personal motives for studying counseling. (*Note:* This is one of several reflective questions that you may wish to address in your journal.) Better yet, talk to other students about what motivates them as well—not just the socially acceptable and politically correct reasons, but also the deeper, more personal drives. Although you may never fully understand all the factors, needs, interests, values, and unconscious processes that are influencing your decision, the quest is nevertheless valuable. It is likely that only years after graduation—and perhaps after your own experiences as a client—will you have a focused picture of your honest motives. This process of self-inquiry, once begun, is self-perpetuating because of the growth it fosters. And the beginning is *now*.

TO BE A COUNSELOR

Choosing counseling as a career sets into motion a chain of events and leads to a series of direct and indirect consequences, the impact of which is often initially unclear. The choice to be a counselor, for example, not only dramatically affects the education, training, and molding of the student who made the decision but also affects that individual's family and friends. Imagine, for example, that you



VOICE FROM THE FIELD

I was filled with so much anxiety almost every moment of my beginning years as a counselor. First, I wondered constantly if I had whatever it took to be good at this job. I compared myself to others and usually found myself wanting in some way. I wasn't smart enough. I couldn't express myself as well as others. I didn't have nearly the same life experiences, or academic background, as those who seemed so far ahead of me.

And then when I started seeing clients, I felt so anxious that I wouldn't be able to help them.

I didn't know if I'd say or do the right thing. I had this vision that even though I was pretending to know what I was doing, the client would see right through me and know I was clueless.

Even after all these years, I still feel anxious every time a new client walks in. I wonder if I can help him or her. I worry about whether I know enough, or whether someone else might do a better job. So you see, the anxiety lessens a bit but it never goes away.

simply studied the impact of birth order on personality development. How can you *not* look at your life and your relationships with family members differently after that? Or consider the very real possibility that, in any given week in your professional life, you will listen to clients struggle with fears of dying, infidelity, loneliness, dependency, boredom, suicidal thoughts, and a hundred other issues that have haunted you throughout your life.

We have always thought that if we were to present you with a fully disclosing “informed consent” (an ethical concept you will learn about later that refers to disclosure of risks so you can make knowledgeable decisions about your participation), we would have to tell you that deciding to be a counselor has huge implications for your life in a number of ways. For one thing, *all* your relationships will change. You will develop new expectations and standards for intimacy. You will learn skills that enable you to develop closer levels of intimacy with others, and you will want to use that newfound ability to enrich your family and work relationships. In a sense, you will be ruined—forever dissatisfied with superficial encounters. After all, how can you settle for rather inane interactions when you talk to people daily about their most intimate secrets, their most powerful insights, and their most meaningful feelings? The truth is that your love relationships may very well change forever and many of your friendships may be outgrown. You are not only choosing a new profession but a new way of being, a new way of relating to yourself, to others, and to the world.

Choosing to be a counselor means opening yourself up to intense self-scrutiny and personal growth. It means examining your strengths and limitations as a human being, exploring your vulnerabilities, and identifying those aspects of your functioning that you need to improve. All these changes emerge as the consequence of simply selecting studies in counseling. A number of other implications flow from choosing to be a counselor.

Dealing with Anxiety

We are not referring yet to the anxiety of your clients but rather to your own internal pressure and apprehensions about this work. Anxiety is not only an expected