



# Becoming a Skilled Counselor

Richard D. Parsons  
Naijian Zhang



COUNSELING and  
PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY



# Contents

---

Editors' Preface xiii

Authors' Preface xv

Acknowledgments xix

## PART I: COUNSELING: A PROCESS AND A PROFESSION 1

### Chapter 1: Counseling: Helping as a Professional Practice 3

Introduction 3

Helping as a Natural Human Experience 4

Counseling as a Helping Profession 5

*The Formality of Professional Helping 6*

*The Expanded Goals of Professional Helping 10*

*The Process of Professional Helping 13*

*The Focus of the Helping Process 16*

The Characteristics of a Professional Counselor 18

*Self-Awareness 18*

*Facilitative Values and Disposition 24*

*Procedural Knowledge and Forward Thinking 25*

*Professional Identity 29*

Challenges Encountered on the Road to Being a Professional:

Recognizing One's Responsibility 41

*Maintaining Professional Competence 42*

*Employing Best Practice 42*

*Advocating for Improved Quality of Life 42*

*Fostering Improvement of Counseling as a Practice and*

*Profession 43*

*Taking Care of Self 43*

Counseling Keystones 43

Additional Resources 44

References 44



## Chapter 2: Counseling: The Practice of Facilitating Change 49

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 49 |
| Counseling: An Intentional Process of Change                 | 50 |
| Elements of the Counseling Process                           | 54 |
| <i>A Caveat</i>  | 54 |
| <i>The Elements</i>  | 56 |
| <i>Working Jointly</i>                                       | 59 |
| <i>Discovering the Client: Needs, Goals, and Resources</i>   | 63 |
| <i>A Plan, a Strategy, and Then Action</i>                   | 67 |
| <i>Case Conceptualization</i>                                | 68 |
| <i>The Treatment Plan</i>                                    | 71 |
| <i>The Organic and Dynamic Nature of Helping</i>             | 71 |
| Change: Movement Along a Continuum                           | 74 |
| <i>A Continuum of Change</i>                                 | 74 |
| <i>Counselor Interventions Along the Continuum of Change</i> | 75 |
| <i>The Fluidity of Stages</i>                                | 81 |
| Challenges Encountered: Counseling Is Not Formulaic          | 81 |
| <i>Working With Children</i>                                 | 81 |
| <i>Counseling Clients With a Multicultural Background</i>    | 82 |
| <i>Working With Reluctant or Resistant Clients</i>           | 85 |
| Counseling Keystones   | 87 |
| Additional Resources   | 88 |
| References   | 88 |

## PART II: THE ELEMENTS AND DYNAMICS OF COUNSELING 91

### Chapter 3: The Counseling Relationship: A Unique Social Encounter 93

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction   | 93  |
| Counseling: More Than a Social Encounter   | 94  |
| <i>The Counseling Relationship: Intentionally Created and Purposively Directed</i> | 94  |
| <i>Setting the Stage</i>   | 95  |
| The <i>What</i> , <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> of a Working Alliance                | 99  |
| The <i>What</i> : Characteristics of a Working Alliance                            | 99  |
| The <i>Why</i> : Understanding the Value of and Need for a Working Alliance        | 100 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| The <i>How</i> : Counselor Disposition and Skills Necessary for Creating and Maintaining a Working Alliance | 101 |
| <i>Counselor Attitudes and Dispositions Supporting a Working Alliance</i>                                   | 101 |
| <i>Counselor Skills of Communicating Genuineness, Nonjudgment, and Empathetic Understanding</i>             | 107 |
| Challenges to the Development and Maintenance of a Counseling Relationship                                  | 120 |
| <i>Challenges Emanating From the Client</i>   | 120 |
| <i>Challenges Emanating From the Counselor</i>  | 122 |
| <i>Challenges Emanating From the Client–Counselor Dynamic</i>   | 123 |
| Counseling Keystones  | 123 |
| Additional Resources  | 124 |
| <i>Readings</i>   | 124 |
| <i>Web Resources</i>  | 125 |
| References  | 125 |

### Chapter 4: Identifying What Is: Probing the Client's Issues 129

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction   | 129 |
| The Obvious Is Not Always So Obvious                   | 130 |
| <i>Moving Toward Intimate Disclosure</i>               | 130 |
| <i>Exception to “Normal” Progression of Disclosure</i> | 134 |
| Skills Used in Identifying the <i>What Is</i>          | 135 |
| <i>Questioning</i>                                     | 135 |
| <i>Encouraging</i>                                     | 139 |
| <i>Clarifying</i>                                      | 141 |
| <i>Challenging</i>                                     | 142 |
| <i>Summarizing</i>                                     | 143 |
| <i>Informing</i>                                       | 146 |
| <i>Interpreting</i>                                    | 152 |
| Moving From the Facts of the Story to the Meaning      | 156 |
| <i>Focusing the Client Inward</i>                      | 157 |
| <i>Probing for Meaning</i>                             | 157 |
| From <i>What Is</i> to <i>What Is Desired</i>          | 161 |
| Counseling Keystones                                   | 161 |
| Additional Resources                                   | 162 |
| <i>Readings</i>  | 162 |
| <i>Web Resources</i>                                   | 162 |
| References   | 163 |

**Chapter 5: Goal Setting: Identifying What Is Desired 165**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction                                  | 165 |
| Why Goals?                                    | 166 |
| Goals: Clear, Concrete, and Achievable        | 167 |
| <i>Specificity</i>                            | 168 |
| <i>Measurability</i>                          | 168 |
| <i>Attainability</i>                          | 170 |
| <i>Result</i>                                 | 170 |
| <i>Time</i>                                   | 170 |
| <i>Gain</i>                                   | 171 |
| <i>Optimism</i>                               | 173 |
| <i>Appropriateness</i>                        | 175 |
| <i>Legitimate</i>                             | 177 |
| <i>Simplicity</i>                             | 178 |
| Change Model and Goal Setting                 | 179 |
| Special Challenges and Considerations         | 180 |
| <i>Client's Constricted Views</i>             | 180 |
| <i>Client's Confusing Strategy With Goals</i> | 181 |
| <i>Not Knowing Where to Start</i>             | 182 |
| Moving On to Strategies                       | 182 |
| Counseling Keystones                          | 183 |
| Additional Resources                          | 183 |
| References                                    | 184 |

**Chapter 6: Moving From What Is to What Is Desired 185**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction  | 185 |
| Intervention Planning: Not Static, Nor a One-Time Event           | 186 |
| The Use of Theory and Research as Guides to Intervention Planning | 186 |
| <i>Theories: Framework for Making Meaning</i>                     | 187 |
| <i>Theories: All Equally Valuable and Useful?</i>                 | 187 |
| <i>Theories of Counseling: A Rich History</i>                     | 188 |
| <i>Contemporary Theories</i>                                      | 188 |
| A Model of Change and Goal Achievement                            | 190 |
| <i>Identifying Pathways to Client Goals</i>                       | 190 |
| <i>Working With Exceptions</i>                                    | 191 |
| <i>Brainstorming Creative Options</i>                             | 193 |
| <i>Assessing Possible Pathways</i>                                | 198 |
| <i>Implementing a Plan</i>  | 204 |
| Challenges to Progress  | 209 |

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Client Resistance</i>            | 210 |
| <i>Clients With Special Needs</i>   | 210 |
| <i>Clients Exhibiting Reactance</i> | 210 |
| Counseling Keystones                | 211 |
| Additional Resources                | 212 |
| References                          | 212 |

**Chapter 7: Practice Accountability:  
An Ethical Mandate and a Practice Necessity 215**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction  | 215 |
| The Practical and Ethical Impetus to Practice Assessment                        | 219 |
| <i>Responding to Stakeholders</i>   | 219 |
| <i>Professional Identity</i>  | 220 |
| <i>Ethical Response</i>   | 221 |
| Assessing the Progress and Outcome of Counseling                                | 221 |
| <i>Formative Assessment</i>   | 222 |
| <i>Summative Evaluations and Outcome Measurement</i>                            | 227 |
| Assessment as a Guide to Practice Decisions                                     | 232 |
| <i>Supervision</i>  | 232 |
| <i>Referral</i>   | 232 |
| <i>How to Make a Referral</i>   | 234 |
| <i>Termination</i>  | 236 |
| Challenges to Accountability  | 238 |
| <i>Human Complexity</i>   | 239 |
| <i>Defining Issues and Outcome</i>  | 239 |
| <i>No Consensus</i>   | 241 |
| <i>Limited Training in and Valuing of Accountability and Outcome Assessment</i> | 242 |
| Counseling Keystones  | 243 |
| Additional Resources  | 243 |
| <i>Readings</i>   | 243 |
| <i>Web Resources</i>  | 244 |
| References  | 244 |

**PART III: COUNSELOR AS PROFESSIONAL 249**

**Chapter 8: Counselor Competence:  
An Ethical Precondition to Successful Intervention 251**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction  | 251 |
| Education, Training, and Supervision: Fundamental to Competence | 252 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Education and Training: The Fundamentals                                  | 253 |
| Supervision: Facilitating Movement of Student to Professional             | 262 |
| <i>Working With Qualified Professional Supervisors</i>                    | 262 |
| <i>Peer Consultation: Supporting Competence</i>                           | 263 |
| Continuing Education: Avoiding Technical Obsolescence                     | 266 |
| Best Practice as Evidence Based   | 267 |
| <i>Evidence-Based Practice: A Matter of Ethics</i>                        | 267 |
| <i>From Theory to Empirically Supported and Evidence-Based Techniques</i> | 268 |
| A Final Thought   | 269 |
| Counseling Keystones  | 269 |
| Additional Resources  | 270 |
| <i>Readings</i>   | 270 |
| <i>Web Resources</i>  | 270 |
| References  | 271 |

## Chapter 9: Care for the Counselor 273

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction                                   | 273 |
| Professional Burnout                           | 274 |
| <i>Causes</i>                                  | 274 |
| <i>Warning Signs</i>                           | 276 |
| <i>Prevention and Intervention</i>             | 278 |
| Compassion Fatigue                             | 280 |
| <i>Symptoms</i>                                | 280 |
| <i>Causes</i>                                  | 282 |
| <i>Prevention and Intervention</i>             | 283 |
| Personal Well-Being: Fundamental to Competence | 284 |
| Counseling Keystones                           | 285 |
| Additional Resources                           | 289 |
| <i>Readings</i>                                | 289 |
| <i>Web Resource</i>                            | 290 |
| References                                     | 290 |

## Chapter 10: The Unfolding Professional Identity 293

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction                               | 293 |
| The <i>Why</i> of Professional Identity    | 294 |
| <i>Value for the Individual Counselor</i>  | 294 |
| <i>Value for the Counseling Profession</i> | 294 |
| The <i>What</i> of Professional Identity   | 295 |
| <i>History</i>                             | 295 |
| <i>Philosophical Foundations</i>           | 296 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>Roles and Functions</i>                 | 301 |
| <i>Advocacy and Professionalism</i>        | 302 |
| <i>Ethics</i>                              | 304 |
| <i>Professional Pride</i>                  | 306 |
| Developing Counselor Professional Identity | 307 |
| Assessing Unfolding Professional Identity  | 308 |
| Counseling Keystones                       | 311 |
| Additional Resources                       | 312 |
| <i>Professional Associations</i>           | 312 |
| <i>Readings</i>                            | 312 |
| References                                 | 312 |

## PART IV: APPLYING WHAT WE KNOW 315

### Chapter 11: Samantha: Finding It Hard to Say Goodbye 317

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Background                     | 317 |
| What Happened?                 | 321 |
| First Session: Initial Contact | 321 |
| Conclusion                     | 332 |

### Chapter 12: Jamal: The Gym Teacher's Concern 333

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Background             | 333 |
| Precontact Preparation | 335 |
| Initial Contact        | 335 |
| Session II             | 344 |
| Conclusion             | 348 |

### Chapter 13: Mrs. Ayame Hoshi: Feeling as Half of a Person 349

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Background                       | 349 |
| Intake Session                   | 350 |
| Summary of Middle of the Session | 355 |
| Employing Cognitive Intervention | 355 |
| Conclusion                       | 360 |
| Final Thoughts                   | 360 |

## Epilogue: From the Authors' Chairs 363

## Index 367

## About the Authors 381