

COUNSELING PHILOSOPHY

Counselors (secular and Christian) agree on very few things. However, no matter how different the dogmas, ALL clinicians hold one thing in common, agreement that the goal of all counseling is change; whether it be the client's thinking, feelings, attitude, behaviors, awareness, sensitivity, relationship(s) or understanding, etc.; and the nature of change is process.

My approach as a Counselor is Theocentric (God-centered) and holistic at heart and ministerial / discipleship in nature, but eclectic in practice, using the best methods and modalities to fit the client's needs. I counsel with both believers and nonbelievers equally without imposing my beliefs and values on either. Second Order change (the change which brings about a definitive and lasting difference and transformation), is primarily brought about through (relationship) the therapeutic alliance between God, therapist, and client. The method(s) utilized are only secondary and effective to varying degrees. Significant change requires the Holy Spirit's alteration of the counselee's heart (one's inner life only known to God and oneself) Outward changes begin and flow from a heart transformed by God, anything less is inadequate.

The sum of the Commandments is love towards God and one's neighbor. These two commandments are linked both vertically and horizontally, we can't have one without the other (1st John 4:8:5:1-2). We must fully consider both dimensions, change must take account of both sets of obligations. It is at these crossroads, or crisis points – apocalyptic movement(s) – that give way to the option of change. That goes for changes both toward God and/or away from God. All change is a matter greater or lesser towards or away from God and is always crucial. There is no neutral change. All change towards God is good and all change away from God is bad. Sanctification is change towards God. Successful counseling changes a person to be more like Christ. The movement towards or away from Christ-likeness is always a deeply moral issue and never neutral. Its repercussions resonate throughout every facet of our being and life, even touching others we encounter, and are in a relationship with. (Portions excerpted from Jay E. Adams, How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process).

Therefore, Christian counseling requires that at least the counselor have an intimate relationship with Jesus; and is sensitive enough to yield to the Holy Spirit, and what He is doing in the client's life, whether the client is a believer or not (secular or Christian). The process of sanctification brings us closer in relationship/fellowship with the presence of the Lord (1st John 1:1-10), and bestows a greater sense of belonging, dignity and power to the many who had/have (been victimized), seen themselves as victims and stuck in the past where they experienced the trauma(s), that they had/have allowed to define and entrap them.

It is in these integrative movements, those times when we come into His presence (where we know and are intimately known by God, (Galatians 4:8-9, John 17:3, KJV) that we are both changed (transformed) and empowered through the Holy Spirit. Spirit-filled believers are change agents (Christ's embodiment) to the world, and not victims (Hebrews 12:25-29, KJV).

Change is a constant, and central to counseling. Everyone has the choice to be proactive or reactive to that change. People who deny that change is constant and try to maintain the status quo will face negative consequences for their (non)choice. Change will continue to happen, but they will not be

prepared for it. Also, people who suffer a major trauma in their life will only develop emotionally roughly two years beyond the time that the traumatic event occurred and have fewer coping skills to deal with life's problems unless they address and overcome those traumatic effects.

Most of these traumatic hurts are impossible to overcome alone because most were not created alone; they are relational hurts, and/or betrayal of trust experienced in a social context and therefore can only be healed through relationship(s). Part of that healing matrix is to (re)empower the client; in doing so, the counselor recognizes the client as a collaborative partner in their journey toward better health and does not impose the counselor's values or choices on the client, but instead honors their decisions whether the counselor agrees with it or not. Spiritually, the counselor does not use his faith to coerce or "hit the client over the head with the Bible" – but instead uses his faith and relationship with God to be more accepting, non-judgmental, compassionate, genuine and empathetic. No method or theory of counseling has been shown to be significantly better than another. However, what has been discovered is that the relationship between the therapist and client is what matters most in determining whether the client will benefit from therapy.