

CHAPTER

6

Models and Approaches of School Counseling

OBJECTIVES

By reading and studying this chapter you should acquire the competency to:

- Organize a plan for counseling with students experiencing different types of problems in a school setting
- Explain and describe Alfred Adler's principles of counseling as applied in schools with a preadolescent population
- Explain the principles of behaviorism as they are applied in school settings
- Explain and describe the principles of counseling as developed by Carl Rogers
- Describe the approach and explain a school application for rational emotive behavioral therapy
- Explain and describe cognitive and behavioral counseling in the schools
- Compare two models for cognitive behavioral therapy used in schools today
- Explain choice theory and describe William Glasser's model for reality therapy in the schools
- Describe the dynamics of groups and explain the principles of group therapy
- Describe the methods of solution-focused brief counseling and goal setting in the schools
- Describe the methods of strengths-based counseling in the schools
- Explain the use of technology in the delivery of virtual school counseling
- Develop a personal model for the delivery of school counseling services

“The fool tells me his reasons; the wise man persuades me with my own.”

Aristotle

● INTRODUCTION AND THEMES

Standard 4: The professional school counselor provides responsive services through the effective use of individual and small-group counseling, consulting, and referral skills. (American School Counselor Association [ASCA]/Hatch & Bowers, 2005, p. 63)

There are three major theories that have shaped how counselors provide therapeutic interventions in schools. The first of these is based on the theoretical foundation provided by psychoanalysis, first defined and elaborated by Sigmund Freud. These approaches include those that can be described as neo-Freudian and those that contain elements first identified in Freud's writings. Eric H. Erikson, Alfred Adler, and Otto Rank have built models for practice based on these approaches and theories.

The early behaviorists provided the second theory that guided approaches to therapeutic interventions. Behaviorism was first defined in psychological laboratories with carefully controlled experiments to look into how individuals learn and respond to their environments. These approaches to therapy include William Glasser's **reality therapy** and **choice theory**. Related theories describe **goal setting** and brief solutions-focused counseling, strengths-based counseling, **cognitive therapy**, **behavioral counseling**, and cognitive behavioral techniques. Each of these methods is based on helping clients learn new ways of thinking, processing information, and responding to their environments.

The third major theoretical basis in counseling is a uniquely American approach devised by Carl R. Rogers. His person- or child-centered (in this chapter also called "student-centered") approach is one that does away with the notion that a counselor is going to fix a problem the student is having. The approach is one that helps the student better understand his or her own thinking and find a resolution within.

School counselors have also adopted an abbreviated approach for providing student-focused interventions that are time efficient and highly effective. Central to these solutions-focused methods are strength-based school counseling and narrative therapies (Tafuya-Barraza, 2008).

The emergence of strength-based school counseling has provided school counselors with a highly effective tool for providing successful interventions in school settings. While not always appropriate for every problem, strength-based school counseling is both efficient and effective.

Dynamic interactions of a group of students working with a counselor can employ a number of approaches to therapeutic intervention. Counselors need skill and an understanding of group dynamics and theory to provide an effective program of group counseling.

A new direction for school counselors is in working within a virtual school. The online world is changing old rules about the delivery of counseling services for many students today.

People are usually more convinced by reasons they discovered themselves than by those found by others.

Blaise Pascal

Ground Rules for School Counselors

Counselors working in public schools must establish ground rules with students who begin the counseling relationship. One is that everything discussed by the student and counselor is kept in confidence by both parties.¹ Second is that there is a strict time limit to the length of each counseling session. Counselors must establish boundaries, including the fact that they are paid professional employees of the school who may never break the school's rules or policies. The counselor works in the interest of each individual student; however, as a professional, the counselor maintains a separation from students who are receiving counseling services. Finally, counselors do not play favorites, make exceptions, or do anything to discourage any student or group of students from seeking assistance.

HOW DOES A SCHOOL COUNSELOR DO THE JOB? ●

When a new school counselor begins a career, he or she must build a practice. Schools will have referral systems and children will be “sent to see the counselor”; however, an effective counselor soon develops a practice built on trust that has been earned. Students know the genuine thing when they see it, and a counselor who is trusted will have a reputation that is spread by word of mouth throughout the building and beyond into the community. This can happen only if the school counselor has the personal warmth, integrity, and skills to create a counseling environment in which students know they will be listened to by a professional adult who is nonjudgmental and who truly understands them.

The effective counselor knows counseling theories and has the ability to employ techniques that can help students.² Beyond that knowledge and skill base, the counselor should be an optimist who has a true belief in his or her skills and the ability of students to change and improve. To be effective, the

counselor must understand students and the culture of students as well as the culture of the school. Effective counselors recognize their roles in the culture of the school. The counselor also understands and respects the society created by students but never tries to become part of that culture. This implies the counselor is with it and up to date with popular culture but does not effect airs or try to act like the students. This will be immediately detected, and the counselor will be labeled by the students a phony and subsequently lose credibility.

Central to the job is listening. This skill is one very few adults in a child's life have. The counselor must always be sensitive to all levels of communication being used by the student being counseled. Verbalizations make up one dimension; others include the student's posture and body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures. All aspects of the student-client being counseled must be mentally noted by the counselor and become part of the therapeutic dialogue.

Listening in all these dimensions leads the school counselor to be able to achieve **empathy**, the ability to sense and feel the feelings, understandings, motives, and attitude of the student being counseled as the counselor's own. The ability to understand why a student behaves in a particular way, what he or she is thinking, and what his or her motives and needs are is the essence of being a counselor. If the counselor is heard as judgmental by the student, this trusting relationship will never occur. Language by the counselor that starts with the pronoun *you* should be avoided. For example, never start a sentence with "Don't *you* think . . .," or "*You* should/should not . . .," or "It's really *your* doing/fault that . . .," and so on.

Other characteristics of good, highly effective school counselors can be found in **self-reports** (Hopkins, 2005).

One is self-deprecating humor. More than 30 years ago Norman Cousins published a report demonstrating the power of humor to improve the condition of medical patients (Cousins, 1976). Counselors should make the counseling office an enjoyable, never a threatening environment. A sincere smile and pleasant greeting should go to all students in and out of the counselor's office area.

● ADLER'S THEORIES IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

Adlerian counseling holds the central belief that people are social creatures and must learn to cope effectively as members of a community of others (Adler, 1956b). Thus, the behaviors and actions of all humans are directed by social needs. From infancy onward, children work to understand the world around them and become competent within it. This inevitably leads to the child being blocked or thwarted in these efforts. One result of being blocked is a belief that one is inferior and weak. The interpretation of the world by the young child

may be distorted and very wrong. This is made worse in authoritarian homes in which the child never develops the ability to express independence and competence.

Elementary school students can overcome insecurities developed earlier in their childhoods by learning to work in cooperation with others. This work is most successful if directed toward self-improvement leading to self-fulfillment. The most benefit comes to the child whose efforts add to the common good for the community (e.g., classroom). Thus, Adlerian counseling is aimed at gaining an insight into self by learning to live effectively in school and in other social settings (Daniels, 1998).

Background

Alfred Adler (shown in Photo 6.1) was a Viennese physician in general practice and psychoanalyst who was a close associate of Sigmund Freud. Adler broke with Freud in 1911 and relocated to Long Island, New York, in 1926. His debate with Freud had to do with core assumptions of psychoanalysis, including the sexual feelings of young children. Adler saw the concept of infantile sexuality more metaphorically than did Freud. Another disagreement with classical psychoanalysis was Adler's belief in the role of motivation and the child's need to move toward his or her own future. Freud's model was backward looking, attempting to learn causes of current problems through an analysis of past experiences. While Freud explored the unconscious mind for early memories, Adler tried to identify the source of the child's motivation to respond in a particular way.

During World War I, Alfred Adler was a member of the Austrian Army Medical Corp and served in a hospital for children. After the war he opened a clinic and also worked to train teachers in his psychological methods (Boeree, 2006). Today we count Alfred Adler as the first of a series of neo-Freudians that includes, among others, Erik Erikson, Abraham Maslow, and Otto Rank.

PHOTO 6.1 Alfred Adler



SOURCE: © Bettmann/CORBIS.

Adlerian Concepts

Among the firsts that Adler's writings presented was the first psychological study of **feminism** and the power dynamics between males and females. Adler argued against the cultural norm that holds boys in higher esteem than girls and where boys are encouraged to be aggressive and avoid all weakness, while girls are encouraged to be demure and shy (Rigby-Weinberg, 1986). Adler used a term **masculine protest** to describe the need of parents to raise boys to be "real men" who are brave, powerful, and stoic. The difficulty of reaching this masculine ideal can leave a little boy craving to reach it but failing and retreating into a world of power fantasies. As a young adult this can lead to vengeance, resentment, overwhelming avarice, and ambition (Daniels, 1998). Later Adler changed the term *masculine protest* to one that was more attuned to his American experience: **striving for superiority**. This became his term to describe male assertiveness and the training that boys receive to behave in "male-appropriate ways."

A second unique feature of the theory developed by Adler is that of the critical role played by feelings of **inferiority** (Adler, 1956a). Adlerian therapists believe that each infant has inborn feelings of inferiority. This inborn set of feelings is the dynamic that motivates us all to strive to overcome these feelings. All children work to become more powerful and have an increasingly superior role in their lives and to be seen by others as successful and capable. This may be the simple act of insisting on putting on one's own clothes at the age of 2 or the need to control when one goes to bed, irrespective of parental wishes.

This striving for superiority is an essential theme in all our lives. By going to graduate school and working to become school counselors, we are overcoming feelings of inferiority and striving for superiority and professional success as we overcome those negative feelings. If we fail in our attempts, and our striving is thwarted, there is a good likelihood that our feelings of inferiority will become overwhelming, and we will exhibit what Adler termed an **inferiority complex**. An inferiority complex includes an overwhelming sense of being incapable and less deserving than others. It is the essence of hopelessness and results in depression and a total loss of motivation.

A 5-year-old child will suffer any fall, and work for hours on end without complaint to develop the skill needed to ride a bicycle independently (see Photo 6.2). Adler believed this motivation was one to avoid being inferior and to establish control over that aspect of one's life.

The third major theoretical perspective provided by Adler is the important role of **birth order** in the lives of children. Many of his observations are part of the conventional wisdom of parents today. These include the likelihood that

an only child will be pampered and protected by parents who are nervous about their only child.

Firstborn children have the experience of being only children and then are suddenly deprived of the spotlight and must battle to regain the attention and affection of the parents and others in the extended family. Firstborn children may become disobedient, regress to less age-appropriate behavior patterns, or become sullen and withdrawn. On the positive side, firstborn children will have experienced a richer linguistic milieu, with two parents and other adults talking and paying attention to them (Thurstone & Jenkins, 1931). Subsequent children in the family will not have that experience. Thus, firstborn children may appear precocious and assume a teacher-like role within the family.

As other children enter the family, each will see one or more of the other children as being a competitor for the affection and love of the parents. Each will accept a role within the family that provides him or her with a distinctive temperament and style of interaction. The gender of each child and the length of the time period between births become part of the Adlerian calculus of the impact of birth order (Zajonc, 1976).

Methods of Adlerian Counseling in Schools

Many of the methods employed by Adlerian school counselors are designed for use with preadolescent students. The central Adlerian belief is that children misbehave because they are acting out from faulty logic about how the world works. This misinterpretation occurs over time as the natural striving attempts by the child to overcome weaknesses are thwarted at every turn. The type of problem behaviors normally addressed using Adlerian approaches can be divided into four groups: attention seeking, power struggles with adults, revenge, and inadequacy (Fallon, 2004).

PHOTO 6.2 Striving to Be the One Who Can Ride a Bicycle



SOURCE: © Istockphoto.com /Rch1.

Changing Behaviors. The goal of counseling is to harness the child's feelings of weakness and turn them into constructive and positive behaviors (Thompson & Henderson, 2007). Most interventions are designed to teach children more productive approaches to behaving and interacting with others. Approaches discussed previously, such as play therapy and storytelling (see Chapter 3) are tools used by school counselors employing Adlerian methods. Another approach involves **role playing**. These are simulation techniques that can be used in group therapy (see section on group therapy later in the chapter).

Additionally, these methods are supplemented by a dose of **neo-behavioral** management. For example, children who need attention can be reinforced with positive attention only when behaviors occur in the appropriate context.

Power struggles are not uncommon, and teachers may need to be educated in how to avoid them. Students can present power struggles by acting in a direct and destructive way or by a more passive form of aggression. This latter form involves being forgetful, slow to respond, stubborn, and lazy. Those who insist on entering a power struggle with teachers and aides of a school can be given choices between two positive possibilities, such as, "I would like you to do either . . . or . . . Which do you want to do?" Many educators are inclined to give a choice that only hardens resistance such as, "I want you to . . . , and if you don't you will be sent to time-out."

Children are expressing a need for revenge when they exhibit behavior designed to hurt others. Little children who bite others and elementary school children who are bullies fall into this group. Adler would suggest such children are experiencing the pain of not being likeable and are possibly being abused by others. The dynamic of such behaviors is that they make the child even less likeable to others. Clear class rules about hurting others and punishment by natural consequences for inappropriate behaviors are recommended (see Chapters 3 and 4 for more on these topics). Natural consequences refer to what the Great Mikado in Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta called "making the punishment fit the crime" (Gilbert & Sullivan, 1885). Adlerians view natural consequences as what will occur if a responsible adult does not correct the child. For example, if the child forgets to bring a lunch to school, he will be hungry all afternoon, or if she does not take care of the school's equipment she will not be able to use what she broke in the future.

Children with overwhelming feelings of inadequacy sense others believe they are stupid or unable to perform at normal levels. The result is a powerful feeling of hopelessness and despair. This is a problem that can be so deeply set that a child believes all attempts to show him or her as capable are rejected and any attempts at achievement are desultory and half-hearted (Fallon, 2004). Counseling these students requires an empathetic approach in all one-to-one sessions. Counseling is best paired with positive experiences of success. This can happen by finding small jobs the student can do to "help out" in the office.

Tasks such as filing brochures or collating new pamphlets can provide many opportunities for the counselor to provide the student with positive statements about his or her work and abilities.

BEHAVIORISM ●

A number of school counseling approaches are built upon a foundation of behaviorism. This branch of psychology dominated American university psychology departments for most of the 20th century.

The core understanding in behaviorism is that actions and behaviors of children happen as a result of experiences they had with the environment. Humans enter the world without previous learning or habits. They are equipped with certain reflexive responses that can be made to their environments but have no way to interpret and understand the world around them. John Locke has described their minds as blank slates (*tabula rasa*), ready for experience to write upon (Locke, 2004/1690).

The name *behaviorism* is derived from a belief that we can know what a child is about only through observable behaviors. Behaviorists avoid any concern with the child's inner world or the phenomenological field in which the child lives. The focus is on what the child does and how to modify those behaviors in a more productive direction.

Operant Conditioning

The association of an outcome and the antecedent behavior is the central issue for behaviorists. Children are likely to repeat an action or behavior (**operant**) that is closely followed by a pleasant outcome (**reward**) (Skinner, 1954). A key point to this system is the reward must be **contingent** on the behavior occurring first. This behavior–reward cycle will produce frequent reoccurrences of the behavior. As the child must first operate or provide a behavior, it is referred to as **operant conditioning**. A second point is the reward must be one that the child desires. If the reward is powerful and can change behavior, it is referred to as a **reinforcer**. This implies that when given, it will reinforce the occurrence of the behavior being rewarded.

If the reinforcer is viewed as a positive and desirable reward, it is described as a **positive reinforcer**. Positive reinforcers can meet a child's primary needs, for example, food, drink, and sleep. A **secondary reinforcer** makes the child feel good but is not included in his or her primary needs. These can include a star or sticker, affection, praise, or permission to partake in a favorite activity.

The use of economic rewards in education is quotidian and spreading (Wallace, 2009). From the perspective of school-aged children, the true payoffs for doing well in school are in the distant future. Students have been paid for attending after-school tutoring, scoring well on advanced placement (AP) tests, and attending Saturday and summer tutoring sessions. All of these efforts are examples of applied behaviorism in a school setting (Guernsey, 2009).

A **negative reinforcer** can also change behavior. These involve the removal of an annoying condition following the desired behavior. For example, when a parent nags a child to put away all the toys and clean up his or her room, the child may find the nagging annoying. When the child does as asked, the negative stops (no more nagging till the next time), and being left alone for a while rewards the child.

The problem for counselors and other educators using a reward system to control and change the behavior of students is knowing what is rewarding to the student. A child may crave attention and being noticed by his or her peers. This can result in the student being a constant problem for teachers. The result is that the teacher continually reprimands the student. These reprimands are a form of attention, and all the others in the room are certain to notice and respond to the student's acting out or other inappropriate behavior.

Behaviors that are never rewarded will diminish in frequency and eventually be **extinguished**. Ignoring inappropriate behavior is not an easy concept for responsible teachers or parents to understand or employ. If a child demands that he or she be given a desirable object and the responsible adult refuses, the child is likely to ratchet up the demand and become truly pestiferous. At this point the adult may make the error of giving in to the child. This adult abdication reinforces a pattern of behavior of demanding and pestering by the child. Adults who try to extinguish an inappropriate behavior, only to later cave in and give the child his or her way, produce the most resistant patterns of behavior. If a child does not know when he or she will win the contest of wills with the adult but does know that eventually the adult will give in, he or she has no reason to stop misbehaving. The frequency, intensity, and persistence of these inappropriate behaviors will increase.

● ROGERS'S PERSON- (CHILD)-CENTERED SCHOOL COUNSELING

One of the most satisfying experiences I know is just fully to appreciate an individual in the same way that I appreciate a sunset. When I look at a sunset. . . I don't find myself saying, "Soften the orange a little on the right hand corner, and put a bit more purple along the base, and use a little more pink in the cloud color. . . ." I don't try to control a sunset. I watch it with awe as it unfolds.³

Carl Rogers

Carl Rogers described the birth of the new form of psychological therapy occurring on December 11, 1940, during a paper presentation he made at the University of Minnesota to a meeting of the Psi Chi honor society in psychology (Kramer, 1995). Rogers followed a complex path in reaching his professional identity and developing what became known as the **third force** in therapy.

Background

Rogers was raised in a strict home with highly committed Christian parents (Rogers, 1961). His choice for higher education was the Agriculture School of the University of Wisconsin. Later he decided to do graduate work at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. That also proved to be a false start, and Carl Rogers entered Teachers College of Columbia University, where he studied child development and guidance with Leta Stetter Hollingworth⁴ (Thompson & Henderson, 2007).

While working as a therapist in a child guidance clinic in Rochester, New York, he met many social workers who had been educated at the University of Pennsylvania, where they were taught by Otto Rank, an immigrant from Vienna. Otto Rank was a former acolyte of Sigmund Freud and member of Freud's close circle. In 1923 Rank broke with Freud and the traditional model of psychoanalysis and developed a different approach to therapy.

Otto Rank studied the personal struggle each person has in balancing individual **will** with the conventions and culture of society. He uses the word *will* to replace the concept of ego as developed by Erikson. To Rank, the will is a more energized form of ego that strives to provide us with independence and dominion. The best human resolution to the struggles of the human will involve acceptance of one's self and the creation of a **personal ideal** to endeavor always to achieve (Rank, 1978/1936). The term **client** entered the writings of Otto Rank to replace the medical concept of a patient. The medical concept of fixing what was wrong with a patient was replaced by the concept of helping the client own and understand what heretofore were unexplored and unacknowledged parts of the client's own inner life. Otto Rank named this therapeutic approach **relationship therapy**.

Rogers invited Rank to conduct a two-day seminar in Rochester. During those meetings Rogers refined and modified his conceptual basis for working as a therapist and began developing the new approach to individual therapy. Rogers described the significance of the impact of the Otto Rank seminars by saying, "I became infected with Rankian ideas" (Kramer, 1995). Rogers described this new approach as client-centered therapy (Rogers, 1980). Otto Rank's relationship therapy model was incorporated into the

early work on child psychology and therapy by Rogers, but it was refined through Rogers's experience base of 12 years spent as a therapist working with troubled children and their families (Rogers, 1939). The new Rogerian **client-centered**⁵ counseling model was the first truly American approach to psychological therapy.

Nondirective Counseling

Unlike psychoanalysis, the Rogerian approach does not dig into the **unconscious mind** or **repressed memories**. The focus is on the immediate world of the child and how the child views and understands what he or she is experiencing. This approach is described as being **phenomenological** in that it is less concerned with the scientific reality of the moment but rather is focused on how the child sees it. The key to all counseling is being an active listener: one who is totally focused on what the child is revealing and describing from his or her private phenomenological perspective (Rogers, 1977).

This requires the counselor to do anything that would help him or her enter the world of the child's subjective experiences and understandings. Included in this is the requirement that the counselor avoid interpreting what the child means, asking questions, or giving the child advice.

Congruence

The goal of counseling is to assist the child to reach a point described by Rogers as **congruence**. To reach this point of congruence, the child will need to experience a psychotherapeutic change in his or her personality structure (Rogers, 1992). The congruence that is needed is between the child's knowledge of him- or herself as a person and the ideal image he or she wishes could be achieved. This difference is **incongruence**, and it represents a source of anxiety, frustration, and maladaptive behaviors (Rogers, 1942).

Rogerian Manifesto

In his textbook on client-centered therapy, Carl Rogers laid out 19 propositions as to what a client- (child)-centered counseling intervention should assume (Rogers, 1951, pp. 483–522). The principles have been modified to fit the context of American students in the 21st century. These principles include:

1. All children and young people exist in (are born into) a continually changing world of experience (phenomenal field) of which they are at the center.
2. Children react to this phenomenological field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field becomes the “reality” for each child.
3. At first, children react as an organized whole to this phenomenal field. There are no multi-taskers in the crib.
4. Children have an inborn basic tendency and striving to actualize, maintain, and enhance their base of experience as individuals. The striving is directed to increase self-regulation and autonomy and move away from being controlled by others, even loving caregivers.
5. Actions by children are purposeful and goal-directed attempts to satisfy those needs as perceived or felt by the child. Each child lives in the present and is not directed by something that occurred in the past.
6. Emotion accompanies and guides goal-directed activities and behaviors by children. The nature of the emotion is directly linked to the perceived significance to the child of its relationship to survival and the perceived enhancement it brings.
7. The best vantage point for understanding the actions and behavior of a child is from the internal frame of reference of the child.
8. A portion of the total perceptual field (phenomenological frame) gradually becomes differentiated. The sense of a unique self is developed at this time.
9. From interactions with the environment and interaction with others, the structure of the child’s self is formed as a consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships. It makes it possible for the child to think in terms of the words *I* and *me*. At this developmental point, the child is creating a rudimentary system of values.
10. Values experienced directly by the child, and in some instances those values taken over from others as if they had been experienced directly, may become distorted. Values attached to experiences are a part of the self-structure, while values introjected from others have a greater chance to become structurally changed and perceived in distorted fashion. Yet, they will seem as if they had been experienced directly and will be incorporated into what the child holds and believes.

11. As children experience life, those experiences of the world and its inhabitants may (a) be symbolized, perceived, and organized into some relation to the self, (b) become ignored because there is no perceived relationship to the self structure, or (c) simply be denied symbolization or given distorted symbolization because the experience is inconsistent with the structure of the child's self.
12. Most of the ways children behave are somehow consistent with their personal concepts of self.
13. In some instances, behavior may be brought about by experiences a child lived and that have not been symbolized. Such behavior may be inconsistent with the structure of the child's self-concept, but in such instances the behavior is not "owned" by the child. These behaviors occur as if the child were on "autopilot" and not directing the actions, as though he or she was just along for the ride.
14. Psychological adjustment exists when the concept of the self is such that all sensory and visceral experiences of the child are assimilated on a symbolic level into a consistent relationship with the concept of self.
15. Psychological maladjustment exists when the organism denies awareness of significant sensory and visceral experiences that cannot be symbolized and organized into the *gestalt* of the self-concept. When this situation exists, there is a basic or potential psychological tension (incongruence).
16. Any experience that is inconsistent with the organization of the structure of the self-concept may be perceived as a threat. The more of these perceptions there are, the more rigidly the structure of the self-concept will become organized to maintain itself and the more maladapted the child will become.
17. Under certain conditions, involving primarily complete absence of threat to the structure of the self-concept, experiences that are inconsistent with it may be perceived and examined and the structure of self-concept revised to assimilate and include such experiences.
18. When the child perceives and accepts into one consistent and integrated system all his or her sensory and visceral experiences, the child necessarily becomes more understanding of others and is more accepting of others as separate individuals.
19. As the child perceives and accepts into his or her self-concept's structure more of his or her experiences from living, the child finds that he or she

is replacing the present value system. This is especially true when values are based extensively on introjections that have been distorted and inappropriately symbolized. The goal is to reach a point when the experiences of life fit within the child's evolving valuing process.

Methods of Rogerian Counseling in Schools

Counselors employing the child-centered approach of Carl Rogers believe that children all have dignity and value and deserve respect. All children are able to make constructive change in their lives and strive to be fully actualized. Change can best occur when children are self-directed and provided opportunities to make wise choices and decisions. Children being counseled move toward improvement when the counselor is nonauthoritarian, warm and authentic, congruent, and an excellent listener; provides unconditional acceptance of the client; and views the child as competent (O'Hara, 1995). To operationalize these principles, Rogers proposed the following requirements for a counseling relationship (Rogers, 1992):

The counselor and child both recognize that they are together in a therapeutic relationship.

The child is experiencing internalized discrepancies and is psychologically incongruent.

The counselor is congruent and an integrated person. The counselor does not present a façade but is a genuine person there to provide support and assistance for the child.

The counselor provides young clients with unconditional positive regard. There is no point when it is appropriate for the counselor to chastise or point out mistakes the child has made.

The key tool of the counselor is empathy. This type of empathy requires the counselor to sense the child's private world and be able to feel as if the counselor were the child. By entering the student's world, the counselor can sense the individual's angers, fears, and confusion.

Counselors employ **open-ended questions** to help the child-clients enter into a dialogue. Open-ended prompts like "Tell me what is going on in your life this week" prevent the child from giving a one-word answer and encourage a narrative from the student. This and similar openings can begin a **therapeutic dialogue**.

A child-centered therapeutic dialogue involves **active listening**, whereby the full attention of the counselor is focused on the child and what is being expressed. The counselor must be able to recognize exactly what the child is expressing and have the ability to reflect those feelings so the child knows the counselor is “tuned in.” When the counselor is reflecting the understanding he or she has developed, the counselor should use **ownership statements** for those reflective comments. Ownership is shown when the counselor starts a sentence with the word *I*. Comments such as, “I hear you saying that you feel lonely here in school,” or “I think you are saying that you are angry at the limits your mom set for you.”

Through these reflective statements a school counselor can also clarify the student’s feelings and bring a focus to what is confusing or in conflict. Any challenge to the student’s contradictions must be gentle and approached as if for clarification. The response by the counselor must always fit right into the student’s mood and the content of his or her thoughts. Even the tone of the counselor’s voice conveys his or her ability to sense the student’s inner feelings and thoughts.

The student who is being helped by the counselor comes to recognize and accept the counselor’s empathy. The school counselor is able to understand and sense the student’s subjective world and still maintain a professional role apart from that of the student being helped.

Problems With Rogerian Methods in Schools

The problems for a school counselor using the child-centered approach of Carl Rogers can be divided into three areas. First is the problem of working in a school instead of a private office or clinic. On entering into a counseling relationship, students typically test the boundaries of that relationship. This may involve making vicious remarks about teachers or others in the school community. If the counselor makes a nonjudgmental reply, the student may take the counselor’s empathy to imply agreement. Despite any ground rules, this supposed agreement may be reported throughout the school and cause many hard feelings. Working in a school also implies that the counselor must be careful when making an appointment to meet a student. Students must not be taken away from tests or laboratory exercises. The fact that Rogerian counseling may take many sessions and occur over several months can present a tricky scheduling problem for a school counselor. Teachers who see the same student miss time from class to meet the counselor may come to resent both the student and the counselor.

The second problem area is in documenting the value of this method. Terms used to describe the counseling process are vague and not well defined. Rogers was educated in an empirical science and made great efforts to provide operational descriptions for his work, but his model is beguiling in its apparent simplicity

(Pescitelli, 1996; Rogers, 1985). This makes it possible for poor practitioners to think they are providing child-centered therapy when they are not.

The final concern is that the model does not address developmental differences between children at different age levels. It also does not address the problem of when to use Rogerian methods with young children, children with disabilities, and those with significant mental illnesses.

ELLIS'S RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

Everything hangs on one's thinking. A man is as unhappy as he has convinced himself he is.

Seneca

Albert Ellis began his career as a clinical psychologist in the 1940s and soon found the standard course of psychoanalysis to be too inefficient and languid.

CARTOON 6.1 Finding the Time



"I would love to meet with you, but Principal Scott insists I finish all this paperwork today."

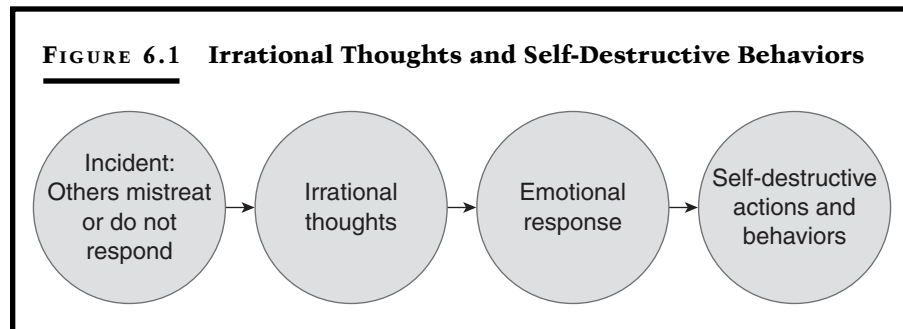
SOURCE: Merv Magus.

Over his first decade as a therapist he developed a different, more confrontational approach to counseling. Ellis began to confront his clients with their irrational beliefs and showed them more rational beliefs and approaches to interacting with the world (Thompson & Henderson, 2007).

Ellis believed that psychological problems are the product of misperceptions and irrational cognitions (Ellis, 2001b). These irrational thought patterns are mostly the product of the clergy, educators, and our parents. In a school setting, Ellis's approach teaches students how to think about their lives in productive and qualitatively better ways. Many elementary and secondary school students are easily upset and experience inappropriate emotional feelings following interactions with others that do not happen in the desired way. These emotions lead to inappropriate and self-destructive patterns of responses. By breaking this sequence and learning different ways to interpret and understand his or her world, the student soon feels better and responds to others in more appropriate ways. This led Ellis to describe his approach to therapy as **rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT)**. Rational thinking leads to appropriate emotions and behavior patterns.

Irrational Thinking

Ellis (2001a) has identified several descriptive terms for the type of irrational thinking that can occur, producing angst, inappropriate emotions, and self-destructive behaviors (Figure 6.1 depicts this sequence).



Irrational thinking personalizes what is not personal, magnifies the importance of what occurred, and focuses on the negative. These terms as employed by counselors are overgeneralizations of any incident in the child's life. They include:

Awfulizing: Using emotionally charged words to describe an incident in your life, such as *awful*, *catastrophic*, *crushing*, *life-altering*, and *disabling*.

Distortions: Creating dichotomies and categorizing everything as either clearly evil or wonderful, good or bad, absolutely disgusting or just right. Nothing exists in the space between the semantic polar opposites. For example, “If I make the second team in basketball, and am not a starter, I am a worthless athlete.”

Can’t-stand-it-itis: Making the emotional assumption that this is something that you can never bear or cope with, and that you have been humiliated, defeated, crushed, or somehow made impotent by this happening.

Musterbating: With highly emotionally laden statements becoming the new Savonarola,⁶ making moralistic demands and telling others what they *must*, *ought*, *should*, *always* (or *never*) be doing. Demanding offenders must be condemned and harshly punished.

Perfectionizing: Assuming that everything about you will always be perfect. Any defeat, no matter how slight, is a major blow. Statements such as “I’m worthless, useless, disgusting, hopeless, unteachable, or stupid.”

These examples of dysfunctional language and the underlying irrational thinking are normally accompanied with emotions that can lead the child to making wrong and self-destructive choices. These emotions involve anger, self-loathing, anxiety, and depression. Examples of this abound in the everyday lives of most students, as is described in Case in Point 6.1.



CASE IN POINT 6.1

A high school senior who is rejected for admission to his or her first choice college and feels like a total failure may exhibit irrational thinking and feel inappropriate emotions. If the student is able to snap back and realize that there are other good choices open for him or her, there is no problem. If the adolescent becomes depressed, is unsure of his or her ability and worth, and is totally miserable, counseling using REBT may be called for.

Likewise, an elementary school student who has experienced the death of a grandfather may be appropriately sad and grieve for the grandparent. If that normal grieving process becomes irrational, the child may lose all zest for life, believe there is nothing more to live for, and express a desire to join Granddaddy in heaven. These thoughts are aberrant and irrational and imply that the child may be helped by REBT.

Thought Question. Reflect on your own life. What major disappointments have you experienced? Write one or two down, then review all the internal conversations you had about what you did and what happened. Make a list of them and try to match them to the five overgeneralizations described by Ellis.

Methods in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

The first phase in REBT involves assessing the problem that is affecting the child. Getting adolescents to express their feelings and describe what they are thinking can involve Rogerian methods. Younger children who lack the ability to explain how they feel or what their thoughts are may require the counselor to employ indirect or fantasy-based methods for therapeutic communication, for example, a puppet play or storytelling (Eppler, Olsen, & Hidano, 2009). In this assessment the counselor is listening for irrational thinking that may be highlighted by the use of language patterns described previously.

Once the problem has been identified, the next task for the counselor is to find its parameters. This includes the intensity of the distress the child is experiencing, how long it has been going on, and how frequently it occurs. The issue of frequency can provide the counselor insight into what triggers the child's distress.

ABCDEs of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

The two linked goals of REBT are first to have the child recognize how his or her thinking is not rational and the conclusions being reached are wrong. The second is to reeducate the child in new thinking patterns and a more rational way of seeing the world around him. To do this, Ellis proposed a series of steps for the counselor to follow in helping the child (Ellis & Bernard, 1983). These steps involve:

- A. Identifying the activating event
- B. Identifying irrational beliefs or cognitions about step A
- C. Identifying the consequences for the irrational beliefs (emotions and feelings)
- D. Disputing the irrational beliefs
- E. Employing effective, new, more rational thinking about the original activating incident

The following scenario is based on a problem that can happen when a student romance breaks up.

- A. Girl receives a rejection from the first boy for whom she feels romantic love.
He wants to date others; she thought they were “going steady.”
- B. Student is crushed by the “break-up” and feels it is all her fault.

- C. Student feels anger at the boy and has feelings of self-loathing and depression.
- D. Counselor disputes her analysis showing that no one is at fault, and she is a worthy person who is liked by others.
- E. Girl replaces irrational thinking in B with a realization that she is a competent and likeable person who can make and keep friends and that other boys are available.

Strengths of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

Perhaps the greatest advantage to using REBT in public school counseling programs is the fact that it can be carried out in a short time frame. The approach is one that is easy for children to latch onto and to employ when other problems arise in their futures. Thus, REBT not only helps a child experiencing a problem, but also provides a method for self-help in the future.

BECK'S COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY IN SCHOOL COUNSELING ●

Aaron Beck, a pioneer in **cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**, has modified the REBT model of Alfred Ellis by making it less confrontational and providing a strong basis in science for its techniques (Beck, 1979; Sussman, 2006). Beck has labeled the irrational thoughts described by Ellis as **automatic thoughts**. His approach to therapy is assisting the client in setting goals for interacting in the world and then reaching them by changing the distortions in cognition or automatic thoughts.

Automatic thoughts occur and run parallel to the person's ongoing interactions in the world. For example, a child sees several other children laughing and has automatic thoughts of being the butt of their humor, a person so unworthy as to be laughed at. These thoughts lead to negative emotions, loss of self-esteem, and self-defeating behaviors such as avoidance of others. The counselor's task is to teach new ways of thinking (Goode, 2000).

Methods of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

As is true of all counseling, interventions using CBT begin with a trusting relationship between counselor and student. The first CBT counseling session is a time for the counselor to work collaboratively with the student to set goals for the counseling. Questions such as, "At the end of counseling, how would you

like to be different than you are now?” These goals are then prioritized and an agenda is developed (Sussman, 2006).

Counselors begin sessions by reviewing the agenda and identifying goals for the session. It is also common to ask open-ended questions or prompts such as, “What happened this week?” or “Describe everything you do on a typical non-school day from getting up until bedtime,” or “Describe what mood state you are in now.”

The core of the counseling is teaching the student-client to challenge inaccurate beliefs. One technique is to teach students in therapy how to think like scientists. For example, with the case of the student who believed he or she was being laughed at, the counselor would ask the student how he or she knew that was true. “What are the chances they were laughing at a joke, or at something else?” By learning new ways of thinking through situations, the student learns a new, more positive way of approaching problems. This learned way of thinking must then be practiced between counseling sessions. This is where counselors assign **homework**. The child should write down all the incidents that came up in the time between sessions and when he or she challenged old automatic thinking with a more scientific way of understanding what happened. This may be recorded in e-mail entries that are forwarded to the school counselor between sessions. During the next counseling session, review of the homework provides information for further counseling using CBT.

Advantage of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Schools

The CBT approach of Aaron Beck is less labor-intensive for the counselor. The total number of sessions needed for most problems is about 10. These can occur every week at first, then become more and more separated in time as the student improves. Another advantage is the approach has been proven to work and provide an efficacious approach to counseling. The system has elaborated approaches for many different problems (depression, anxiety, personality problems, etc.) that counselors may encounter that have been tested and demonstrated to be effective (Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2004).

● GLASSER’S REALITY THERAPY SUPPORTED BY CHOICE THEORY IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

The therapeutic model developed by William Glasser is one based on choices we make in our relationships with others. Glasser (1998) believes that inappropriate behaviors that lead a student to the counselor’s office are the

student's best efforts to cope with unpleasant relationship(s) and/or the failure of the student to meet his or her needs. The task of the school counselor is to help the student choose new relationship-building behaviors and to identify and use appropriate ways to meet his or her needs.

The counselor does not explore how the student may have been traumatized in the past; the focus of counseling is on the here-and-now. Part of the here-and-now is accepting consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Students will try to avoid this reality, and part of the counselor's job is to provide reality therapy. Counselors using reality therapy recognize that the only behavior each of us controls is our own. Thus, Glasser rejects the basic premise of behaviorism as mechanistic and hurting productive relationships in education; however, the word *behavior* plays an important role in the counseling process. Glasser also avoids the use of terms such as *mental illness* or *disorder*.

Glasser wants counselors to see their role as teaching students better ways to meet their needs and build more satisfying relationships. Reality therapy holds that all behavior is directed toward satisfying one or several of five universal, basic (inborn) needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Glasser, 2000). Students do not turn to counselors for help when they are in jeopardy for not surviving; that is the province of medicine. Of the remaining four needs, the need for power is central in most conflicts in school. While the five basic needs provide the motivation for all human behavior, Glasser's concept of **Quality World** describes the specific motivation for what we do. Quality World is composed of images (mental pictures) of all of the people, objects, and values that make up our vision of a good life. For each of us, our Quality World is unique; the five basic needs are universal.

Choice Theory

Glasser proposed that all people are responsible for the choices they make and that those choices can be modified by the school counselor. Choice theory is based on 10 axioms. The following statements are based on those 10 axioms.

1. The only behavior I can control is my own.
2. All anyone can give another person is information.
3. At heart, long-lasting psychological problems are problems of relationships.
4. The problem relationship is always part of our present life and linked to our behaviors.

5. Problems in our past inform what we are today, but we can only satisfy our basic needs right now and plan to continue satisfying them in the future.
6. We can only satisfy our needs by satisfying the pictures (our visualizations) in our Quality World.
7. All we do is behave.
8. All behavior is made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology.
9. Of these, only acting and thinking are under the individual's direct control. We can only control our feeling and physiology indirectly through how we choose to act and think.
10. All behavior is designated by verbs and named by the part that is the most recognizable.

Methods of Reality Therapy and Choice Theory in School Counseling

The goal of counselors is to improve the choices students make in their relationships. This involves replacing “deadly habits,” including blaming, complaining, criticizing, nagging, punishing, threatening, and bribing with more positive approaches to interrelating with others. These positive approaches include supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting, and negotiating as equals when there are differences.

The counselor following Glasser's approach would follow the following seven steps:

1. Build a good relationship. This is the starting point for all theories and approaches to counseling.
2. Examine the current behavior. The counselor can introduce questions such as, “What are you doing?” or “How are you approaching the issue of . . . ?”
3. Evaluate whether the behavior is helpful or not. Ask questions such as, “Is what you are doing making it possible for you to get what you want?” or “So how is it working out?”
4. Develop alternative strategies with the student by brainstorming ideas and alternatives. Ask questions such as, “What other approaches could you try?”

5. Make a commitment to try selected alternatives. Ask questions such as, “Which alternative approach will you try?”
6. At a later time, examine the effectiveness of the commitment—no punishment and no excuses. Ask questions such as, “When will you do this?” or “Do you have a planned time when you will do this?”
7. Accept the logical and natural consequences of the behavior. Do not become discouraged; persevere with the student. Giving up on the student is not an option.

GROUP COUNSELING ●

School administrators often burden school counselors with large caseloads and many expectations for expert assistance. The ability to employ group counseling methods can greatly improve the efficiency of the counselor and make it possible to assist many more children.

Group Theory

Each of the major theorists in counseling has endorsed the use of groups, starting with Alfred Adler (Drinkmeyer, Pew, & Drinkmeyer, 1979). The psychotherapy model of Adler assumed that there was a social need within us all that longed for acceptance and approval from others. Students with emotional problems have generally been unable to interact with others in successful ways. **Psychoeducational groups** guided by the school counselor can teach students social skills and give them their first opportunities to be successful (Papanek, 1970). Carl Rogers (1970) wrote positively about instituting what he described as **encounter groups** in schools and other educational institutions (p. 155). Alfred Ellis supported group approaches to REBT, believing that groups can give students accurate feedback about irrational thoughts and help them try different roles and approaches to problem solving (Ellis, 1982).

Methods of Group Counseling

Counseling in the schools must match the developmental levels and needs of students (DeLucia-Waack, 2006). Before fifth grade, students have limited attention spans and are bound by a form of linear logic that emphasizes

deductive reasoning and makes insight impossible (Gray, 2006; Piaget, 1953/1936, 1970). Group counseling with students at this developmental level should be focused on concrete issues that are easy to grasp and discuss. Primary-level groups should be limited to four members or fewer. Eight is the maximum for middle and high school students in a counseling group that a counselor should lead.

There are three major psychoeducational group types that a school counselor may make part of the school's counseling program (Goodnough & Lee, 2004). These are groups that encourage growth, improve school climate, and reformative groups.

Groups to Encourage Growth

There are a number of ongoing concerns students will experience as they grow and move through the grades. These groups can be focused on normal transitions that occur such as middle school to high school to college. Another focus may be on personal development, such as improving studying habits, taking

PHOTO 6.3 Group Counseling With Teenagers



SOURCE: © Istockphoto.com/JeanellNorvell.

better class notes, improving grades by using time productively, or learning to set goals and prioritizing.

Groups to Improve School Climate

These groups are established with the goal of making life better for all in a school community. The groups may be part of a program to control bullying or hazing behaviors, improve student morale, improve interracial understanding, promote tolerance, or establish support programs related to service learning experiences. (See Chapter 8 for more on counseling with diverse populations.)

Reformative Groups

These groups are established to assist students in learning to cope with difficult personal problems. Groups can address issues of individual identity, family problems (divorce, separation, grieving and bereavement), addictions, abusive families, anger management, sibling rivalry, and the host of other issues children and adolescents face growing up. These groups are also important tools for helping a school community overcome a common tragedy. Deadly violence in schools is lower today than in the 1990s, but students continue to be killed in car crashes and in other devastating accidents. Group counseling can provide immediate help for young people feeling confusion and pain.

Group Process

The use of groups by the school counselor is the most effective intervention available for most problems among adolescents (Shallcross, 2010). The key to a good psychoeducational group is a well-trained counselor who possesses sterling leadership skills. Prior to the first group session, it is best if the counselor meets individually with each student who will participate. This meeting can help the counselor and student by identifying and clarifying the student's goals in becoming part of the group. The counselor can also review rules for the group: (1) all meetings are confidential, (2) no one ever gets laughed at or teased in or outside the group, (3) each member listens very carefully to what each other member is saying, and (4) meetings start and end on time.

After ground rules are set, the first session with a new group usually needs a group activity designed to be an icebreaker and way to allow group members to get to know and trust one another. These students will know of each other as “kids” in the same school but will not know them the way members of a psychoeducational group eventually will.

Ideas for First Session Icebreakers

In several small pill cups, place four or five M&Ms in each cup and give one of these small cups of candy to each student, with instructions not to eat any yet. Next have the youngsters take turns sharing with the group something about themselves that others *do not* know. After their shared confidence, each gets to eat one M&M and then nominate another student to reveal a confidential component of his or her life and have an M&M afterward. Only when the child shares with others does he or she get to eat an M&M. If the group has more time and is into the activity, the counselor can provide yet more candy for those who wish to continue sharing.

For older students, icebreakers can be more abstract. For example, "Pretend the group was in a plane that went down on a deserted island. Each person is given the opportunity to take one item with them as they exit the plane before it catches fire. What object would you take? Why?" The counselor can have each person write down or draw their answer on a tablet, and then one at a time share their selected object and provide a reason for its selection.

The Internet offers many icebreaker ideas for counselors. One good site for these is www.icebreakers.ws.com. Another is www.icebreakers.us.com.

For each group session, the leader should have a plan of what he or she wishes to accomplish and provide exercises to facilitate reaching his or her goal. Counselors should be careful to notice and reinforce when the group is showing cohesion and support for one or more of its members. This is a good sign of the group's health. Leaders should note to themselves indications of the group developing norms. These are never expressed but always present in a working group. **Group norms** become evident when a student violates one, for example, when a student "disses" the group by putting ear buds in his or her ears and finds that others in the group are unhappy with his or her behavior.

The final group session can happen when the leader feels that the group has made all the progress possible or may have been built in as the plan for the group and spelled out in advance. Students from cohesive and well-functioning groups may feel grief and loss at its ending. The task of easing children through the transition of being in a group to not being in a group must be planned. This requires that counseling time be set aside to review the group's progress and the individual progress of its members. The final session should also have the participants complete an evaluation activity. For example, write short notes

complimenting each of the other group members and telling each person what about them the author likes the most. These can be shared and included in the counselor's final group meeting.

Counselors may keep a diary of their observations following each group session. These can be reviewed prior to the next session, but not shown to or directly shared with the group. It is best to keep the existence of these notes *sub rosa*. Remember that all such notes are considered to be official school records, and can be reviewed by the parents of participants and subpoenaed by all courts.

Pragmatic Considerations

The organization, structure, and culture of most middle and high schools are not conducive to the practice of group counseling. Detailed planning and careful implementation is required to make a successful program of psychoeducational group counseling possible. For example, a group can be formed of students sharing a study hall period together.

Structural concerns are linked to the problem of scheduling. To plan a group counseling schedule, it is first necessary to introduce students and faculty to the advantages and goals of group counseling. This step is consistent with the requirement of the ASCA national framework that school counseling programs be linked to the school's mission and philosophy model (ASCA/Hatch & Bowers, 2005, p. 98).

The faculty can be approached during their regular inservice program and students met in their classes. Faculty must be assured of the importance of group counseling and also have the goals for the group counseling programs made available to them. At the end of the school year, a report to the faculty should be made by the counselors' office that provides summative statistics on the impact of group counseling during the school year.

First-year high school students will need a longer introduction to the school's group counseling program options than will students who have been introduced to group counseling in previous years. To quantify the needs for group counseling, the school counselor should design an easily understood survey of needs to be administered to all students. After the introduction, all students must sign and return the survey to the counselor at the close of the meeting. By requiring all students to return the survey, no one will be aware of which students requested services. The survey form should summarize how the group will meet weekly for the quarter (8 weeks) and last a full class period. Focus topics for the various groups being contemplated can be presented on the surveys, for example, "Kids of divorce or marital separation,"

“Effective study skills,” “Coping with grief and bereavement,” “Getting into and paying for college,” or “Quitting smoking.” The survey should ask students for other ideas for needed groups. Planning counseling programs based on empirical data also meets a mandate of the national framework (ASCA/Hatch & Bowers, 2005, pp. 53–54).

Careful administrative support, including school policies making it a requirement that teachers let students scheduled for counseling attend the session without penalty, is the bottom line (Ripley & Goodnough, 2001). This requires that the counselors agree to insist that no student can wander the halls and must report to the counseling suite on time.

Another concession is to make it possible for outside professional counselors to be used as co-therapists in the school counseling groups. Outside counselors can bring important expertise to groups in areas such as the integration of juvenile offenders, drug and alcohol addictions, family relationships, living with a sexually transmitted disease (STD), or financial management and planning, and nutritional counselors can consult on healthy living choices.

● SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF COUNSELING

Time constraints on school counselors make approaches to service delivery involving only a few sessions very appealing. This need for more counseling in less time may explain the rapid expansion in the use of **solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC)** in schools (Lewis & Sieber, 1997). Some counselors have found that even single-session counseling can produce significant improvement for students receiving counseling (Littrell, Malia, Nichols, Olson, Nesselhuf, & Crandell, 1992).

The whole approach is predicated on five assumptions:

1. Concentrate on success [that which works] and change in needed areas will occur.
2. Every problem has a time when it is not present or doesn't happen. Use those times to formulate a solution.
3. Small changes in how the student behaves have a large ripple effect on others in his or her environment.
4. Students being counseled have what is needed to resolve their problems. Counselors must concentrate on those strengths and successes.
5. Always work toward positive goals. (Sklare, 2005)

Methods of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling

In using SFBC, the first session is a time for establishing good rapport and developing clear positive outcome goals between the student-client and counselor. To assist in this, the counselor may ask positive outcome questions. One of these is, “If a magic wand was waved over your head and solved your problem, what would be different?” The counselor asks follow-up questions such as, “If you were getting along better with other kids, what would you notice that you were doing differently?” The student’s answer to these questions can help clarify the answer into a positive goal statement.

Goals

The best goals are behavioral and easily demonstrated and operationalized (Parsons, 2009; Paslay, 1995). Positive goals state what the student will be doing as opposed to vague goal statements such as “I want to do better on tests.” The goal could provide behavioral change and be developed by the student by the counselor asking, “If you were on the road to better test grades, what would you be doing that would show that?”

Goals must never be *negative*, taking the form of either “wanting to stop doing something” or “wanting others to stop doing something.” To turn these into positive goals, counselors would reply, “If you were not doing ___ (describe what the student should not be doing), then what would you be doing instead/differently/or what would you start doing?” (Sklare, 2005, p. 25).

Harmful goals involving rule breaking, illegal activities, or harming one’s self or others must be avoided. Turning these into positive goal statements requires the counselor to help reframe the student’s goal in a positive way to meet his or her needs. A question that can help reframe a harmful goal idea is, “What’s the reason you want (don’t want) to . . . ?”

Students making “I don’t know” or “I have no idea” their first goal statement are expressing resistance to the process. This can be recast in positive terms by asking, “If you did know, what . . . ?” or “If you did have an idea, what . . . ?”

In setting goals, **identify exceptions**. When a student uses non-absolute terms, for example, *sometimes*, *almost always*, *usually*, or *generally*, they are indicating moments when they are successful. Focus on those positive moments and help the student clarify what is working for him or her. Also, use **mind mapping** to assist the student in identifying what he or she was doing differently when success of the identified exception was experienced. Counselors should be cheerleaders for the student by verbally rewarding these successes with praise. The final concern in goal setting is making its success measurable. This **scaling** task involves asking the student to give a numerical level to the degree he or she

experiences the problem (1, lowest, to 10, highest). With each subsequent visit, the student is asked about the level of this problem. Any positive movement seen should spark praise for progress and questions of what is being done differently.

By having specific, measurable, behavioral goals and focusing on what is improving, the counselor may not need to see the student more than five or seven times after the initial session. The student is doing all the “heavy lifting.” The counselor should ask the student to do a vague sort of homework between sessions. This involves writing down incidents that occurred where he or she tried out the new behavior and what happened. As with other approaches, this can be facilitated by instant communication or standard e-mail entries open to the counselor. These reports then become a focus of the subsequent sessions.

Relaxation Therapy

One brief therapeutic method that school counselors can employ with students in a group or workshop session is mind-body relaxation to reduce stress. This therapy can be effective at all grade levels, and there is anecdotal evidence that the techniques can improve scores on high-stakes tests (E. Ramirez, 2009). One relaxation method involves daily yoga exercise for 10 minutes each day in homeroom. This is done in more than 40 of the schools around the city of Chicago. Another approach is the use of deep muscle relaxation and breathing exercises. This approach is being successfully employed in the Boston area.

Both approaches need to be designed by experts in the field. Yoga instructors are certified by a national organization and must complete a 700-hour training sequence focused on anatomy, philosophy, sequencing, and alignment (see <http://yoga.about.com/od/yogaenthusiast/a/teachertraining.htm>). Relaxation training is part of the education of most clinical psychologists. The school’s psychologist may be able to teach this program to counselors, who can then lead sessions.

What does not kill me makes me stronger.

Friedrich Nietzsche

● STRENGTHS-BASED COUNSELING IN THE SCHOOLS

Strengths-based school counseling (SBSC) is a recent approach to meeting the support needs for all students, but especially those who are at risk for psychological and educational problems (Smith, 2006a). (See Case in Point 6.2.)

As a model, it is based on building on the strength of clients to inoculate them against problems and difficulties in their lives. The strengths-based approach has been a regular part of the practice of social work for a number of decades (Saleebey, 2008). In school counseling, this is a prevention-focused approach to helping children (Galassi, Griffin, & Akos, 2008).⁷ The model is truly an integrative one, incorporating a number of other approaches, including the needs model of Maslow, Rogerian counseling methods, and social work practice.



CASE IN POINT 6.2

Chris, my old tennis partner and member of our faculty, is about my age. He and I both grew up in large old East Coast cities and attended public schools. My life was well charted; I lived in an extended family of achievement-oriented strivers. His was not so clear. Chris, an African American, was raised in public housing in a city that at the time had the highest infant mortality and crime rates in the state. He never knew his father, and his mother, a laborer, raised him alone. Somehow they were able to put him through college. On graduation he became an officer in the U.S. Navy and later the Fleet Marines. After the war in Vietnam, he became a teacher; a few years later he earned a doctor of education degree and eventually became a tenured professor.

Most of the community around him when he grew up was in ruins, and most of those young people he knew as a youth have been caught up in the justice system, few graduated high school, and fewer yet went on to college. Cases such as this true story of Chris are the focus of SBSC.

Thought Question. Reflect on the people you know, including extended family members. Identify one or two and describe the special strengths they possess that made it possible for them to become fulfilled persons.

The role of the school counselor is to identify those special strengths and resilient factors in the life of a student and help him or her recognize those factors and build on them (Smith, 2006a). Students can beat the odds by confronting the world with all its problems using their strengths and resolve (Ungar, 2006; Ungar, Lee, Callaghan, & Boothroyd, 2005).

Strengths and Resiliency Factors

Strengths that contribute to a student's resilience have been organized by researchers Christopher Peterson (2006) and Martin E. P. Seligman (2004) into

a list of six core strength of character factors covering a total of 24 dimensions (Haidt, 2005; Novotney, 2009b). According to Peterson (2006, pp. 142–146) these include:

1. *Strengths of wisdom and knowledge*, made up of creativity, curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, and having a broad perspective
2. *Strengths of courage*, composed of factors of truthfulness and authenticity, bravery and the courage to speak out when needed, persistence in the face of obstacles, and the feeling of being alive and full of zest
3. *Strengths of humanity*, including factors of kindness (helping others), being caring and loving, and having good social intelligence
4. *Strengths of justice*, involving an unbiased fairness in all matters, leadership and the ability to have others want to follow, group loyalty, and a true spirit of teamwork and team building
5. *Strengths of temperance*, comprising avoiding vengeance and being forgiving and merciful, modesty and true feelings of humility, prudence in both actions taken and words spoken, and being disciplined and self-regulated in actions and appetites
6. *Strengths of transcendence*, including an appreciation of natural beauty and excellence in the arts, spirituality and a recognition of one's place in the universe, hope and a sense of optimism, a sense of humor (without ridicule) and enjoyment of life's incongruities, and a strong sense of hope and optimism

It has been argued that four strengths can be added to this list (Smith, 2006b), including a seventh involving problem solving and analytical reasoning. This dimension includes most higher-order thinking skills. An eighth is an ability to make money and support one's self and others. The ninth includes the ability to work within the community's structures to obtain needed support and assistance. The 10th and final one includes survival strengths, including avoidance of pain and the provision of physiological and physical survival needs.

The ethnic heritage of a student can also be a resiliency factor and provide strength for developing coping mechanisms. Enrique Neblett Jr. and his colleagues have found that African American students holding an **Africentric worldview** have a protective mechanism for maintaining ego strength and coping with stress (Neblett, Hammond, Seaton, & Townsend, 2010).

Methods of Strengths-Based Counseling

As in all counseling, the first step in strengths-based school counseling is the development of a healthy therapeutic relationship with the student. Beyond the normal counseling skills, this requires a significant reservoir of optimism and a belief in the student's ability to improve (Morris & Usher, 2010).

While developing a good counseling relationship, the school counselor's second step is to begin to identify the student's strengths and special factors that make him or her resilient. This can start with having the student relate his or her life story.

The third step in SBSC is for the counselor to help the student clarify the nature of the problem that the therapy **counseling intervention** will address. A few simple questions can facilitate this step, including, "If there is one question you were hoping I would ask you, what would it be?" Another is, "Tell me your take on the problem. What is your theory about what is going on?"

Once the problem is understood and clarified, the counselor initiates therapeutic dialogues designed to instill feelings of hope and provide encouragement for the student. In this phase, praise is to be avoided, as it is a component of a contingency system that places the counselor in a judgmental role. Rather, helping the child see the possibilities for success provides encouragement. This can involve having the student retell his life story, casting himself as a survivor whose cunning and daring made it possible to survive.

Next, the school counselor works with the student to identify solutions to his or her problem. The conversation avoids discussing the problem and addresses solutions. Having ideas about solutions is a hopeful and optimistic mind-set. Finding solutions is done in much the same way as solutions-focused counselors have students explore exceptions or times when their problems do not occur. This makes it possible to identify functional answers in the search for effective strategies the student can employ. When appropriate strategies are identified, the school counselor can work to enhance the student's strengths and resilience factors. Elsie Smith (2006a) has proposed that discussing the student's ability to forgive others can reduce the anger and resentment that he or she may feel.

The various strengths that the counselor identified in the student can now be discussed. Therapy can focus on ways those strengths can be used to improve the student's competence, problem-solving ability, and resilience. By emphasizing strengths, the counselor provides the student with a sense of his or her ability to take charge of his or her own life and not be victimized. By being a survivor (one who overcomes problems) and having a survivor's mentality, the

young person can feel very good about him- or herself and experience improvement in self-esteem and **self-efficacy**. Through strengths-based school counseling, a student can learn a new way to cope with life and be empowered as his or her own agent of change.

● VIRTUAL COUNSELING

The whole nature of schools and the role of school counselors are about to be changed in a dramatic way. The cause of this phenomenal educational metamorphosis is the sudden growth of technology-based distance education and the growth of **virtual schools**. Yet, most school counselor organizations have not realized what the future holds (Dahir, 2009).

The strength of this technology movement can be seen in its impact on other areas. Up until 2002, there was a clear trend toward continuing growth in **homeschooling** in the United States (Vaughn, 2003). That trend has been reversed by the growth in enrollment in virtual schools (“Home-school enrollment falters,” 2005).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been following the growth of virtual education and charted the rapid expansion taking place with both virtual elementary and secondary schools (Zanderberg, Lewis, & Greene, 2008). The federal report demonstrated that by 2005, 37% of all school districts had students attending virtual schools. The growth rate was about 60% in a 2-year span of time. Virtual schools have been able to grow this quickly by using the regulations of charter schools in many states. As a case in point, in Pennsylvania there are 11 licensed virtual charter schools enrolling nearly 20,000 students (Kurutz, 2009). In a fully staffed public school system, 40 or more school counselors would serve that number of students. Yet, in these virtual schools, there is only one school counselor providing direct service to the students. One large school system in Broward County, Florida, has created positions of virtual school counselors to assist students attending virtual classes from home (see www.bved.net/guidance.html). The Commonwealth of Virginia created a counseling program open to students attending virtual schools from Virginia. The *Virginia Handbook* for this virtual counseling system is available at www.virtualvirginia.org/educators/downloads/Counselor_Handbook_2008.pdf; the counseling program can be accessed from www.virtualvirginia.org/about/counselors.shtml.

The reasons that these virtual schools are growing so rapidly are related to several deep-seated parental concerns. For one, parents are concerned about the “bad influences” their children will meet in public schools. Related to this is a

parallel concern about bullies, the presence of drugs and alcohol on campus, and a felt need to control all aspects of their child's life (Vaughn & Wright, 2004). Another large subgroup of parents feel that public schools are far too secular and fail to teach and reinforce the religious values they teach at home. Other parents appreciate the fact that students can learn at their own pace and schedule (Slater, 2009).

Methods of Virtual Counseling

The use of online systems to provide individual and group counseling is amenable to several theoretical approaches, including solution-based counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy, and Rogerian and Adlerian counseling. The use of private chat rooms can facilitate group counseling (Anthony & Nagel, 2010).

Implications of Virtual Counseling

The implications for this trend are obvious. Counselors should become proactive and have state education departments require that counselors for virtual schools be licensed in their states. The technology for this is available, including video cameras on computers for individual counseling and the ability to use conference technology to conduct virtual psychoeducational counseling sessions.

Cyber-based virtual schools have the potential for being dangerous for students. Enrollment in a virtual school is typically done online. This can provide a back door into a seemingly child-safe environment for dangerous individuals who wish to harm young people. Students in virtual schools can contact each other either through the school's system or through social networking. The use of Facebook and other social networking can also be a problem for students, counselors, and teachers (Manning, 2010). Close monitoring is clearly needed in virtual education programs, but it is rarely provided.

Many virtual schools are for-profit and work from a business model. The following is an excerpt from a 2009 online advertisement for a counselor or advisor for a virtual charter school:

We are creating a high-tech approach to educational support and expect our counselor to have superior customer service skills and a commitment and desire to provide the best experience possible for students and families.

The advertisement went on to list tasks including:

Be responsible for the logistics of just-in-time support and training in the form of e-blasts and electronic newsletters, and provide support for students with school set-up, first log-in, computer set-up/navigation and materials issues.

These tasks are not taught in the curriculum of any graduate counselor education program in 2010 and are not part of the professional standards for the field.

SUMMARY

A central skill for school counselors is the ability to actively listen to students and truly understand the feelings of distress and emotional responses they are experiencing. The first modern counselor advocating a child-centered form of counseling was Carl Rogers. His writings have influenced the course of psychotherapy in America and represent the “third force” in psychology. Rogers was greatly influenced by a neo-Freudian, Otto Rank. Another significant neo-Freudian of the 20th century was Alfred Adler, a therapist who included the important role played by groups and society in the structure of each individual’s personality.

Neo-behavioral approaches have provided school counselors with techniques that teach students different ways to think about problems and challenges they confront in life. One of these theories, rational emotive behavioral therapy, developed by Albert Ellis, provides students with new ways to understand the world around them and also new methods to solve personal problems in the future. In a similar way, Aaron Beck’s cognitive behavioral therapy teaches student-clients to challenge inappropriate thinking by using a hypothesis-testing approach stressing scientific logic. A third neo-behavioral system is the control theory and reality therapy of William Glasser. This approach emphasizes the link between the child’s actions and the reality of the outcomes.

Group counseling is an effective method that can both be more time efficient for school counselors and employ peer influence in the therapeutic relationship. Time efficiency is an advantage to the counseling approach of solution-focused brief counseling. The strengths-based school counseling model is a cross-over set of methods adapted from the practice of social work. Strengths-based counselors are proactive in their efforts to build up the inner resolve and strengths of students as a way of inoculating them against potential problems.

The future of school counseling is not clear, as the nature of schools is evolving rapidly. There is a need to address the problem of providing the services of school counselors in a virtual school environment. Children exist in the real world, but many schools now exist in a cyberworld. Counseling is needed for the real-world students but must be delivered through cyberspace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the 19 core propositions of Carl Rogers seem to hold a special meaning for you? Explain why that proposition resonates within you.
2. Review the four forms of behavior problems described in Adlerian counseling as common among preadolescents. Which do you believe to be the most difficult for a counselor to improve? How would you address that problem with an 8-year-old child?
3. Which form of reinforcement (positive or negative) works best with students? Why do you believe that? Provide several examples of each.
4. Reflect on your own “automatic thinking.” What thoughts do you experience in social situations when you meet new people?
5. What advantages and disadvantages does a virtual school’s counselor experience?
6. Reflect a bit on your own life and background. What are the strengths that you will bring to the profession of school counseling? What do you see as your areas for further development in working as a school counselor?
7. Reflect upon the boundaries you want to establish as a high school counselor. For example, will parents be allowed to call you by your first name? How about your student-clients? Make a list of what you see as being the boundaries you will insist on in your school counseling practice.

RELATED READINGS

- Beck, A. T., Freeman, A., & Davis, D. D. (2003). *Cognitive therapy of personality disorders* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Belgrave, F. Z., & Allison, K. W. (2006). *African American psychology: From Africa to America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- DeLucia-Waack, J. L. (2006). *Leading psychoeducational groups for children and adolescents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glasser, W. (1986). *Control theory in the classroom*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Rogers, C. R. (2007). *Counseling and psychotherapy: Newer concepts in practice*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sklare, G. B. (2005). *Brief counseling that works: A solution-focused approach for school counselors and administrators* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Vernon, A. (2006). *Thinking, feeling, behaving: An emotional education curriculum for children/grades 1–6* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Vernon, A. (2006). *Thinking, feeling, behaving: An emotional education curriculum for adolescents/grades 7–12* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

NOTES

1. The exceptions are that the student cannot ask the counselor to keep illegal or threatening (toward self or others) information confidential.
2. Reading about counseling provides a general background. To actually do the work of counseling requires supervised experiences following specific training in the techniques being used.
3. Diane Albright (1994) presented this quote in an article titled, “An Unexpected Gift.”
4. Leta Stetter Hollingworth completed her graduate work in psychology at Columbia University under Edward Thorndike. In 1916 she began a long career as a professor at Teachers College of Columbia University, where she founded and administered the School for Exceptional Children. She is most known for her activism in support of women’s rights and her groundbreaking studies of gifted children.
5. In the early writings Rogers used the term *client-centered*, but by the 1960s he began using the term *person-centered*. This difference was made to make the term sound less formal and more focused on the individual involved. I have taken the liberty to modify this presentation using the word *student-centered* or *child-centered* as a way to distinguish counseling in the schools.
6. Girolamo Savonarola was a Dominican priest who was the leader of 15th-century Florence. He was known as being opposed to the art and literature of the Renaissance and burned many books. His strong moral code led him in opposition to the Borgia pope, Alexander VI, and what he saw as corrupt clergy. Today his name has entered the lexicon as an adjective for a person with a severe moral code and the need to enforce it on others. In view of his passion for book burning, his excommunication and execution by immolation in 1498 is a bit of an irony.
7. This preventative approach is a good fit with the ASCA national framework.