

HOW COUNSELING IS DONE

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New developments in psychology have re-established the dignity and worth of the individual's personality. The practical psychologist appearing in the role of the counselor helps the individual solve his own personality problems by self-effort and understanding. In the following article, the author explains with special reference to the Counseling Centre at the University of Chicago, the role of the counselor and how he handles the therapeutic technique of non-directive counseling.

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There has been a growing interest in non-directive therapy during the past few years and especially so since the Counseling Centre was organized at the University of Chicago in 1946. The Counseling Centre at the University of Chicago is dedicated to the practice of non-directive therapy and to extensive research in that field. Because this is so we are often confronted with questions asking why we confine our counseling to the technique known as non-directive or client centred to the exclusion of all other types of counseling? What is this non-directive counseling? What is the basic philosophy underlying this treatment? What are the basic principles that are applied to create the non-directive relationship? What is the role of the non-directive counselor? What type of client is able to utilize this sort of counseling? What use do we make of tests at our Counseling Centre? What are we doing in research? An attempt is made here to answer some of these questions.

Why do we confine our counseling to the now-directive technique?—Because we believe, from our experience, that this is the most effective method of helping individuals achieve personal adjustment, and because this belief is backed by an accumulating amount of evidence that this is so, and because our research amplifies and objectifies our basic hypotheses. In addition to these reasons, when a counselor has accurately grasped the basic philosophy underlying this method, and when it has become an integral part of his thinking,

then he can use no other technique because it would violate this basic philosophy and by its very inconsistency create only confusion and conflict in the client. This is perhaps the one point that is hardest of all to understand and I should like to emphasize the need for consistency on the part of the counselor, if he is to create the relationship necessary for successful non-directive counseling.

What is this non-directive counseling?—It is an *experience* for an individual who is seeking help with a personal adjustment problem which enables him to look squarely at himself, gain an understanding of himself, learn to accept himself. Then, after the individual has clarified his self-concept, he is able to chart his own course of action in a more positive and constructive manner. He leaves the counseling experience with more than an answer to a specific problem. He has gained self-respect, self-confidence, and emotional maturity. In the relationship that is created between the client and the counselor the client assumes the responsibility for himself; the strong curative forces that are within each individual are released. The client grows more mature psychologically, through this experience.

What is the basic philosophy underlying non-directive therapy?—Our basic philosophy stresses a deep respect for the integrity of the individual—a respect that *is* so honest that it transcends age, problem, or situation. This same philosophy and underlying principles are utilized as fully in non-

directive play therapy, the only difference being that there the child's natural medium for self-expression is his free, undirected play rather than verbalization across the counseling table. And it is there, in play therapy experiences with very young, emotionally deprived children that we can really see the force of this drive for self-realization and maturity so crystal clear. I can recall many cases of children—neglected by their parents, deprived of what we have considered basic needs for every individual, facing what seemed to be unbearable problems—who through non-directive play therapy were somehow strengthened sufficiently to meet these problems and who emerged from the therapy more mature, independent and adjusted. If a young child can work through serious problems by means of non-directive therapy, then surely an adult is as capable of doing so, too.

I have worked with individuals whose problems centred around their acceptance of a severe physical handicap—and I refer specifically to a young girl who was a spastic—a victim of cerebral palsy—and through a series of non-directive counseling interviews she worked through her emotional problems and finally came to grips with her handicap. She asked herself: Was she a handicap? or was she a person? And at first she thought that by sheer will power she could overcome the muscular incoordination and she attempted to control muscles that would not be controlled. Then followed the insight that her personality was within herself—something apart from her physical handicap—and with that insight came self-acceptance, self-direction, and more positive and constructive attitudes.

I have worked with children and adults who seemed to have three strikes against them from the beginning because their environment or family relationships were

so negative—and yet, without manipulating the environment in the slightest degree, those individuals have been able to meet those situations in a very constructive manner and did something about it themselves.

A counselor's accumulating experience reinforces his confidence in this procedure. And when our research keeps pace with our experience then we are better able to evaluate it scientifically and able also to perfect our technique.

Our basic philosophy is based upon this concept: The individual has within himself this strong growth drive. The individual learns first to know himself, accept himself, achieve self-respect and self-confidence—and once he has acquired this, then he is able to accept others, respect other personalities, enter into more satisfactory relationships with others, and direct his life in more constructive ways.

What are the basic principles that are applied to create the non-directive relationship? —The first requirement is to establish rapport with the client so that he feels free to express himself fully. The client must feel secure in this relationship, must trust the counselor to respect his confidence, and must feel accepted whether he is expressing negative, ambivalent, or positive feelings.

It is only after the rapport is established that the client is able to move ahead on his own.

The client must be granted the permissiveness to lead the way, to bring out the things that to him are, important—to bring out what he wishes to bring out when he is ready to do so. Thus all questions, probing, suggestions, advice from the counselor are ruled out. This is the client's hour to use as he sees fit. The counselor does not inject his evaluation, judgment, or insight into this experience.

As the client relates his story the counselor is alert to recognize the attitudes and feelings that the client expresses and reflects these back to the client in such a way that the client is able to gain insight into his behaviour. For it is only when the emotions are syphoned off, so to speak, and the individual is able to look at himself in the cool light of reason, that he is able to make constructive decisions, and to achieve adjustment. It seems that this cannot be achieved by telling the client what is wrong with him, what he should do, or why he behaves as he does. The client must work through this himself or it is not his solution, and if it is not his solution then it is a flimsy thing and not functional. It is in this area that most of the misconceptions of non-directive therapy arise. There is such a difference between reflection of content and selective reflection of emotionalized attitudes that the client expresses. To be able to accurately catch these attitudes and to reflect them back to the client in such a manner that they are not mere echoes, calls for sensitivity and concentration on the part of the counselor. That is one of the decisive factors in conveying to the client that the counselor understands, accepts the client exactly as he is, grants him the permissiveness to utilize fully the capacities for growth within himself. It is this that enables the client to achieve insight, that gives him the experience of being a person respected in his own right—a person who has the sole right to direct his own life—a person who can draw upon the rich resources within himself that need only freeing to function to their fullest capacity.

Occasionally someone gets the erroneous idea that this reflection of feelings is just an echo, a mirroring back of exactly what has been said, a trite repetition, or an absent "umhmn" while the counselor takes a cat-nap. And we sometimes hear

jokes to that effect. Someone says, "I think I'll take a chocolate coke." And someone answers, "You feel that you would like a chocolate coke." That is not a reflection of an attitude. It is a shallow misconception of the whole process.

The role of the counselor is not one of passivity.—It calls for the most severe self-discipline that I know of—to be able, as a counselor, to trust the other person to solve his own problems and make his own decisions, to concentrate on what that client is saying and feeling so that the counselor can select and clarify those feelings—and it requires an intense, unrelaxing concentration—to have the kind of trust and respect for the individual that will let *him* select what he wishes to discuss, to let him decide how he will meet his problems, and for the counselor to hold only to the limitations of time, place, and counselor participation. The counselor must refrain from becoming emotionally involved in his client's problem.

The client experiences—and sometimes for the first time in his life—what it is like to walk alone. The counselor, by the consistent adherence to these basic principles says by his very attitude and behaviour toward his client "I believe that you have within yourself the power and the ability to direct your own life. I am here to provide the kind of situation that makes you depend upon yourself, to test out your inner capacities." It is a challenge that few clients can resist. It is indeed a unique situation. Too many people are far too ready with solutions for other people's problems. As you all know from your own experiences, advice is almost as free as the air. And most people listen to another mentally tapping their feet impatiently, waiting for that person to finish, so that they can get in their two cents worth. But the non-directive counseling relationship

is not like that. It is a relationship between two people, but it is centred completely upon the client and it is truly his hour.

In my opinion the success or failure of non-directive counseling experience rests upon the relationship that is built up between the counselor and the client. The strength and consistency of this relationship determines the depth to which the client can go. The counselor must not waver—must not put out supporting techniques, suggestions, or advice when he feels that his client is not doing the right thing. The non-directive counselor would not be holding judgment in reserve, just in case the client did not perform according to the counselor's preconceived idea as to what he should do. Judgments and preconceived solutions to problems have no place in the non-directive counseling relationship. Any element that the counselor injects that the client did not put in by his own selection cancels out the feeling that we are trying to communicate to our clients. It is a genuine respect for the individual. It is not something that can be put on and off like a coat. It is not achieved by following a manual of directions. It is not fluctuating or inconsistent. It is like a steady flame that burns throughout the series of interviews—burning for each and every client—for the seemingly inadequate, incompetent three year old who is not even able to talk on through every individual possibility. This confidence in the individual's ability to help himself and to become more independent and self-directing and mature is never fully appreciated by a counselor until he has seen it in operation. The more experiences they have in observing this process of self-directed growth the more ready they are to admit that that force is more powerful than anything they could inject into the situation.

The therapy takes place in a neutral, safety zone. The quality of the acceptance

and permissiveness extended to the client determines the use the client will make of this situation. There can be no approval or disapproval shown or the client is apt to waver in his decision and self-understanding. It is the absence of judgmental values that keeps the client's confidence in himself and in the counselor. The consistency of the attitudes extended toward the client are extremely important. If the counselor is not diagnosing—if he is not interpreting—if he does not place his judgment ahead of his client's—if he is sensitive to the attitudes and feelings of the client, then the client can move ahead on his own, finding with each step a better understanding of himself, and new courage to be himself, and the strength to become independent and self-reliant. When the individual learns to know himself completely, then he becomes the master of himself and is truly a free man. If counseling, or psychotherapy, or call it what you will—is one means of freeing the individual so that he can become a more spontaneous, creative, and happy individual, then it is well worth further study and more extensive application. If it seems to be a way of extending emotional hospitality to a troubled and confused individual, then it seems only just that it be tried.

Non-directive counseling is not a simple and easy thing to do. And the only thing that will convince the beginner that this is true is an actual counseling experience. The only thing that really convinces a counselor that non-directive therapy is an effective method is to have completed a successful case. And the only way to have a really successful case is to have mastered the basic philosophy, to be able to establish the necessary relationship with the client, and to have developed the sensitivity to emotionalized attitudes that enables the counselor to reflect back these attitudes in such a way that they bring about insight.

At the University of Chicago there is a vocational guidance centre, a reading clinic, a speech clinic, and psychiatric services. These are apart from the Counseling Centre—and their purposes are to help an individual with specific problems. If an individual comes to the Counseling Centre and requests vocational guidance tests, remedial reading instructions, speech correction—they are referred to these other departments. If a client gives evidence of being psychotic he is referred to a psychiatrist. On the other hand, if someone goes to the vocational guidance centre, and the reading clinic, and in the opinion of the psychologists there seems to have emotional problems or a problem of personal adjustment, then he is referred to the Counseling Centre. It is through this cooperative arrangement that we are able to offer a more adequate and complete service to our client.

Our research at the Counseling Centre is working to gain objective measurements to the changes that occur in the individual as a result of counseling—changes in personality, reading ability, speech, intelligence, social adjustment. And the tests that are given at the Counseling Centre are primarily for the purpose of research, given to the clients with their permission. Complete counseling cases are electrically recorded—with the client's permission—to enable us to study more completely what really happened during a counseling series, and what changes can be measured. We have several research studies underway at the present time. For example, one study is being conducted in cooperation with Drs. Gray and Robinson of the Reading Clinic at the University of Chicago to determine the effectiveness of non-directive therapy for individuals who have reading difficulties. Research in group therapy, play therapy, and the implications of this theory

for education, for counselor training programmes—and many other problems are on our research agenda.

All of these research studies are for the purpose of helping us perfect our technique by obtaining a better understanding of the dynamics of human behaviour, by knowing better the basic personality structure.

At the present time it is virgin territory, but the implications that we are uncovering in our studies are significant. We are impressed by the implications of this theory for education, for the field of medicine, for the resolution of social conflicts. *But even so we do not lose sight of the fact that it is the strength within each individual, and his capacity for growth, upon which we build.*

Non-directive *counseling illustrated.*—The following case is included to illustrate non-directive counseling.

Jenny was in the eighth grade. She was a poor student—and a very poor reader, although intelligence tests indicated that her difficulty was not due to low intelligence. Jenny was referred to the counselor as a reading problem. She seemed very disturbed when she appeared in the counselor's office. She sat down and twisted her handkerchief between her hands and grinned wanly at the counselor. An excerpt from the first contact follows :—

Jenny : "I just don't know what to do. I'm so unhappy about everything. I haven't got any friends and I'm so big. I'm the biggest girl in the whole school and I'm so dumb. I just can't do anything. And I'm so ashamed."

- Counselor : "Things don't seem to be going so well for you in school and you feel unhappy about it."
- Jenny : "Yes. You see I'm having some trouble right now with my cousin. She's pretty and she's smart. And she's been fighting with me and calling me names. She says awful things about me that aren't true. And she says she'll steal my boy friend. She could too, if she really wanted to because she is smart and awful pretty and I worry so much about it all. These fights we have. And I feel so bad."
- Counselor : "You really worry about these fights and the threats your cousin makes."
- Jenny : (interrupting) "Yes. To take away my boy friend. And I'm so tall. I scrunch down all I can. I *crawl* along so I won't look so big. But—what she says about me isn't true. Honest, it isn't. I go out with boys, but I'm not a bad girl. Honest, I'm not;"
- Counselor : "It disturbs you when she says you're a bad girl."
- Jenny : "Because I'm not. But it's all a part of a big, big worry. Because, well, I don't have any friends and I just can't say *no* and that's what really bothers me. I'm afraid. If I'm with some one and they suggest that we do something and I don't want to do it I'm afraid to come right out and say no. I'm afraid if they would leave me and so I say yes—yes—yes—to everything they ask me to do and I don't want to do any of the things they suggest and so I do those things, too, and I feel terrible. I can't sleep at night. It worries me so."
- Counselor : "Their friendship means so much to you that you can't say no to anything they ask you to do and yet it worries you a great deal."
- Jenny : "Oh yes. It does worry me. Because I live in the fear that some day—some day they will ask me to do something really bad—and I'll do it—and—." (The expression on her face indicates extreme anxiety).
- Counselor : "It puts you in a bad spot—worried to death in case you do something really bad because you can't say no."
- Jenny : "Yes. And—Well, even now I do things that I know I shouldn't do. We smoke and when we can get it we drink and sometimes we go downtown and pick up sailors. I really don't like to do any of those things. I don't want to do them. But the minute I'm asked, I grab my things and rush out and act real glad. I'm really at their mercy. They could make me do anything. Because I can't say no."
- Counselor : "You really feel that you put yourself completely at their mercy because you just can't make yourself say no."

- Jenny : "Yes." (Smiles bitterly). "And I get to thinking about all these things in school and I just can't listen to the teachers. I say to myself every day, I say Jenny, now listen to Miss X. And I look at her—as steady as I can—and she starts to talk—and the minute she starts to talk, then I'm off too. No matter how hard I try. Just tell myself—you listen to her—I try. Really I do. But..."
- Counselor : "All of these worries get in your way and even though you do *tell* yourself you're going to listen—you just can't do it."
- Jenny : "I think of Jack and my cousin and how she said she would take him away from me. Jack is a sailor. He thinks I'm eighteen. He doesn't know I'm just a grammar school student. He *thinks* I'm in high school. And I know my cousin is crazy about him. She is even younger than I am, but she is in high school. And she said she would take him away from me. I don't know what to do. She said that she would tell him that I was a bad girl and I would do anything a man asked me to do—and I keep worrying—what if he did ask me to do something awful? I know all about the facts of life. I know what could happen. There was a social worker once who told us. And you can get an awful disease and go crazy and may even die. And Mama would kick me out. I know she would. They are awful religious. And I wouldn't want to do it. I really wouldn't. It would be just because I would be afraid to say no. I'd be afraid he would walk out and never come back again so I would say yes and..." (She covered her face with her hands and shuddered.)
- Counselor : "You are really quite worried about what might happen to you—really serious consequences—just because you feel that you can't say no."
- Jenny : "Yes. And I—it's a terrible feeling. You just can't believe how terrible it is. I'm all mixed up. Because I *like* babies. And if I had a baby I could quit school and I just *hate* school. But I know I couldn't stay home—and maybe Jack wouldn't marry me—and they would take the baby away from me—and then?"
- Counselor : "It's a miserable feeling. One way you look at it, it seems as though you might find a solution to the school problem by having a baby and having to quit school and on the other hand you feel there would be a very real problem if you did have a baby. Jack might not marry you. You couldn't stay home. They might even take the baby."

- Jenny : "Yes. That's right." (A long pause). "And then the gossips would be right when they said I was bad. I would be bad. And I might get a disease. And the baby might be as dumb as me. And I wouldn't have any money. I know how terrible that is—not having any money."
- Counselor : "'You feel there would be the possibility of a lot of unhappy complications."
- Jenny : "Yes. I know how I feel now when my cousin taunts me and calls me a bad girl. It gets me, right here. I feel miserable—really terrible. And I'd feel even worse if it was true."
- Counselor : "It's bad enough when there aren't any grounds for her remarks about you—but you think it would be worse if the remarks were true."
- Jenny : "Oh yes. I know it."
- Counselor : "You're really sure that you would feel worse."
- Jenny : "Yes. Everything would be worse than it is, really. I'd be more afraid of what people would say. I'd be afraid everyone would snub me if I did. And I know they would. Everything would be a lot worse."
- Counselor : "You feel pretty sure that your problem would only multiply if you got yourself in any deeper."
- Jenny : "'Yes. I just *wish* I could say
- no. I just *wish* I could get so I didn't care what people felt when I said no. I just wish I didn't care whether I ever saw them again."
- Counselor : "You really want to be able to say *no* and mean it,—and not waver because of the other people's reaction."
- Jenny : "Yes. That's what I really wish."
- At a later contact Jenny announced that she had asked her mother to say no for her and that she told the girls and boys when they asked her to go some place with them "You'll have to come home and ask my mother," and when they did, she had pre-arranged that her mother say *no* for her. "Mother would say 'No, Jenny can't go.' And I would coax and beg there in front of the others. I'd say, 'Oh, please, mom, please. Don't be an old meany. Let me go!' But I had always told her ahead of time *not* to break down and say yes, because I didn't want go with them."
- Then later the announcement that she was not seeing her cousin any more indicated more steps to help herself. She said she avoided the places where her cousin might be.
- Then after the dance, where Jack, the cousin, and Jenny were all thrown together, she said, "My cousin came up to Jack and they danced a lot. She's real pretty. And she said to me 'I'm going to steal your boy friend.' And I felt awful bad about it. She had on such a pretty dress. Mine was an old one, made over. But I just said 'That's up to you two. If Jack wants to go with you, okay.' Jack was right there. And my cousin said to Jack 'She's a bad girl. She does the awfulest things.' But Jack

didn't pay any attention to her. He made his choice and he decided he liked me better. And I can say *no* now, too, if it's something I don't think I should do."

Then she took more positive steps. She got a job after school rather than hang around the corner drug store with the rest of the gang. She decided to do something about her study problem and told the counselor that she had asked her older

brother to help her with math and reading and had offered to pay him to help her and he had agreed to do it. She expressed fears and anxieties about failing again and related how terrible she felt other times when the rest of the class passed and she had stayed behind—a failure. After she had worked through her emotional problems, then she was ready to do something about remedial instructions in reading and arithmetic.