
3 Career Counseling Practices

Making an optimal career choice has been and remains one of the major objectives of career counseling. Over time, career counseling has broadened its scope and purposes to include career transitions of adults who make multiple career choices over the life span. In contemporary society, workers are to be lifelong learners, be prepared to make changes, adapt to new and different circumstances, and learn what happens in one life role affects others. Within this framework, helpers are to address all concerns clients bring to counseling. In essence, current practices in career counseling have become very inclusive. Helpers are not simply dealing with static states of human behavior but ever more with complex person–environment interactions that require sophisticated adaptive systems. The current interest in the relationship between career development and mental health is an example of a growing awareness that human development is multidimensional and multifaceted. Thus, career development can be both continuous and discontinuous. Current practices in career counseling therefore address the needs of the whole person.

This chapter focuses on current career counseling models developed from theoretical orientations of career development theories. The primary concerns in this chapter are major components of models such as the intake interview, use of assessment results, and effective interventions. First, however, a learning theory model of career counseling, adapted from Krumboltz and Sorensen (1974) and Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996), is presented in its entirety to provide an example of stages in the career counseling process. This model is representative of current career counseling practices that are very inclusive. This model not only includes the traditional concerns of interests, values, and personality variables but also focuses on career beliefs and obstacles, family life, emotional instability, and cognitive clarity. One should not be surprised to learn that current career counseling models have components similar to those used in personal problem counseling. As I discuss components of models, however, the content of the parameters of career counseling will clearly focus on the career choice process. Included in the discussion are some methods to address barriers that constrain career choice.

A Learning Theory of Career Counseling

The learning theory model of career counseling includes the following seven stages:

Stage 1: Interview

- a. The client–counselor relationship is established.
- b. The client is asked to make a commitment to the time needed for counseling.
- c. Insightful and positive client responses are reinforced.
- d. The helper and client focus on all career problems; family life; environmental influences; emotional instability; career beliefs and obstacles; and traditional career domains of skills, interests, values, and personality.
- e. The client is helped in the formulation of tentative goals.

Stage 2: Assessment

- a. Objective assessment instruments are used as a means of providing links to learning interventions.
- b. Subjective assessment attempts to attain the accuracy and coherence of the client’s information system and to identify the client’s core goals and faulty or unrealistic strategies to reach goals.
- c. Beliefs and behaviors that typically cause problems are evaluated by using an inventory designed for this purpose.

Stage 3: Generate Activities

- a. Clients are directed to individualized projects, such as completing another assessment instrument or reviewing audiovisual materials, computer programs, and/or occupational literature.
- b. Some clients may be directed to counseling programs that address personal problems or lack of cognitive clarity.

Stage 4: Collect Information

- a. Potential intervention strategies are discussed.
- b. Individual goals, including newly developed ones, are discussed.
- c. A format for previewing an occupation is presented.
- d. Clients commit to information gathering by making a job site visit or using computerized materials.

Stage 5: Share Information and Estimate Consequences

- a. The client's difficulty in processing information is evaluated.
- b. The client's faulty strategies in decision processing are evaluated.
- c. Helpers and clients develop remedial interventions.
- d. Clients may be directed to collect more information or recycle within the counseling model before moving to the next step.

Stage 6: Reevaluate, Decide Tentatively, or Recycle

- a. Possibilities of success in specific kinds of occupations are discussed.
- b. The helper provides the stimulus for firming up a decision for further exploration of a career, or for changing direction and going back to previous steps in making a decision.

Stage 7: Job Search Strategies

- a. Client intervention strategies can include using study materials, learning to do an interview or write a resume, join a job club, role play, or participate in simulation exercises designed to teach the consequences of making life decisions. Concepts of career life planning are introduced, along with how decision-making techniques that have been learned can be used in future decisions.

The stages in this model suggest a progressive agenda that begins with establishing a working consensus relationship with the client before engaging in the process of gathering background information. Clients are active participants in the counseling process. Problem identification focuses on educational deficits that are considered as limiting the occupations one considers in the career choice process. The client and counselor address this issue by developing a learning plan that includes specific learning activities and a means of evaluating progress. Faulty beliefs and negative thinking that interfere with one's ability to think rationally and make optimal career decisions are aggressively addressed. Clients learn how to reframe their thinking process from negative thoughts to more positive ones. This model endorses the rationale that the way individuals view themselves and the world around them greatly influences what they believe about themselves. In addition, the learning model, along with other models discussed in Zunker (2006), focuses on the ability to process information, make rational decisions, increase one's self knowledge, and introduce career information resources and decision-making skills.

Interventions can take many forms; for instance, the client and counselor select appropriate assessment instruments for identifying specific needs. Some clients may be assigned to a computerized career information system to

broaden their scope of occupational choices, while other clients may join a group who are exchanging career information or discussing career decision-making skills. Some clients may be assigned to a counselor who specializes in cognitive restructuring. These few examples of intervention strategies make the relevant point: Intervention components address a multitude of individual needs. Further discussion of career counseling procedures that have evolved from career development theories, along with the use of example cases, have been provided by Sharf (2002), Swanson and Fouad (1999), and Zunker (2006).

The differences between counseling components developed from different theoretical orientations reflect somewhat of a different emphasis in the use of assessment, diagnostic procedures, and intervention components. The trait-oriented theories are considered to focus on a *differential* approach, which emphasizes matching occupational requirements with client traits or values, interests, personality, and aptitudes. The *developmental* approaches promote tasks that are used to move the client through a series of developmental stages. The social learning and cognitive theories are labeled as *reinforcement-based approaches* to career (Osipow, 1990) and, as such, focus on how social learning is reinforced and influences self-perceptions and one's worldview. Differential, developmental, and reinforcement-based approaches also have distinct similarities, as one would expect considering the major goal of all theories is an optimal career decision. Within the practice of career development, helpers have also been known to use technical eclecticism in order to meet the needs of their clients; interventions used in different career counseling models are selected on the basis of individual concerns. Thus, helpers should be committed to making an in-depth analysis of other model components. Keeping this recommendation in mind, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to counseling suggestions that have evolved from career development theories presented in Chapter 2. The following discussions focus on the intake interview and problem identification, use of assessment, and other intervention strategies. Less emphasis will be placed on the theoretical orientations of counseling techniques. The reader should be able to recognize theoretical orientations of some of the suggested interventions and strategies. For example, even though almost all career counseling models have an assessment component, the use of assessment results may vary. As mentioned in Chapter 2, career development theories offer some different approaches to career counseling, but all have contributed to current career counseling models.

Intake Interview

In most counseling models the intake interview is used to collect background information, such as social history; educational level; work history; family information; behavioral problems; affect; medical history; and, in the case of

career counseling, problems that can interfere with career choice. Presenting problems in all helping situations are carefully evaluated. The sequence and content of the intake interview usually follow the outline listed below. Be aware, however, that one should be thoroughly trained in interview techniques that include appropriate communication skills for all clients including multicultural groups. Helpers should also be aware of the many suggestions and specific techniques for interviewing multicultural groups provided by Ivey and Ivey (2003), Okun (2002), and Zunker (2006).

1. Background information

This information can be attained through a structured form that the client is to fill out and discuss with the helper, or it can be obtained through a face-to-face opening session.

2. Presenting problems (the reasons given by the client for coming to counseling)
3. Current status information (affect, mood, and attitude)
4. Health and medical information (including substance abuse)
5. Family information
6. Social/developmental history
7. Life roles (e.g., homemaker, leisure, citizen, and interrelationship of life roles)
8. Problems that can interfere with career choice (e.g., work identity, career maturity, faulty thinking, lack of information-processing skills, and educational deficiencies, among others)
9. Problems that interfere with career development (e.g., work-related dysfunctions, work maladjustment, faulty cognitions, psychological disorders)
10. Clarification of problems (state problems clearly and concretely)
11. Identification of client goals (e.g., determine feasibility of goals, create subgoals, and assess client's commitment; Brems, 2001; D. Brown, Brooks, & Associates, 1996; Cormier & Nurius, 2003).

This rather straightforward format is considered to be very inclusive and indeed provides categories of basic information that is considered essential in the counseling process. However, because of its inclusive nature, helpers will often need more than one session to complete the intake interview. Ivey and Ivey (2003) pointed out that counselors should and must strive to build a trusting relationship with their clients. It should not be considered unusual to temporarily end the interview to administer assessment instruments, for example. Presenting problems could also be so complex that the client is

referred to a counseling professional who has specialized training. Helpers should focus on important psychological dimensions of functioning, such as need satisfaction, stress and coping strategies, attainment of developmental tasks, social skills, and many other characteristics and attributes. Problems that impede effective functioning may include indecisiveness, poor self-esteem, faulty cognitions, psychological disorders, and substance abuse, among many others. Finally, helpers will find that many client needs can emerge at any time during the counseling process.

It is during the intake interview when helpers make tentative appraisals of the client's personality type. Thus, subjective as well as objective appraisals of clients are made concerning such traits as personality, intelligence, and values; the focus of the interview is on individual traits. A client's goals, interests, and talents provide insights into vocational identity. Appraisals during the interview include the client's social networks, support systems, stages of development with an emphasis on career maturity, and vocational identity. During the interview, the helper assists the client in developing an accurate picture of the self and life roles. One of the unusual elements in the developmental approach is that social space is addressed as a pervasive influence in the career choice process. The position that one may limit one's career options or compromise them because of one's social status has far-reaching implications. At some point in the interview, the helper and client should address barriers to career choice.

Self-efficacy is a most important variable in most career counseling models; therefore, in-depth appraisals are made. Clients who do not view themselves as competent will greatly limit their career choice prospects. Potential barriers to career choice and development include educational deficits and negative cognitions. Personal beliefs are evaluated in terms of their influence on outcome expectations. Clients are encouraged to verbalize their expectations of a future work role. Interviewers use their listening skills to evaluate their clients' perceptions of outcome goals and self-efficacy deficits.

Clients may be asked to tell their life story. The helper uses the way the client perceives events, situations, and environmental interactions to provide clues to the development of personal constructs. A client's unique life role development is thought to give meaning to the client's personal constructs. Of most importance are the client's core values, which can lead to an understanding of an individual's career choice and commitment. The accomplishment of life's task and progression through life stages also are of major importance. Interviewers take the position that people are active participants in their own development; they construct meaning from decisions they make (Kelly, 1955). A client's description of career concerns can be used to emphasize how vocational self-concepts are most important in selecting work roles. Finally, it is most important to establish a culturally appropriate relationship in which the client's needs and worldviews are discussed. The continuation of the interview depends heavily on client assessment results.

Throughout the interview, helpers should be alert to any clues that provide insights into a client's personality, mood, social functioning, and other

characteristics. General appearance, behavior, affect, hygiene and dress, eye contact, and speech and attitude, among other characteristics, provide important information. Within this context sets of needs should emerge. Intervention strategies may be used to confirm concerns that have been tentatively identified. Before deciding on client goals and/or intervention strategies, the client's concerns are conceptualized. Later in this chapter and in other chapters that follow, examples of counseling cases will illustrate the conceptualization process.

Using Assessment Results for Career Counseling

Standardized tests and inventories, as well as nonstandardized methods, are used in career counseling models. Standardized tests in particular have been identified with the career counseling movement over time. The importance of tests to the practice of career development is emphasized by the following seven career counseling goals of assessment results: (1) identify career beliefs; (2) identify skills, proficiencies, and abilities; (3) identify academic achievement; (4) discover personality variables; (5) identify and confirm interest levels; (6) determine values, including work values; and (7) explore career maturity variables. In most career counseling practices, the use of assessment results is determined by the needs of each client, although some helpers routinely use some inventories for the purpose of enhancing the client's self-knowledge and/or to identify and discuss barriers to career choice.

Nonstandardized or self-assessment has recently received more attention (Healy, 1990; Subich, 1996). Examples of self-assessment procedures include the following:

- Writing a structured or unstructured autobiography followed by an analysis and discussion with helper
- Interest identification through a variety of exercises that may include listing 20 things you like to do followed by a discussion of them (Goodman, 1993)
- Card sorts in which the individual sorts occupations into categories of "would not choose," "would choose," or "no opinion," followed by a clarification of choices
- A structured career life planning experience exercise, referred to as *life-line*, in which the individual develops more self-awareness by selecting an occupation as if he or she were free of identified roles and responsibilities. Each individual eventually reformulates goals when reassuming originally identified roles; goals are then modified.
- Guided fantasy, in which the individual learns relaxation techniques, then establishes a fantasy of a day on the job in the future, and eventually discusses reactions to this fantasy with the helper. Clients who achieve a high degree of self-awareness are thought to have a better chance of making an optimal career choice.

- Skill identification by focusing on previous experiences of both work and nonwork experiences, such as hobbies and volunteer work. The client compares skills learned with job requirements of occupational interest (Zunker, 2006).

Nonstandardized tests offer options for clients when techniques, content, and norms used in standardized tests are not applicable.

The level of readiness for career counseling can be assessed with the Career Thoughts Inventory (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996), a measure of primary factors that are thought to reveal levels of readiness. Examples of primary factors are as follows: capacity to think clearly, motivation to learn about options, and commitment to carry out a plan of actions. Another dimension of readiness is labeled *complexity* and generally refers to contextual factors that may make it more difficult for an individual to focus on career decision making. Other measures of cognitive functioning include ability to process information and to think rationally. The Career Beliefs Inventory (Krumboltz, 1988) and the Career Thoughts Inventory (Sampson et al., 1996) are often used. Assessing a client's level of information processing can be accomplished by evaluating the following: (1) *encoding*, or the client's perception of information; (2) *goal setting*, the client's ability to recognize procedural requirements to reach goals; (3) *effective plan development* and pattern matching (i.e., the ability to establish alternative solutions and/or several means of reaching goals); and (4) *action step*, the client's ability to select appropriate behaviors to solve problems exposed in previous steps (Rounds & Tracey, 1990). In sum, the client's level of readiness for decision making and the client's ability to effectively process information are two important factors that should not be overlooked in career counseling models.

One of the most important key concepts in career decision making is *self-knowledge*. This concept is very inclusive, representing numerous traits and characteristics, including self-concept, self-perceptions, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. In this context, there is a sense of self that is most important to the development of all life roles, including the work role. Assessment results that provide the stimulus that encourages the process of self-discovery therefore can be very productive for most clients in the career decision-making process. One widely used method of clarifying self-knowledge is an informative discussion of the client's attitudes, interests, personality, and values. Other goals include increasing the client's awareness of his or her needs, something that can be used for the purpose of enhancing one's motivation to change.

It is generally agreed that a comprehensive evaluation of each client's cognitive abilities, values, interests, and personality is a necessary part of the career decision-making process. These traits are used with other data to determine an individual's needs and/or fit in an occupational environment. Needs are used to determine the potential of job satisfaction in certain

occupations that offer need reinforcers. Work environments are also matched with personal styles as measured by interests and personality inventories. Some specially designed tests include the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Rounds, Henly, Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1981), which provides a means to evaluate individual needs for the purpose of determining potential congruence with certain occupations. The Self-Directed Search (Holland, Powell, & Fritzsche, 1994) and the Strong Interest Inventory (Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994) are used to match a person's responses with Holland's RIASEC typology: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The matching process is made easier by publications listing abilities and interests according to Holland types. Both the Self-Directed Search and the Strong Interest Inventory provide concrete examples of occupations for each Holland type.

Measures of a client's uniqueness can also be fostered by assessment instruments that assess a variety of trait characteristics, including assets for securing goals, self-concept, career maturity, vocational identity, interests, values, and beliefs about problem resolutions. Level of ability is also considered to be a most important characteristic in the choice process as well as in career development. The *career development and assessment model* comprises four phases of assessment. The first involves *life structure* (social elements that constitutes a person's life) and *work salience* (a measure of five life roles). The Salience Inventory (Nevill & Super, 1986) is used for this purpose. The second phase measures a client's perception of the work role with the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988). In the third phase, aptitudes (Differential Aptitude Test; Bennett, Seashore, & Westman, 1974), interests (Strong Interest Inventory; Harmon et al., 1994), and values (Work Value Inventory; Super, 1970) are assessed. In the fourth phase, self-concepts and life themes are assessed by adjective checklists (Johansson, 1975) or card sorts (Hartung, 1999), or by a repertory grid technique (Neimeyer, 1989). The results of these instruments are used to evaluate a client's career development and to determine interventions that promote career development.

Finally, in *construction career theory*, assessment is very inclusive and focuses on client concerns, career adaptability, vocational self-concept, and vocational identity. Career narratives that include an individual's life story are used to relate vocational self-concepts to work roles. To assess career adaptability, the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites & Savickas, 1996) is used for high school students, and the Career Development Inventory (Savickas & Hartung, 1996) is used for college students. These two inventories generally measure competencies for making educational and vocational choices. Assessing vocational self-concept and career themes is accomplished by the use of the adjective checklists just described, card sorts, or a repertory grid technique. In addition, career themes are assessed through either an autobiography or interview. Measures of interests include the Self-Directed Search and the Strong Interest Inventory; these two instruments also are used to assess vocational identity.

Interventions

In this section, examples of interventions will make it clear that there is the potential for a wide range of helping procedures that could be used in the practice of career development. As in the immediately preceding section, there are differences in approaches to the career counseling process that influence the content and use of interventions as well as the use of assessment results. Nevertheless, there are also similarities in intervention strategies. Most career counseling models that have evolved from career development theories support the importance of identifying client problems and needs that give direction to the development of the content of intervention strategies. Some career development theories may place a greater emphasis on self-concept development and the need to address life stages, for instance, whereas others may emphasize cognitive functioning, learning that broadens one's career perspectives and career beliefs. Within these two approaches to career choice and development are other numerous interventions that are most plausible and worthy of consideration. What this means to helpers is that there is no shortage of intervention strategies, but the process of choosing effective ones is of utmost importance. At this point, we revisit the case for the individual; client need identification should focus on the uniqueness of each person. It is from the position of individual uniqueness that tailored interventions are developed. Because of the variety and potentially large number of interventions that can be used in career counseling, they are limited in this section to those that have evolved from career development theories.

Interventions that enhance a client's knowledge of the self through identified traits are indeed an important focus of the trait-oriented theories. One of the purposes of intervention strategies is to match client needs to groups of occupations that offer the prospect of satisfaction and fulfillment. A logical intervention resulting from this perspective would involve discussions that identify measured traits and their significance. Ideally, the client is able to summarize how the knowledge of certain traits is important in the career choice process and how one matches needs with reinforcers found in the work environment; thus, job satisfaction factors are considered important not only in the initial choice process but also in career decisions that follow over the life span.

In the very popular scheme of matching personality types with occupational types in Holland's RIASEC typology, the focus is on the strength of the client's personality type. In the Holland system, decisive individuals are thought to have a strong and consistent personality pattern. Clients who have inconsistent personality patterns may be undecided or indecisive and not fully committed to pursuing a career choice. Thus, one major purpose of counseling sessions is helping clients find occupations that are congruent with their personality types. A lack of discovery of a congruent occupation suggests several alternatives in the counseling process. Counselors may choose to engage clients in values clarification, a more in-depth analysis of

interests and attitudes, and/or discussions of past experiences (e.g., past work experiences, hobbies, and extracurricular activities). Intervention strategies may also include discussion of personal problems that may need to be addressed as a part of the career choice process.

In both career developmental and career construction theories that emphasize life-span development the focus is on tasks and stages of development. Self-concept is a major component in life-span developmental theories. In Super's (1990) view, self-concept develops through a variety of events and experiences in one's environment as well as physical and mental growth. One's observations and identification with working adults also are considered most important. What I am suggesting here is that a more sophisticated vocational self-concept evolves from a greater awareness of the work world. In addition, internal factors, such as aptitudes, values, and personality, become a vital and functioning part of one's total self-concept. Interventions can be most relevant at different stages of life throughout the life span. As Super saw it, self-concept is a vital part of a continuous developmental process.

Current national career guidelines recommend certain competencies and indicators of competencies relevant to one's career development over the life span. As one would expect, the importance of self-concept is touted as a part of the competencies and indicators, beginning with students in elementary school. The developmental tasks for students include interventions that will increase their self-knowledge and help them learn more about occupations and educational requirements and developing planning skills. Interventions that focus on one's ability to identify personal interests, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, for example, are to be initiated in early childhood development. As a part of a continuous process of one's development, an increasingly sophisticated range of competencies and indicators is provided as measures of self-concept development.

The centerpiece of career construction theory are personal constructs, which are modified in a continuous process involving one's interpretation of events and circumstances experienced over the life span. Learning experiences are thought to be bidirectional, however; thus, an individual who is influenced by others, events, and experiences can also influence others—and, possibly, the outcome of events and experiences; there is reciprocity. Constructivists support the belief that individuals define themselves as they participate in events and relationships in their environment. As a person develops personal constructs, his or her view of the world differs from the views of others. One is the product of cultural contexts; hence, interventions are indeed individualized and concentrate on helping clients identify and understand the meaning that unique personal constructs give to one's purpose and life roles. As in life-span developmental theories, vocational self-concepts are enhanced through discussions of abilities, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, career interests measured by interest inventories are used to identify occupations that appear congruent when compared to one's vocational self-concept. Thus, clients develop a clearer understanding

of their vocational self-concept in discussions of significant events in their life story. Some clients may find that writing an autobiography, followed by an in-depth discussion, is more effective.

In social learning and cognitive theory interventions the focus is on the here and now. A faulty career belief is addressed by interventions that focus more on cognitions that are faulty or distorted and less on insights or potential causes. The client concentrates on how to reconstruct a faulty career belief through cognitive reconstruction, which is discussed further in Chapter 12. One of the key concepts in this theory is *self-efficacy*. Following the lead of Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, helpers show clients how personal performance accomplishments are keys to improving one's self-efficacy. Thus, outcome expectations are regarded as personal beliefs. In this context, an individual who believes he or she can successfully perform well in an activity has a better chance of doing just that. What is most important to helpers is to recognize that self-efficacy can be improved. Major interventions include skills training programs that provide the opportunity to experience positive performance outcomes. People conclude that they have the ability to perform correctly when faced with certain tasks and, in fact, have a good chance of performing well with other tasks that are encountered; their self-efficacy has been enhanced. Self-efficacy is discussed in several chapters that follow. In the next section of this chapter, career and personal concerns are viewed as inseparable. Suggestions for integrating career and personal counseling are introduced. Interventions are focused on four domains: (1) career, (2) affective, (3) cognitive-behavioral, and (4) culture.

Whole-Person Approach to Career and Personal Concerns

Over time, a number of prominent career development researchers have suggested that there is a connectedness between career and personal concerns that should be addressed. Osipow (1979), for example, suggested that career and mental health concerns could be approached from an occupational mental health position. He suggested a blending of vocational development with the mental health of working adults. More recently, Krumboltz (1993) and Betz and Corning (1993), among others, have suggested that career and personal concerns are intertwined and need to be addressed in the counseling process. Historically, however, career and personal domains were thought to be separate entities and, as such, should be approached as distinctly different domains (Spokane, 1991). Following this logic counselor training programs were established from the position that career and personal concerns were separate domains.

In contemporary society there has been considerable attention directed to the changing nature of work accompanied by uncertainties of the future world of work and the decline of the American dream. New technology and

the restructuring of industrial organizations that promoted outsourcing have impacted entire families and their lifestyles. The spillover effect from one life role to another has given credence to addressing the personal concerns of adults in career transition. The position that work is a major factor in each person's life story suggests that personal concerns can significantly influence one's career development; thus, a greater emphasis on life role development has emerged as a prominent counseling goal. There now is an increasing awareness of interplay between work and personal concerns and all life roles. The concern for the mental health of workers is not a new phenomenon but rather a growing awareness of factors that can influence behavior. A whole-person counseling approach is one suggestion for integrating career and personal concerns in the practice of career development. In the next paragraphs, I introduce some suggestions for managing sets of career and personal concerns.

The following is a summary of relevant information from an intake interview presented to a helper: Jan grew up in the suburbs near a large metropolitan area. Her family has lived in this area for several generations. She is now in her late 20s, has not been married, and lives alone in an apartment not far from her family's home. She has been employed in a local department store for 3 years after completing 2 years of college. Jan told the helper that she has difficulty controlling her temper at work and has been involved in several "misunderstandings" with fellow employees. She is trying to decide whether she should find another workplace. Jan complains that she is never able to relax. She states, "This job is going to ruin everything for me!" and "I can't even get along with my family!"

Helpers may find that some clients express feelings of distress associated with their work role for a variety of reasons. No doubt there are indeed workplaces that can contribute to one's anxiety and subsequent problems associated with work stress, for example. The fact is that work stress is currently a very viable subject of discussion by workers as well as industrial managers and psychologists; Chapter 11 is entirely devoted to a discussion of work stress. In Jan's case, however, sources of her anxiety hold the key to effective interventions that can moderate feelings of distress. Helpers must be aware that sources of anxiety can come from many situations and events in the workplace as well as from experiences in one's personal life. In Jan's case, it was determined that she did experience high levels of anxiety associated with all life roles. The fact that Jan is "never able to relax" does suggest that her anxiety could be self-generated.

The helper's tentative conclusions from Jan's intake interview were thoroughly discussed with her in a working consensus counseling relationship. It was mutually agreed that assessment interventions could reveal and confirm some sources of anxiety from several factors, including career beliefs and self-knowledge (abilities, interests, personality, and values). The rationale for assessment here was to confirm tentative conclusions reached earlier that faulty beliefs could be one important factor that influences Jan's disruptive behavior patterns and low self-esteem. In addition, the discussion of variables

associated with self-knowledge can provide relevant information about Jan's view of herself and her confidence level. Potential work stressors in the current work environment were also to be assessed. The overarching goal was to evaluate a broad range of contributing factors, including self-esteem, self-concept development, and self-efficacy deficits. The helper in this case was acutely aware that anxiety can be triggered by many situations, and in the case of Jan there needed to be an evaluation of her perceptions of events and her subsequent interpretation of them. Someone who is highly anxious tends to focus on what could go wrong in the future; he or she fears not being able to control future events. When one is overly sensitive to perceived threats, the intentions of others, including coworkers, can be misinterpreted. In essence, all life roles can be affected by feelings of anxiety.

In a whole-person approach to helping, one of the keys to success is learning how to manage sets of needs that clients bring to counseling. The case of Jan is a good example of multiple needs associated with career choice and development as well as numerous personal needs. One way of addressing sets of needs is by observing them in four domains: (1) career, (2) affective, (3) cognitive-behavioral, and (4) culture, as illustrated in Box 3.1. Each domain contains representative strategies and typical client concerns. In the career domain, strategies are derived from the theoretical orientation of career development theories discussed in Chapter 2 and this chapter. The concerns listed include examples of associated problems from indecisiveness to retirement. The affective domain includes a broad range of emotionally driven problems, from mood disorders to a lack of insight and awareness. The cognitive-behavioral domain focuses on faulty thinking, cognitive distortions, and problems in decision making. The culture domain includes concerns ranging from deficiencies in the use of English language to discrimination and oppression. The examples of strategies and concerns in each domain are not to be considered as inclusive but are representative of numerous strategies and concerns for each domain. In the following paragraphs, the four domains described in Box 3.1 are used to illustrate how multiple needs can be addressed.

Jan's concerns are conceptualized in four domains, as follows:

Career: Jan's faulty beliefs about her work role could be a causal influence that is responsible for her failure to identify with a work environment. She is currently experiencing poor relationships with fellow workers, extreme stress, and work impairment.

Affective: Jan appears to be experiencing significant anxiety and anger, is emotionally unstable, and is subject to panic attacks. She is likely to overreact to the give and take of a work environment.

Cognitive-behavioral: Jan's anxiety is self-generated and appears to be influenced by faulty thinking, feelings of insecurity, and overgeneralization of negative experiences. Self-destructive behavior is a likely consequence of faulty thinking and reasoning.

Box 3.1 Representative Strategies and Client Concerns in Four Domains**CAREER****Strategies**

Trait-Oriented counseling, Developmental counseling, Social Learning and Cognitive counseling, Person-in-Environment counseling

Assessment of traits, clarifying interests, self-concept development, vocational identity development, awareness of developmental stages and tasks, rational decision making, self-directed career maintenance, interpersonal skills development, sources of job satisfaction, work adjustment variables, coping with job loss, and preparing for retirement

Concerns

Indecisive, deficiencies in basic skills, career maturity issues, poor work identity, work impairment, work maladjustment, deficiencies in basic skills, adjusting to career transitions, balancing life roles, job loss, stress, violence in the workplace, relational problems, failure to adapt to changing work requirements, loss of work identity, and adjustment to retirement

AFFECTIVE**Strategies**

Client-centered therapy, Gestalt experiments, Existential therapy, Psychodynamic therapies

Empathy, active listening, awareness techniques, dignity and worth of individual, ventilation and catharsis, self-regulation, wholeness of individual, insight and awareness, meaning in life, positive regard, and internal frame of reference

Concerns

Emotional instability, sad, anxious, angry, panic attacks, impulsivity, poor self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and helplessness, depressed mood, lethargy, fatigue, and poor personal relationships

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL**Strategies**

Behavioral counseling, Cognitive restructuring, Rational-emotive therapy, Reality therapy, Beck's cognitive therapy

Counter-conditioning, bibliotherapy, refraining, A_B_C_D_E analysis, systematic desensitization, modeling, contingency management, homework assignments, assertive training, problem-solving techniques, contracting, and social skills training

Concerns

Faulty thinking, inappropriate behavior, self-destructive behavior, cognitive distortions, maladaptive behavior, faulty beliefs, overgeneralizations of negative experiences, poor information processing skills, and problems in decision making

CULTURE**Strategies**

Culturally based interventions, Multicultural counseling

Focus on level of acculturation and worldview, cultural identity, cultural orientation, work-related values, culturally appropriate assessment techniques and resources, adjustment techniques to new socioeconomic system. Use indigenous helpers, alternative counseling procedures, and expanded repertoire of helping responses

Concerns

Deficiencies in the use of English language and basic skills, poor adjustment to the dominant cultural values, collectivist worldview, cultural shock, lack of job skills, difficulty with assimilating new lifestyle, restrictive emotions, level of cultural identity; effects of discrimination and oppression, and relating to others

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Culture: Jan was born into a middle-class family and has primarily adopted an individualistic worldview. She endorses the position that through self-determination one can find an acceptable role in society and is aware that she has failed to accomplish this goal. She is also aware of the importance of recognizing and appreciating cultural differences.

Observing client problem identification in these four domains suggests an interrelationship of concerns that can be addressed simultaneously. In Jan's case, her reaction to anxiety is very inclusive and has negatively affected all life roles. At this point in her life, Jan's perception and interpretation of situations and events are distorted to the point that she feels threatened and distressed. In the workplace, misunderstanding the intentions of coworkers has created a dysfunctional working environment. Relationships with family and friends have likewise been affected. What is suggested here are problems with faulty thinking and perceptions within the cognitive-behavioral domain. Helpers can offer cognitive-reconstruction techniques among other cognitive-behavioral approaches that provide methods of modifying a faulty thinking process. In this case, the helper can use the work environment as an example of how faulty reasoning can create not only problems with coworkers but also with others in different social situations. Most significant here is for Jan to recognize that how she perceives and reacts to situations and events in her life is an important factor for her own mental health and, subsequently, her ability to function on a job. Helpers should recognize the importance of consistent patterns of intervention strategies they choose to use. In Jan's case, career and personal interventions involve an emphasis on cognitive processes. Social learning and cognitive career development theories stress the need to identify a client's faulty beliefs and address them through enhancing positive self-talk and cognitive restructuring and reframing. Although how and why a person has developed feelings of anxiety may be important, cognitively oriented interventions address the here and now rather than discussing past background and experiences to gain insight and awareness. Thus, interventions focus on how to change negative thoughts to more positive ones. It was important for Jan to recognize that faulty beliefs affected not only her ability to function appropriately in a work environment but also her personal life. The major goal was to modify her thinking process.

In subsequent chapters, the discussion of barriers to career choice and development will make it clear that choice and development are a complex, multidimensional, multifaceted process. In Chapter 6, I revisit the information presented in Box 3.1 with a case that involves the mood disorder of depression. In Chapter 11, I discuss coping strategies to reduce the effects of stress, including addressing self-efficacy, self-esteem, and social support. How to generate self-enhancing thoughts also is discussed and illustrated in Chapter 7. In a whole-person approach to career counseling helpers need to be alert to all mental health concerns that could affect a client's ability to think rationally.

Summary

1. A learning theory model of career counseling contains the following sequence: interview, assessment, generate activities, collect information, share information and estimate consequences, reevaluate, decide tentatively or recycle, and job search strategies.
2. The intake interview includes background information, presenting problems, current status information, health and medical information, family information, social and developmental history, life roles, problems that interfere with career counseling and development, clarifying problems, and identifying client goals.
3. The use of assessment is determined by client unique needs. Both standardized and nonstandardized methods are used. A wide range of tests and inventories is used, including measures of ability, acculturation, career beliefs, career maturity, educational achievement, interests, personality, and values.
4. Intervention strategies include enhancing self-knowledge, discovering specific needs, job satisfaction factors, strength of personality type, identity needs, learning more about occupational and educational requirements, modifying faulty beliefs, understanding the meaning of personal constructs, clarifying understanding of self-concept, how to process career information, and learning career decision-making skills.
5. The rationale for a whole-person approach to career and personal counseling emphasizes the awareness of interplay between career and personal concerns and all life roles.
6. Integrating career and personal concerns in the practice of career development addresses sets of needs by four domains: (1) career, (2) affective, (3) cognitive-behavioral, and (4) culture.

Supplementary Learning Exercises

1. In your future job setting, how would you see yourself managing sets of needs that clients bring to counseling?
2. How would the learning theory of career counseling differ from models developed from the theoretical orientation of life-space, life-span approach, and John Holland's typology? Provide examples.
3. What does the label *reinforcement-based approach to career development* mean? Give examples.
4. Under what conditions would you use nonstandardized methods of assessment? Explain your rationale.
5. What has career maturity to do with career counseling? Explain the significance of this concept.

