

Excerpt from *Counseling with Returned Servicemen*, Rogers, C.R. and John L. Wallen, M.A. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1946, pp. 1-7 and 148-149.

## CHAPTER 1

### COUNSELING: WARTIME AND POSTWAR

Joe is discharged. He put his uniform away yesterday. Many thoughts are running through his mind. Swell to be home, great to be welcomed so enthusiastically by the neighbors. It was nice to go down to the plant and see Mr. Grant, even though the place looked so changed. But other deeper thoughts are more disturbing. What if people knew how uncertain I feel? Do I want to go back to the old job or not? Do I want any job? I feel so changed, I'm not sure I could make the grade. And if I had a job, could I hold it? Funny the way folks suppose that just because you lived through the Normandy beachhead you will be able to cope with anything. Never felt so uncertain in my life, nor so queer. Life has been so different for three years that this old life looks frightening, difficult, and uncertain. The future looks confusing and threatening, and I'm not sure in what direction to steer.

Joe is not alone in his feelings, but could be multiplied by the thousands. He is unsure of his purpose and, yes, fearful of the multitude of new adjustments he must face. That he has shown unquestioned courage under fire does not alter the fact that facing civilian life is a frightening experience and involves many decisions that he hardly feels ready to make. How long will Joe stumble about before he finds new peacetime purposes to replace his wartime goals, makes clear and satisfying decisions regarding a job, and again recovers his self-confidence? The answer to this question will depend upon whether or not there is a friendly counselor in the community who can help Joe to find himself.

Or look for a moment at Technical Sergeant Miller, formerly a gunner on a Fortress, but now a mechanic at the army air field, veteran of 25 difficult missions over Europe. Miller is a restless, jumpy sort of person who does not say much and does not mingle much with the other men, but when he does talk, usually over a bottle of beer, the concentrated bitterness that pours out is astonishing. Bitterness toward his officers, toward civilians, toward the government, toward our allies – nearly everyone seems to be under Miller's indictment. It is not simply grouching, but a deep anger and hatred that has clearly been smoldering within.

What will be Miller's future? Will he continue to feel that every man is his enemy and that complete cynicism is the only attitude he can take? Will he go on to be a problem in his job and in his community? Again the answer to that question will be influenced by the availability of counseling help.

There are others – many others – with other difficulties of adjustment. John Neal has only been out of the Navy for six weeks, and already he and his wife are quarreling. The neighbors are saying that you could not expect much from a marriage that had lasted only two weeks before he shipped out for two whole years in the South Pacific. As a serviceman's wife, Mrs. Neal thought she had problems enough while he was away, but now she is realizing that the return home may

be just as hard. But is this marriage doomed to failure, or can John and Dorothy begin to build a sound adjustment?

Or take the boy down the street who has returned home from the general hospital, with that odd-looking scar on his temple and two fingers blasted off in Italy. He faces many problems. Shall he take advantage of the government offer and retrain himself in college, or shall he take back his old job on the railroad? And what is he going to do about the way people look at him? Will he have the courage to pick up his social life again, or will he withdraw?

## **THE NEED FOR COUNSELING SERVICES**

These are not isolated problems, nor are they unimportant. They are rapidly becoming a part of our everyday situation, and it is the rare citizen who does not know a serviceman who is facing real problems of adjustment, problems that cause him concern. The type of services offered to these men will help to determine whether these problems grow and accumulate and fester in social sores, or whether adequate help is offered in assisting these men to become self-directing competent citizens, capable of managing their lives and their affairs in a manner satisfactory to themselves and to the community.

It is because the nation is aware of this situation that one hears everywhere a growing talk of counseling services for servicemen. The army is training counselors. The Veterans Administration supplies counseling aid. Chaplains and ministers and USO workers are seriously applying themselves to the learning of counseling skills. Selective Service boards are expected to be of assistance. State agencies for veterans are setting up counseling centers. A fresh interest in counseling has grown up in schools and colleges because teachers are increasingly being called upon to assist in the matter of offering help to veterans, particularly in the smaller communities. In short, national, state, and local organizations, government agencies and private agencies, professional workers in education, social work, psychology, and other fields, are all interested in the field of counseling.

How great will the need for counselors be? No one can with assurance predict the answer, though one committee charged with making an estimate came out with a figure of 10,000 to 15,000 counselors as a minimum. The plain fact is that these thousands of counselors do not exist and that full professional training of any such number could not possibly be completed in time to be of help.

Because of this situation, there is an urgent need for brief, intensive training of counselors who will be dealing with the vocational, personal, and educational problems of our millions of men and women in the service. To be realistic, this training will need to be planned to turn out counselors with less than a full professional training, but adequately equipped to perform a sound though limited counseling function.

This brings us to the purpose of this little volume. Based on counseling experience with both servicemen and civilians, it endeavors to present a viewpoint and a method that can be acquired by a person with reasonable qualifications for a counseling position. It proposes to develop

certain concepts basic to effective counseling and to open the doorway to further reading and study in this field.

## **TWO VIEWPOINTS IN COUNSELING**

It may be said at the very beginning that the counseling viewpoint presented in these chapters is a new one. It is likely that it will be sharply different from any counseling which the reader may have done or with which he may be familiar. For that reason it may be well to state in a few words the difference between counseling as it is traditionally understood and counseling as presented here.

Traditionally, counseling has meant primarily the carrying out of three major functions in endeavoring to help the individual with some problem of adjustment. The first is the gathering of information about the client, collecting all pertinent data that might throw light on his situation. The second is the formulation of a diagnosis or explanation of the client's problems, based on the complete picture that has been assembled. The third step is the solution of the difficulty – pointing out to the client the course he should pursue, the steps he should take, to meet his problem.

The viewpoint presented in this book is decidedly at variance with this concept. Counseling is presented as a way of helping the individual to help himself. The function of the counselor is to make it possible for the client to gain emotional release in relation to his problems and, as a consequence, to think more clearly and more deeply about himself and his situation. It is the counselor's function to provide an atmosphere in which the client, through this exploration of his situation, comes to see himself and his reactions more clearly and to accept his attitudes more fully. On the basis of this insight he is able to meet his life problems more adequately, more independently, more responsibly than before. He has experienced psychological growth in the counseling situation, as well as discovering for himself a way of adjusting to the realities and demands of life.

## **THE RISKS INVOLVED**

Whatever one's offhand reaction to this very brief description of the two viewpoints, it should be evident that the traditional method of counseling should not be undertaken unless the counselor has satisfactory professional preparation in the field of psychology, psychiatry, or social casework. Extensive knowledge is required to judge what information is relevant and significant, and a thorough background in the psychology of personality is necessary to make a sound diagnosis of an individual and his adjustments. Wisdom and experience to a staggering degree are necessary to prescribe possible solutions to the varied problems that arise. Hence, the newcomer to the counseling field should avoid this traditional procedure, since neither his knowledge nor skill are adequate to undertake it and he may cause very serious damage to a maladjusted individual by attempting these procedures.

The client-centered counseling approach advocated in these chapters, however, is a much safer avenue to working with human problems. As the reader will see, it does not demand omniscience on the part of the counselor, since the stress is upon the full use of the strength and

capacity for growth within the client. It is the counselor's function to provide an atmosphere of a type that permits the client to work out his own solutions, and while subtle skills and attitudes are called for, the risk of damage to the client is very slight indeed in utilizing this second approach. Hence, it seems especially sound for the wartime counselor.

While the presentation in this book is directed toward the problem of dealing with the serviceman and servicewoman, the principles and procedures are equally applicable to the fields of industrial counseling, student counseling, family counseling, and others. Individuals are basically alike, whether they are civilian or military.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **PRACTICE IN COUNSELING: THE NEXT STEP**

The practice that has been obtained through the exercises in this chapter is a sound intermediate step. This manual stressed first the study of basic principles and case material exemplifying these principles. Second, exercise of the sort given in this chapter offer the opportunity to apply these principles in a situation where the counselor feels no urgency and no tension, because it is a paper situation. This in turn should be followed by the next step, supervised counseling interviews. It is to be hoped that the reader of this chapter can arrange for such supervised training. For the greatest learning the interviews should be phonographically recorded, since the opportunity to listen to the whole interview, with the words, the inflections, and the silences all accurately reproduced, makes for the greatest progress. If this is not possible, the counselor is urged to keep very complete notes during the interview, writing them up immediately afterward. A single interview adequately reported and intelligently criticized will make for more counselor learning than ten interviews summarized afterward from memory. Where skilled supervisory criticism is unobtainable, definite profit may be gained by a group of counselors studying together and analyzing and criticizing each other's interviews. The counselor who is serious in his purpose will endeavor to find some way of carrying on this next step of supervised practice.