Counselor Attitudes

One of the vital components of counseling is the attitude of the counselor. Some attitudes, such as being closed to new experiences, can impede the counseling process. Other attitudes, such as openness to learning, can be valuable to the counseling process. One of the goals of Advanced Practicum is to help develop these counselor attitudes which enhance counseling and to help Advanced Practicum students inhibit those counselor attitudes which detract from good counseling.

The counselor attitudes of particular relevance to effective counseling fall into five categories:

- **Openness toward self** – Willingness to learn, try new things, and to see alternatives.

- **Openness toward clients** – Viewing them as individuals seeking assistance, as complex individuals who are not helpless, and as partners in the process.

- **Openness toward colleagues** – Viewing them as colleagues, not competitors, with experiences and ideas that are valuable.

- **Openness toward supervisors** – Viewing them as colleagues with unique and relevant experiences.

- **Openness toward counseling** – The counseling process is often a developing, evolving process wherein the client’s skills and resources are developed. The counselor does not solve the problem, but offers alternatives and teaches/facilitates the client’s problem-solving process.

The following expected behaviors are intended to facilitate the development of appropriate counselor attitudes. Students are expected to:

1. Actively and openly explore, with the supervisor and the Advanced Practicum group, anxieties and expectations concerning the training experience at UCCS.

2. Recognize colleagues and supervisors as resources to help with hypothesis-building, test selection, process and outcome goal discussions, and as people with whom to share feedback about methods of achieving goals.

3. Consult with supervisors to discover resources which may be helpful to the counselor and to the client.

4. Share special knowledge and experience within the setting of the Advanced Practicum group, such as bringing in theories (personality development, vocational choice, etc.), ideas, articles, and experiences that would benefit others in their progress as counseling psychologists.

5. Become knowledgeable about the various professional organizations and attend some of the meetings of local groups, sharing these experiences and information.
6. Initiate support for all group supervision members, including the supervisor; give constructive feedback and share thoughts and feelings with each other in group supervision.

7. In an effort to learn, practice, and strengthen positive interaction skills in group supervision:
   (a) Learn to utilize basic empathy skills within the group--both about the interviews and about the process of the Advanced Practicum supervisory group;
   (b) Apply listening and feedback skills within the group--both regarding the interviews and as well as the process of the Advanced Practicum group;
   (c) Utilize helpful self-disclosure;
   (d) Know and demonstrate the difference between "do it my way" and "this has been my experience";
   (e) Participate actively within the group, contributing to group solidarity and reducing competition;
   (f) Demonstrate an understanding of individual differences, an appreciation for those differences, and an ability to take a stand for one's position in a positive way.

8. Identify, with the supervisor’s assistance, personal verbal and non-verbal mannerisms, which either enhance or detract from counseling effectiveness.

9. Identify personal discomforts or anxieties generated by interview content and particular counselor techniques (e.g., dealing with "personal" material, probing, and confronting). Acknowledge types of problems beyond one’s present capability or which conflict with personal values or comfort level. Accept that the Advanced Practicum experience generates tensions and anxieties, which need to be worked through with the help of the supervisor, other students, and/or other senior staff.

10. Differentiate counseling from advising, and both of these from casual conversation. Learn that all three of these modes of interaction have a place in counseling and that different cues exist for the initiation of each. As needed, identify new behaviors required to participate in these different modes of interaction and work at acquiring the identified behaviors.

Note: “Counselor Responsibility” is a theme that runs throughout training: Responsibility to your clients to offer the best help you can give, and also responsibility to your supervisors and student colleagues to seek and give clear, helpful feedback.