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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: WHY? HOW?

The offer from Dr. Nevison to contribute some of my personal thoughts and attitudes to the *Canadian Counsellor/Conseiller Canadien* came as a pleasant surprise. Seldom does one have the opportunity to do this in a journal. I appreciate the invitation and congratulate Dr. Nevison on her undertaking.

I would like to address myself briefly to a few topics which are current in my thinking. They are expressed more completely in *Group Counseling: A Developmental Approach* (Gazda, 1971a) and in "Human Relations—Helping," *Journal of Research and Development in Education* (Gazda & Carkhuff, 1971). Nevertheless, I welcome this opportunity to summarize them.

Essentially I am concerned with how counseling, counselor education, and the helping professions in general can be used to *prevent* problem development in our populace, how we can employ our expertise in assisting educators at all levels to relate helpfully to students and make education relevant, and how we can employ "functional professionals," *a la* Carkhuff (1970), as helpers and thus reach the entire community. The title of this paper is being used to reflect two related points of view: (1) to convey that we need to 'put together' our understanding and skills from the many disciplines involved in helping to *prevent* problem development, and (2) to 'put together' our expertise to rehabilitate those who are unable to function so as to experience happiness and success in our society.

I agree with Glasser (1969) that our greatest pollution is human pollution and further "We do not have anything that is *that* valuable to teach in school (in any school) that we must teach it at the expense of causing many students to feel failure in relationship to that school (pp. 11-12)." Much of our human pollution is the direct result of our educational procedures. For example, we frequently use the normal curve and grades in general to *insure* that a certain proportion of our students *do not* 'make it'. It is not accidental, then, that, based on the statistics of the 1970 United States Census, only three of four students who enter elementary school complete high school and that only one of two students who enters college ultimately graduates. This is built into the system so that we virtually guarantee that a large number of our population cannot experience educational success. They thus come to view themselves as failures and our educational system as the source of this failure. It should not be surprising that education does not enjoy widespread support, especially since almost one of two adults was not educationally successful and can often point to educators and our system of education as the source of his condition.

I believe, further, that when an educational system is oriented to developing a society of the 'haves' and the 'have nots' it can eventually expect a confrontation from the 'have nots'. We are experiencing something like this today. Furthermore, many students and educators are questioning, and

rightfully so, the relevance of much of *what* we teach as well as *how* we attempt to teach it. Many are advocating a revolution in education. I agree that we need to make some fundamental changes, but I believe also that they can be accomplished in a peaceful revolution.

If by law we are going to require students to attend school until approximately their sixteenth birthday, then it seems only reasonable that we do everything to make those school years enjoyable, meaningful, and productive. The fact that many, if not most children, have learned to dislike school by the time they reach third grade, should be a clue that we are doing something wrong. What can counselors contribute to the resolution of the problems just cited?

We should possess an understanding of the current problems in education. Those students who seek our help identify the problems they face, and we should take an active part in curriculum revision to prevent the occurrence of many conflicts students experience as a result of the content of courses, and, perhaps even more so, the lack of coursework or effort devoted to teaching interpersonal or human relations skills. We know that many people lack skills in interpersonal relations, yet we do very little directly to help them before they become hurt and alienated. I recommend that we emphasize through direct teaching, and also by our example as teachers at all educational levels, human relations skills and personal problem-solving models—group guidance or “human relations education.”

Since teachers are the product of our teacher education programs and these programs are in effect teacher educators, we must, as counselor educators, first take steps to insure that our teacher educators are model teachers. Prospective teachers and practicing teachers also need concrete skills to facilitate students. Carkhuff (1969a,b) and Truax and Carkhuff (1967) have provided us with excellent models for Systematic Human Relations (Resources) Training. We should take the lead in providing human relations training for prospective and practicing teachers (Gazda, 1971b). Thus we will truly begin to serve the cause of prevention of problem development.

Since it now seems quite possible to train non-professionals or “functional professionals” to be helpers (Carkhuff, 1970), we have a means of reaching into all of our institutions and thus an opportunity to reach virtually everyone in the community. With these new means for helping we in counseling have a new and enlarged role to fill. We must also look beyond the educational institutions, viz., the schools, and teach, i.e., systematically train, individuals, preferably in small groups, how to relate so as to produce the best opportunity for personal growth as well as the conditions which insure growth in others. To accomplish this ideal will necessitate an emphasis on interpersonal understanding, cooperation and mutual problem-solving in our schools versus the current emphasis on competition and self-advancement. Often peers can serve as trainers and/or helpers more efficiently and efficaciously than the professionals; therefore we must often reach those who are alienated from the Establishment through those from within their group who will consent to be trained as functional professionals.

Before we as counselors can intervene to help students, teachers, and other school personnel, we must have demonstrated that we are “helpful” professionals and that we are good models for others. The work of Rogers, Carkhuff, Truax, and others has given us some yardsticks through the “core

conditions" for evaluating our level of functioning. It behooves all of us to apply the yardstick to ourselves before we try to change others.

I have been describing what I feel should be our emphasis as professional helpers, viz., to expend most of our efforts to *prevent* problem development. Nevertheless, there will still be some individuals who will experience intra- and interpersonal difficulties. These individuals will often be placed in prisons or reformatories and mental hospitals. Others will be able to function in their normal settings but require therapeutic assistance to maintain their place in society. Unfortunately, most of our "correctional" institutions do not rehabilitate. In fact, especially is "correctional institution" a misnomer. In most cases inmates are taught, by the treatment they receive, to become more alienated from society. Mental patients are frequently taught to adapt to the life of being a mental patient. Through the systematic application of learning principles in conjunction with the core conditions of a helping and healthy relationship, we now have the basic ingredients for changing behavior and attitudes. However, neither prisoners nor mental patients will change or grow in healthy directions if those in charge are not healthy and helpful models. One cannot expect offenders imprisoned in our correctional institutions to change their attitudes and behaviors in a healthy direction when the majority of those employed by society to rehabilitate them are harmful, punitive persons, themselves.

Even if teachers or other helpers provided facilitative conditions, it would still be necessary to recognize and provide for individual differences to insure that every person in our society has the opportunity to achieve success. We have never tried it, but I would like to recommend that we provide opportunities for individuals to attend schools or training programs for as long as it takes to provide them with skills which will help them feel worthwhile and do something that is productive for themselves and society. Whatever the increased cost would be in the beginning, I predict that it would surely be compensated for by the need for considerably less rehabilitation or correction, by increased productivity, and by the undeterminable value of increased human happiness.

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