

Chapter 19

Counseling Processes and Procedures

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The authors of the previous chapters have extensively examined the place of action in counseling. In particular chapters they have shown its connections, both in similarities and differences, with major counseling trends and positions. Others have applied action to particular counseling populations and presenting problems. In Chaps. 9 and 10, we provided an overview of counseling and action from the perspective of contextual action theory (CAT) and, in applying this perspective, identified and discussed five counseling tasks. In this chapter, we provide more details on counseling processes and procedures based on CAT. They are not intended to replace similar or competing processes and procedures that counselors may be using. Rather, in this chapter we invite counselors to examine more closely what they and their clients are doing from the perspective of goal-directed action.

Our invitation in this chapter, and in the book generally, is to join us in reflecting on the possibilities for professional practice and everyday life by respecting the constructive power of our clients and our encounters with them in life facilitating ways. It is an invitation to consider how relevant an everyday understanding of clients' lives and counsellors' practice is for professional practice and theorizing. As readers of this book, you know that its focus has not been limited to practical applications. You know that we, as editors and authors, have invited you to consider the broad conceptual dimensions of action in counseling as well as their implications for practice. It is our view that the basic philosophy and the methods and techniques go hand-in-hand, that they are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the pre-condition of engaging in CAT-informed counseling is to be acquainted not only with the action project methods and techniques (Valach and Young 2013; Young et al. 2011a, 2011b), but also with the basic philosophy and approach of CAT. This approach as

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applied to counseling implies that we see clients' and counselors' relevant processes and joint client–counselor processes in this framework.

With this in mind, in this final chapter we begin by identifying the links between counseling informed by CAT and other major theoretical approaches to counseling. Without losing our grounding in only one theoretical perspective, we then proceed to detail the counselor's specific challenges of connecting with the client's daily life, which illustrate the integrative application of CAT-informed counseling. Additionally, some basic processes and procedures of counseling informed by CAT and two case illustrations supplement earlier discussions of counseling in this book.

Contextual Action Theory Informed Counseling and Other Counseling Approaches

Throughout this book, we have argued that CAT is not a distinct, stand-alone counseling or therapeutic approach to be added to the proliferating pile of methods that have emerged in recent years. Counseling informed by CAT is integrative. Many procedures suggested by CAT are well known in other approaches. For example, it uses many aspects of cognitive behavioral therapy (see, for example, Valach and Young 2013). When behavior is understood as having cognitive and emotional components, it is an action. Emotion-focused therapy (Greenberg and Watson 2005; Watson, Chap. 8) overlaps to a great extent with some of the procedures of counseling informed by CAT. The latter also adheres to many principles of dialectic behavior therapy (Linehan 1993), as, on the one hand, dialectics is a basic principle of a relational orientation and, on the other, CAT also frames processes as oscillating between internally and externally directed constructions. Counseling informed by CAT is also related to experiential approaches (e.g., Ecker et al. 2012; Greenberg et al. 1998), as action and the experience of action – some authors would say *enaction* (Stewart et al. 2010) – is the center of the counseling process. Existential therapy (Frankl 2006; Yalom 1980) finds many comparable ideas in CAT as meaning (of life), goals, and projects provide cornerstones of CAT conceptualization. Psychodynamic therapies with their emphasis on interpersonal aspects and unconscious processes as well as their ability to construe a long-term working alliance are also well represented in counseling informed by CAT. Constructivist (Neimeyer and Mahoney 1999) and constructionist approaches (Burr 2003; Young and Collin 2004) are mirrored in CAT-informed counseling as social construction through action is its basic premise. Equally, many other counseling processes are used in CAT counseling, including problem-solving (Leith 2007; Malouff et al. 2007), narrative psychotherapy (Angus and McLeod 2004), positive psychology (Snyder and Lopez 2002), post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004), phenomenological approaches (Halling and Dearborn Nill 1995; Laing 1995), mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn et al. 2002), career construction counseling (Savickas 2011), and project work (Little et al. 2007). This list could be much longer as CAT is not an approach defined by its sharp borders but by its integrative stance.

Counseling theories allow the counselor to conceptualize their cases and, based on that conceptualization, to act jointly with the client relative to the case. The theories answer the question of how counselors think about their clients and the issues they present. Logically, case conceptualization may precede the processes and procedures, but in effect, conceptualization and the implementation of counseling processes and procedures occur simultaneously with the counselor's engagement with the client. Although the theories the counselor has learned, accepted, and integrated are an important part of that process, the counselor knows that it is unlikely that the client is guided by a similar formal counseling theory. Rather, clients bring everyday understandings of themselves, their lives, and their problems to counseling. In addition, no matter how sophisticated the counselors' conceptual frameworks may be, they still rely on an everyday understanding of clients' lives and problems. Counselors rely on this understanding because it is the clients' frameworks in which they are acting out their lives. Moreover, the counseling processes and procedures are actions and, like all the actions discussed in this book, are subject to everyday understandings. The main difference from the aforementioned approaches is that CAT-informed counseling relies on the basic principles of CAT, including the important principles of systemic order, multiple perspectives, process orientation, relationalism, contextualism, and constructionism.

Shortly, we provide and elaborate on a list of processes and procedures that detail how the different levels and systems of actions can be addressed in counseling for optimal client outcome and functioning. Before examining the list in detail, it may be helpful to immerse oneself in a case example of how action theory can provide a way of conceptualizing a case (see Text Box 19.1) and a second example of how CAT is used to describe the counseling process as implemented in one counseling session (see Text Box 19.2). Some readers may prefer to refer to these cases as they read the details of the levels and systems of action as applied to optimal client functioning.

Text Box 19.1 The Case of Veronique: A Case Conceptualization

In this chapter we described the aspects of action, project, and career that can be addressed in counseling to assist clients to engage in meaningful joint projects and life-enhancing careers. Coupled with the five counseling tasks envisioned in counseling informed by contextual action theory (see Chap. 9 and Valach and Young 2012), a rich, integrative conceptual framework and practice guidelines emerge. This framework and these guidelines are briefly illustrated in the following case example of how a client's situation and presenting problems may be conceptualized by a CAT-informed practitioner.

Veronique, a 37-year-old woman, sought therapy and counseling because she became very anxious after being involved in a traffic accident. She reported a number of actions she could no longer perform, for example, driving her car. She also reported on actions she could engage in only with great difficulty because of anxiety; for example, relaxing when her 16-year-old daughter is out. In addition, her relationship with her daughter (project) suffered.

Veronique indicated that she would like to “get on with my life,” that is, continue with her other projects and long-term involvements, but could not leave the accident behind. She also complained about her partner, the father of her daughter, who had been living with them for the last year, after a nine-year absence. She reported that he does not help at home, and is impulsive, self-righteous, and violent. He also does not contribute much to the running of the household. Veronique spoke in a very distant manner about the accident in which she suffered internal injuries after being run over by a car. Reflecting upon her past, she talked about her unreliable alcoholic mother under whom she suffered much. Veronique had returned to her previous employment as a clerk in a shop after the injury. However, she expressed dissatisfaction with this job and her lack of qualifications to get the better job she desired. Furthermore, she expressed her intention to leave her partner after their daughter reached her 18th birthday. Thus, the counselor recognizes a number of long-term involvements and strivings we label “career,” including her relationship to her partner, to her daughter, to her mother, and her employment career. Her projects include getting over the accident, progressing at work, terminating her relationship with her partner, improving her relationship with her daughter and, above all, overcoming her present anxieties.

Veronique wants to improve some actions, such as being able to drive her car again. Some of the strivings and goal-directed processes can be addressed at goal level, such as her career project. Others would have to be unpacked at the level of action and project steps; that is, the control system where the functionality in regards to the action and project goals is examined and changed. Some others have to be addressed and worked on as action regulation, for example, her anxiety provoking contexts and cues.

Veronique was inhibited in her actions and projects by a number of emotional memories. These included the trauma of the accident, then an emotional memory of an earlier car accident in which she was not injured. There was also the memory of a number of emotional events and actions with her abusive mother, her violent partner, and others. Additionally, during the fearful experiences with her mother, she developed a tendency to dissociate, a habit she needs to unlearn.

Veronique’s suboptimal and detrimental actions and projects are related to her traumatization, but also to her belief, enacted in her relationship project with her partner, that she must remain in an abusive relationship as she had experienced with her mother.

In the joint elaborating of Veronique’s action systems, of her emotional memories and her detrimental actions and projects, a helping alliance can be constructed. However, Veronique has to learn about her dissociative strategies that make it difficult for her to engage in the work on her traumatic experiences and emotional memory, which are the topic of her dissociation.

Text Box 19.2 Counseling Process: A Session with Sandra and Anne

Sandra, a 19-year-old woman, was seen on four occasions by a counselor, Anne, who works from a systems perspective. Sandra's initial presenting problem, elaborated in the first session, was the challenge of returning home after having lived in another city for a year. Specifically, she was concerned about her relationship with her parents and her possible reimmersion in the local drug culture. The third session is discussed here from a contextual action theory perspective based on a detailed analysis of all the sessions from that perspective.

Sandra's presenting problem and subsequent engagement with Anne revealed two interrelated projects that were of concern to her, namely, identity and relationship.

In Session 3, Sandra's goals were to gain support and validation for both the adult she was becoming and her position within her family. The latter goal seemed particular salient in light of her parents' lack of acknowledgement of her progress toward responsible adulthood. She perceived that her parents were treating her "like a child," "like I'm still 15." The relational project is intertwined with her identity project and goal that is apparent throughout this session. She wanted to be able to define herself in opposition to both her brother and her mother, and paradoxically, in likeness to her mother in some respects. Part of the session is given over to trying to resolve her indecision about staying in this city or moving to another city.

Sandra used a number of functional steps in this session to reach her goals. She openly shared details about herself and her family. She explained in detail the challenges of her family situation—not being recognized as an adult, being caught in the middle, being considered as one who needs to be controlled, being lashed out against. She repeatedly expressed frustration, anger, disbelief, and exasperation about her situation.

In engaging with Sandra in this session, Anne, the counselor, had the following goals. She wanted to align herself with the client and to continue to build the working alliance begun in the first session. She addressed Sandra's sense of identity with her. Anne's goals included trying to understand the family context and to make suggestions so Sandra would experience less conflict at home. She wanted to encourage the client to understand her parents' goals so that she could base her actions on them and not on her feeling of being devalued. In this way, Anne hoped that Sandra would be able to lessen her conflict with her parents.

Anne took a number of functional steps to reach her goals. Anne expressed interest in tracking Sandra's narrative. She normalized and validated Sandra's experience. She encouraged Sandra to see her parents' perspective and to see herself in relation to others. She explored with Sandra her family context,

using a family systems lens. She advised about effective communication techniques to use with her family. At the same time Anne was challenged in trying to help the client develop some awareness of her own internal processes as she engaged in actions with others.

Sandra's and Anne's individual goals and functional steps came together to form joint goals for the session. Addressing the client's identity was one of them, represented in the issues of Sandra holding down two jobs and finishing high school. Addressing the relational project was engaged in through a dynamic process of the client requesting support by complaining and the counselor providing support by validating, praising, approving, and complementing the client. Their joint counseling project is seen as satisfactory by both participants, yet the tension between them of client complaints and counselor praise continued from previous sessions.

Connecting with the Client's Daily Life

In Chap. 9 and elsewhere (Valach and Young 2013), we have described the five counseling tasks inspired by CAT. Here we adopt a complementary way of expanding and detailing that information. Specifically, the counseling task of connecting with the client's daily life and with the actions and projects in the client's daily life, involves addressing where to go with the client's actions and projects. Of course, this direction is at the client's discretion, and, although CAT is not normatively prescriptive, it provides suggestions of what should be attended to. Elsewhere we proposed a list illustrating optimal functioning in the range of systems and levels of goal-directed action (Young and Valach 2008). It is summarized in Table 19.1. This list of "optimal" functions is neither definitive nor exhaustive, but it offers a framework for further considerations. Table 19.1 provides examples of the issues for the counselor and client to address in counseling. The best chances for successful counseling is greatly increased when these issues are well processed and integrated, while considering culture, environment, and resources.

The following simplified schema distinguishes between action, project and career systems. It further distinguishes between three levels of each system. At the highest level, action, project, and career can all be considered from the perspective of goals. These goals reflect their steering processes. Goals are constructed, identified, and spoken about in socially meaningful categories. The second level of Table 19.1 represents the steps in implementing an action, project, and career. These steps have a control function and are represented by their functional description. The third level represents the elements of action, project, and career. This level captures regulation processes and is defined in physical terms. The numbering in the following text corresponds to the numbers used in Table 19.1.

Table 19.1 Domains and issues of the life-enhancing career. (Source: Young and Valach 2008; used with permission)

	Meaningful goal-directed actions	Motivated participation in projects generated by actor and/or others	Life-enhancing career	
<i>At the level of meaning, goals (steering processes)</i>	1 Shared action goals	3 Joint, goal-directed projects	7 Long-term meaning in life	
	2 Relevant to projects and career	4 Cooperative	8 Socially integrated	
		5 Emotionally sensitive	9 Emotionally satisfying	
		6 Relevant to career and identity		
		10 Serving identity and goal processes	12 Mid-term challenging	16 Long-term challenging
		11 Emotional and cognitive components	13 Successful steps	17 Allowing predictability and novelty
<i>At the level of control processes</i>		14 Positive feedback in cooperative undertakings	18 Attendance to emotional issues	
		15 Emotionally functional		
	<i>At the level of action elements (unconscious and conscious behavior; structural support, resources) and regulation processes</i>	19 Energy	23 Adequate structural support	26 Long-term adequate time and sequence
		20 Cognitive and emotional regulation	24 Predictable and manageable time order	27 Structural properties
		21 Skills	25 Adequate emotional resources	28 Resources
		22 Habits		29 Functional emotional regulation

The Goal Level/Steering Processes of Action

(1) Shared Action Goals

To what extent are counselors aware of their clients' individual and joint action goals and of the possible strengths and weaknesses of these actions? With their clients, counselors can address and work on supporting resourceful actions and improving or abandoning detrimental ones. In order to understand and work with a client's shared action goals, counselors can ask themselves questions such as the following: What are the client's actions and goals when relating to others? What are the actions the client is dissatisfied with? What are the actions the client is proud of? What are the client's destructive action goals? What are the client's constructive and life enhancing actions and goals and how can they be improved? What were my own and the client's joint actions and goals in the session?

(2) Actions Relevant to Projects and Career

To what extent are counselors aware of how client actions are connected to, and relevant for, important projects and careers in their lives? Here counselors can ask themselves: How does the client integrate these actions in projects and careers for the medium and long term? It is expected that actions can be consciously and meaningfully integrated into projects, which, in turn, can be part of a conscious, constructive, and desired career. However, clients often do not consciously make such a link, that is, they do not make a connection between their actions and their projects. Or they make a link without reflecting on it. The bottom-up steering process of experiencing a flashback is one such example (Valach et al. 2006). Peter is a 45-year-old construction worker who 25 years earlier, had experienced his father suffering from a brain injury incurred in an accident, which later resulted in his father's death. In the present, a lethal injury to his supervisor, with whom he was very close, resulted in Peter being unable to work at the workshop where the accident happened, even though he wanted to. The moment Peter sees the work yard, his goal of going to work is abandoned and changed to an avoidance goal, even though a few minutes earlier Peter was determined to take up his work. Thus, the flashback not only impacts Peter's emotional and physiological processes, but it also builds up an action in a bottom-up manner (see also Chap. 18).

Clients can also be mistaken in connecting actions and projects. For example, a client could connect her action of engaging in numerous arguments with others, from which she reports feeling upset and disappointed with herself, to her project of "addressing injustice." However, she might subsequently learn that the feelings motivating her aggressive engagements with others are based on her emotional memories that let her fight against past injustices she suffered, and thus is actually a part of a "revenge" project. Career counselors are also challenged to help their clients link actions and projects to relevant careers, and to identify with their clients the appropriate careers for their projects and actions.

The Goal Level/Steering Processes of Project and Career

(3) Joint, Goal-Directed Projects

To what extent are counselors aware of clients' individual and joint projects and of the possible strength and weaknesses of these projects? Counselors can address the issue of, and instigate the work on, supporting resourceful projects and improving or abandoning detrimental ones. At this level, counselors can note clients' most important projects, including which projects are life facilitative or destructive, the projects clients handle well and those for which support is required. Usually, clients engage in and present a number of projects in counseling. Identity and relationship projects are often the most critical ones (see examples in Marshall et al. 2008;

Young et al. 2006; 2008). Ongoing relationships to partners, children, parents, work and other colleagues, neighbors, and friends can often be valuable resources but also a source of problems. Occupational projects are equally important in modern and postmodern societies and often of concern in counseling (Domene et al. 2012; Young et al. 2008). Frequently, these projects involve one or more sub-projects that have the client's attention, such as fitness, body weight, eating habits, sleeping, managing household chores, or passing exams.

(4) Motivated Projects Are Consensual or Cooperative

To what extent does the counselor address the issue of whether and how the client is engaged in cooperative projects? Cooperative projects stress the consensual aspects of any engagement in a joint venture. It is important for clients to understand and experience how their joint projects are mutual, even if there is disagreement or conflict in the engagement. It is particularly helpful in counseling when the counselor and client can attend to the client's cooperative projects with other people in the client's life. What are these projects? What is their quality? How is the client involved? What function or role does the client have in the project? Is the client part of goal setting? Do the client and other people in the client's life share the project goals? How does the client contribute to the project? Are these projects helpful to the client's personally relevant career?

(5) Emotionally Sensitive

To what extent do counselors assess whether clients' projects are emotionally sensitive in a life-facilitating or life-detrimental way and consider appropriate interventions? What is the emotional dimension of these projects? Are the projects conceived with the appropriate emotional understanding, are they emotionally well monitored, and are they energized or de-energized?

(6) Relevant to Career and Identity

A number of questions arise for counselors when assessing the relevance of client projects for their career and identity processes. Do clients link their projects with something more long-term? How do clients make this link? To what extent are clients conscious of their references to the link between project and career? How are projects integrated with and help the client's identity processes? To what extent are projects facilitative, inhibitive or even detrimental to career and identity?

(7) Long-Term Meaning of Life

The long-term meaning of life addresses clients' enduring goal-directed processes. Long-term meaning is more than a philosophical or ethical question. Rather, this issue is often critical to resolving the presenting problem, such as in suicidal, depressive, and self-harming clients. Only by being aware of this issue can counselors begin to address it appropriately. For example, in certain circumstances, it may be suitable for the counselor and client to launch a process of change in the client's meaning of life and his or her philosophy and values, using, for example, an existential approach. Of course, counselors, like all people, have to attend to these issues in their own lives and practices. Thus, long-term life meaning provides a particularly rich domain for authentic counselor–client collaboration.

(8) Socially Integrated

Socially integrated projects can contribute to the person's sense of belongingness to a given society. They are projects through which the person is accepted and recognized within the social, cultural, political, and socio-economic group, for example, participating in work, rearing children, developing relationships, participating in community work, or contributing to neighborhood development. How clients' long-term careers are integrated in a given society is an important question. Although it cannot be answered in a prescriptive way, counselors and clients should address it in counseling to ensure that clients are attending to it satisfactorily. Joint and collaborative actions and projects and relationships are important parts of clients' social lives. Clients' goal-directed processes, particularly long-term dealings, must possess a reasonable degree of social integration otherwise they may become a source of problems and difficulties.

(9) Emotionally Satisfying

Although our emotional participation and engagement in life is wide-ranging, long-term involvements can be a particularly rich source of emotional gratification and positive expectation. To attend to long-term emotional satisfaction with clients, counselors can ask themselves whether and to what extent clients' long-term processes are emotionally satisfying. If possible, this question should be answered positively before counseling is terminated.

The Level of Functional Processes and Control of Action

(10) Serving Identity and Goal Processes

The action steps clients take should facilitate their action goals. They should also serve actions related to client identity. In CAT-informed counseling, actions are short-term goal-directed processes containing action steps as a system of functionally defined units directed at achieving the goal. Thus, counselors can analyze how clients proceed in pursuing goals. The analysis is based on the client's actions during the counseling sessions, and on reported actions that take place outside of counseling. For example the action of a mother who describes trying to provide feedback to her adolescent son by using the reproachful question, "why don't you ever do as I tell you?" is easily recognized as an action step dysfunctional to her goal of trying to instill a greater sense of responsibility in her son.

(11) Emotional and Cognitive Components

Counselors do much more than address their clients' observable manifest behaviors. Addressing the emotional and cognitive processes in action is part of counselors' required competence. There is substantial information on optimal emotional and cognitive processing in the counseling and psychotherapy literature for counselors to use. Thus, the question counselors can ask themselves is: to what extent are they aware of the cognitive-emotional processes in their clients' actions? The last phrase in the question, *in their clients' actions*, is important because it suggests that emotions and cognitions have to be addressed as they are embodied in action. Emotions and cognitions are much more than representational states or philosophies; rather they are embodiments. In addition, in answering the question, counselors should not limit themselves to focusing on emotions that disrupt action. Cognitive strategies, such as mindfulness, accepting, problem-solving, and coping are also helpful in counseling.

The Level of Functional Processes and Control of Project

(12) Mid-Term Challenging

Short-term harmony and adaptation are not the primary aims of CAT-informed counseling. Instead, the temporal focus of the approach is in the mid-term; that is, its focus is on how actions are constructed as projects over various periods of time. Furthermore, the steps of a client's project should be challenging but not overpowering. The steps should be neither too exciting nor too boring, neither beyond the client's means nor too easy to complete.

(13) Successful Steps

Are the client's projects devised in such a way that it is possible and practical to engage in successful project steps? What are the successful steps required in order to maintain these projects? Projects themselves should generate successful project steps to serve the project goals. Thus, counselors can help clients in developing the necessary project steps with the appropriate control processes.

(14) Positive Feedback in Cooperative Undertakings

The important mechanism for control processes is feedback. For example, to what extent and how do parents mutually provide and receive feedback about their joint parenting project? Counselors might ask themselves: How is the processing of feedback functioning in joint projects? Are clients competent in providing and receiving constructive feedback to maintain their joint projects? Constructive feedback is particularly important in joint, collaborative, and cooperative projects. This seemingly trivial understanding often helps in many relationships.

(15) Emotionally Functional

The steps of a project should allow the client to process emotion in a functional way. The steps of a project should be emotionally anchored in the client, monitored by the client, and resonate with the client. Emotionally functional project steps are rooted in the "here and now" without becoming detrimental to the mid-term construction of the project. Clients can be supported in the range of skills needed to ensure that their project steps are emotionally functional. For example, cognitive-emotional competence is concerned not only with processes within an action but also with the mid-term processes of projects. Caring for emotional presence and including emotionally enhancing project steps can be learned in the counseling sessions.

The Level of Functional Processes and Control of Career

(16) Long-Term Challenging

Counselors can help clients to generate long-term career processes. These processes should be personally and socially meaningful, and challenging, but not surpassing clients' resources and learning possibilities. Learning that long-term aims are a source of motivation rather than disillusion is an important process through which counselors can facilitate and support their clients.

(17) Allowing for Predictability and Novelty

In the long-term, it is likely that clients want to maintain a balance between their thirst for novelty and their need for predictability. The relative proportions of this mixture differ from person to person, and from career to career. Marriage is an oft-cited example of a career in which an imbalance between predictability and novelty can become a problem. This issue of finding an appropriate balance should be addressed explicitly in counseling and clients should be supported in trying to construct careers that allow for a functional balance between predictability and novelty.

(18) Attendance to Emotional Issues

To what extent are the steps in the long-term career sufficiently anchored in emotion and monitored over time? Processes involved in constructing long-term careers require vibrant emotional involvement, despite their social and institutional anchoring. For example, the dissolution of many marriages is frequently attributed to a lack of emotional involvement in the processes that sustain them. Attending to the emotional issues involved in short-term action or mid-term projects can be challenging for clients. However, these processes can be examined in counseling as the basis for dealing with the more challenging task of addressing emotional issues in long-term career.

The Level of the Elements of Action

(19) Energy

The client's energy level is an issue that counselors should be aware of and address. Counselors can easily monitor clients in the counseling session or through the clients' reports. Clients frequently complain of experiencing a lack of energy. Furthermore, a lack of energy is a symptom of numerous psychological disorders, such as depression. Many symptoms, such those associated with emotional trauma, are characterized by a lack of energy. Energy, although mainly manifest at the level of action elements, can be addressed at all levels of the action. For example, clients are not likely to be energized by either meaningless goals or futile sequences of action steps. Where emotional regulation is "switched off," no energy is provided.

(20) Cognitive and Emotional Regulation

To what extent are the client's regulatory processes "operational"? Are the regulatory processes directed toward ongoing action or are they serving other purposes, such as addressing challenges from emotional memory? Cognitive and emotional

regulation is not a mechanism that operates by itself. It is a contextual process integrated in an action. Thus, when counselors address clients' cognitive and emotional regulation, they must do so in the context of the related action. Counseling provides a good venue in which to practice cognitive and emotional regulation in relation to particular client actions. In addition, longer-term practice oriented interventions such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) groups have also been shown to be effective in enhancing cognitive and emotional regulation (Segal et al. 2002).

(21) Skills

To what extent are the necessary verbal and non-verbal skills to perform actions well ingrained and readily or automatically available to the client? Skills include those needed at the goal level as actions and at the level of action steps as strategies and plans. For example, planning has long been recognized as a skill that clients require. Skills also refer to those micro processes we execute semi-automatically, for example, the counselor's physical openness to the client. Skills training is a very common procedure in many counseling and therapy approaches and should not be overlooked by CAT-informed counselors.

(22) Habits

To what extent are the client's beneficial as well as detrimental behaviors habitualized? For example, getting very little sleep on a regular basis may be a habit a person developed while a student. It may have been beneficial for a short period of time for the student's academic achievement, but when habitualized may be detrimental to the person's health. As noted, habits can be life enhancing or life detrimental. They can also facilitate action or inhibit it. Counselors can assist clients to identify and change habitualized actions, for example, chronic nail-biting, and habitualized elements of action, for example, talking too much in anxiety-provoking social situations. Habit reversal training is one intervention successfully used to change habits (Azrin and Nunn 1973; Piacentini and Chang 2006).

The Level of the Elements of Project

(23) Adequate Structural Support

To what extent can clients provide or obtain adequate support for their projects, including material, personal, and social resources? Clearly some actions and projects are structured and thus entail structurally supportive as well as inhibitive features. For example, the availability of special education teachers is a resource needed for

many educational projects for developmentally delayed children. Similarly, social capital, a resource identified by sociologists (Coleman 1990), contributes to the productive benefits of a variety of projects, including one's health project (Lin 2001). Counselors sometimes bypass the issue of adequate structural support for their clients' projects because it does not appear "internal" to the client's psychological functioning. However, helping the client obtain adequate quantity and quality supportive processes and structures can frequently make the difference in implementing a project. Thus, attending to and helping the client to obtain adequate structural support is typically an important component of CAT-informed counseling.

(24) Predictable and Manageable Time Order

Do the projects that clients are engaged in have a manageable and predictable time order? Is this an issue clients need to become more aware of? Time order is also monitored and attended to at this level of action and project organization. For example, the single mother who has two jobs may not have as predictable and manageable time order to engage in the parenting project she and her children would like. Counselors help their clients develop an adequate time order in which the required tasks can be addressed.

(25) Adequate Emotional Resources

To what extent do clients' projects receive adequate emotional support and do they have access to the necessary emotional resources? These emotional resources are part of how a project is regulated. For example, having a sufficient number of rewarding interpersonal relationships that can be drawn on may assist a young person in his transition project from living at home to living on his own. These are different than attending to emotional issues as a part of control processes of a career described above (18). As an example of the latter, one would expect that incorporating regular holidays as part of a professional career could be identified as a functionally defined step that allows the person to attend to the emotional issues in her life.

The Level of the Elements of Career

(26) Long-Term Adequate Time and Sequence

To what extent do clients' careers and other long-term processes possess an adequate time order? To what extent are the career aspects well organized sequentially? For example, aspiring to, developing, and engaging in professional occupations require a long-term time perspective and sequence. Counselors and clients are encouraged

to address the latter's long-term striving to ensure that these are well developed as far as time structure is concerned and, thus, will generate goals that are realistic prospects rather than dreams.

(27) Structural Properties

To what extent are the structural properties of the client's career adequate? It is very understandable that long-term meaning cannot be realized without substantial structural support. Consider the ways in which long-term careers such as education, marriage, and parenting are structured in our society through institutions, laws, and long-standing customs. Although counseling may not be the best place to address the structural details of a career fully, some attention could be paid to generating the necessary strategies to obtain some appropriate structural requirements or at least raising clients' awareness of the connection between the client's desired career and the structures in their lives.

(28) Resources

To what extent are the resources needed for the client's career adequate and sustainable? Resources refer to a range of personal and interpersonal resources both psychological and material. As with structural properties, not all resources for a career can be discussed and mobilized during the counseling. However, clients can learn to pay adequate attention to these issues in a constructive manner.

(29) Functional Emotional Regulation

To what extent are the client's long-term emotional regulatory processes well organized and career facilitating? In contrast to dealing with time order, structural properties, and resources, the issue of emotional regulation within a career is an important activity, which should be explicitly addressed in counseling. A wise distribution of emotionally relevant projects and actions within a career is an important concern to counselors and clients. For example, Kidd (2004) has extensively reviewed the role of emotion in career and work. The consequences of ignoring emotion and emotional regulation within a career are often the focus of counseling.

In summary, this incomplete list of the features counselors and clients should attend to and realize in counseling indicates that a systemic order can be used for monitoring, addressing, negotiating, and formulating certain counseling aims. Not only does the list suggest that counselors have to make their prescriptive ideas conscious and negotiable, but it also implies that counselors need to know how to implement them. Relying on the proposed systemic order can help counselors

avoid formulating judgmental propositions. It offers a constructive solution to the dilemma of the counselors' class and culture dictating the goals of the counseling, on the one hand, and leaving goal construction solely to clients' formulations, on the other. Specifically, we know that the counselor's lifestyle might not be suitable and attractive to everyone. We also know that the goals clients formulate relative to their presenting problems are often overshadowed by the same problems when addressing other aspects of their lives. For example, the helplessness of a depressed client may be evident in both the presenting problems, the counseling process, and the client's other projects and career. The CAT-informed list of features provides a way to integrate both the counselor's and the client's perspectives in formulating and pursuing goals for their work together.

The Processes of Joining the Client and Supporting Projects

Counseling informed by CAT is characterized by the counselor joining the client. It is not characterized by maintaining a professional distance between counselor and client, by stressing the counselor's expertise over that of the client, by the counselor's ultimate leadership in counseling, by the counselor transporting the client into a different world, or by the counselor isolating the client from his or her everyday world. "Joining the client," which is not always easily distinguishable from "facilitating the client," can be realized through the following procedures.

First, the counselor joins the client in session through the joint construction of narratives. During the session, clients implicitly select a dominant theme or project from the narrative action that is reflective of how emotionally engaged they are. The counselor joins the client's project not only through the content of the narratives but also through the action of narration. For example, strong emotion during the recollection of an episode indicates an important emotional project. Similarly, the way the client engages in interacting with the counselor indicates a social project of "engaging in relationships strategies." These strategies and the joint narrative have been described in the research and practice literature, which provides a rich reservoir of information on the first and subsequent sessions in counseling and therapy (e.g., Angus and McLeod 2004; Duck 1997; Michel and Valach 2011).

Secondly, the counselor joins the client through facilitating the client's engagement in some actions from a joint project with a relevant other, which is video recorded and followed with a self-confrontation interview. This procedure can also include additional sessions. A dominant project will be explicated through analysis of video recordings of the joint actions with a relevant other and of the self-confrontation interview.

Joining the client can be enhanced further by supporting the client's project over time, which, in turn, involves addressing the client's work on the project in the counseling session and monitoring this work between sessions. Between session work may take the form of checking on the client's on-going projects with the client

through e-mail or telephone, with additional facilitative information, exercises, or emotional and training homework. These steps are premised on the client's understanding of the need to work on the projects in which they are interested. The self-confrontation procedure can contribute to making the project explicit. The themes of the client's narratives allow the counselor and client to focus on the project.

Conclusion

Subscribing to the philosophy, theory, and practice proposed in this book is not a matter of replacing one propositional system by another, or one set of interventions with another. It is more a matter of stepping aside from our habitual practice of conducting counseling "business as usual." It is a call to join us in reflecting on a number of issues, on gaining insight about the correspondence between methods and concepts, on the relevance of the everyday understanding in professional practice theory and research (i.e., naïve theory of action and social meaning in professional research and practice), and on the mechanistic roots of many procedures (i.e., the historical research design in counseling psychology is often predicated on causal models abandoned in modern sciences). It also is a call for respecting our clients' constructive power and of the client-counselor encounter in life-facilitating and life-detrimental ways. Consequently, this book has been less about being right or closer to the "truth" and more about realizing the implications and consequences of a number of considerations that have been shown to make sense.

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