

COUNSELING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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TITLE OF ABSTRACT

Practical and Professional Considerations in Group Work
with Children in the School Setting.

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

Unlike adults, children (especially very young children) often lack the verbal skills or self-awareness to discuss their feelings and frustrations. Because of this, child counselors often observe children at home, or watch as the young people play with doll families, draw pictures, model with clay, or play house. These techniques along with the use of psychological tests are used by child specialists to build rapport, elicit information, uncover childhood problems, and provide opportunity for giving help.

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

From this it should not be assumed that talking is never helpful. Children are spontaneous and sometimes share their worries and concerns openly. At time it is helpful to ask question about what makes the child happy or unhappy, what is scary, what is the funniest or saddest thing he or she can think of, what the child would ask for if he or she had three wishes, or similar questions that have potentially revealing answers.

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

Although the goals of child counseling depend largely on the stated and identified problems, counselors often seek to reduce irrational fears and disturbing behaviour, resolve conflicts, increase the child's ability to express feelings, improve interpersonal relationships at home or school, and teach skills, counseling may involve instructions, play therapy, skills training, the demonstration of kindness and respect and the giving or the withholding or reinforcement.

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

In working with children, most counselors probably use a variety of approaches in reaching their counseling goals. Child counselors should remember the obvious but easily forgotten fact that children are people. They have feelings, needs and insecurities. At times, they try to manipulate adults, but children respond to love and firmness. They need to be treated with sensitivity, empathy, warmth, consideration, and a respect that does not treat them with disdain or convey a smug adult superiority.

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

Remember too that the counseling of children almost always occurs in conjunction with the counseling of parents. In the school environment, if a child shows one of the following behaviours or attributes, he or she would be considered a candidate for referral (counseling).

- Excessive fighting
- Inability to get along with peers
- Frequent hurting of other children
- Violation of school rules
- Poor attitude toward school
- Stealing from school or from peers
- Violent or angry outbursts
- Neglected appearance
- Hunger symptoms and/or frequent failure to bring lunch to school
- Chronic tiredness
- Lack of supervision at home
- Excessive truancy

The counselor's assignment/task would be to deal with the challenges (problems) underlying the child's behaviours and thereby alleviate the child's school challenges (problems) and prevent more serious negative issues from developing. This calls for practical and professional considerations in group work with children in the school setting

METHODS/DESCRIPTIONS

The section will embrace five areas for consideration in setting up the groups work environment.

These are:

- The initial phase
- Evolution of the group
- Special problems requiring out-of-group attention
- Working outside the group
- Practical Guidelines

The Initial Phase,

Checks into:

- (i) Contact with school personnel
- (ii) The school setting
- (iii) Initial contact with the parents
- (iv) Initial contact with the children

Evolution of the Group

- Formation of workable groups will evolve based on areas of need, for examples as highlighted in the introduction. The group phases will entail the following: Operational phase; effectiveness of group format; termination of the group; and teacher evaluation of the counseling program.

Special Problems Requiring Out-Of-Group Attention

- Children have a multitude of developmental problems, and there are many avenues of help for these problems. In working effectively with children, counselors must be willing to go beyond their offices by involving as many resources and peoples who can assist them as possible. It is a wise policy to let the parents know about these contacts and resources, so they too are involved in the helping process. These areas include the following:

- Academic problems
- Nutrition, hygiene, and health care
- Lack of supervision, attention and affection in the home
- Problems associated with broken home

Working Outside the Group

The counselor will come to situations that will call for outside assistance that will be of value in his counseling program. This will include, working with families, working with teachers; and tapping outside resources.

Practical Guidelines

This section consists of some practical guidelines that may be practically useful to counselors who are considering doing group work with children.

The items include: Legal considerations; using judgment; developing a sound proposal; age consideration; the setting; communication of expectations; session preparation; parental involvement; nonpartisanship; use of exercises and techniques in groups; attention demand; preparation for termination; limitation awareness; personal and professional qualifications.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is easy to overextend oneself in working with children whose problems are often very pressing and severe. You might find yourself working with children who are abused and neglected and find it difficult to separate yourself from their life situations.

If you are consistently preoccupied with their problems, you may discover that, this is affecting your life and your relationships negatively. It is a personal matter for counselors to discover how much they are capable of giving, as well as how to replenish themselves in order to stay excited and creative in their work.

Thank You !



By AC HAR-M UN GA