

## **Educational Platform Paper**

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### **Preferred Counseling Profession Setting**

I believe that experience is one of the greatest teachers. It prepares us to face challenges with greater confidence and a more informed perspective. Due to my background as both a special education and general education teacher, I envision myself starting my counseling career in the school setting. I have already developed strong relationships with students, families, and school staff, and I feel passionate about supporting young people where they spend much of their daily lives.

During the summers, I hope to expand my experience by working in teletherapy or an inpatient setting. Gaining exposure to diverse environments and client populations will help me develop into a well-rounded counselor.

Ultimately, my long-term goal is to open my own private practice, ideally one that incorporates nature-based or adventure therapy. When I was in high school, we had a campus-based private counseling service called True North Counseling, which incorporated outdoor experiences into its therapeutic process. As an avid outdoorsman, I have personally experienced the healing and grounding power of nature, especially for those who have had little or no exposure to it.

My dream is to partner with schools or organizations that emphasize outdoor learning and use nature as a catalyst for growth, self-discovery, and emotional wellness.

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I believe that combining evidence-based counseling practices with intentional time in nature could offer transformative experiences for clients of all ages.

## **Preferred Client Population**

As a young male teacher, I have found myself in a unique position to serve as a role model and trusted support figure for boys in the schools where I have worked. My age, personality, and approachable demeanor often help me connect with students in a way that makes them feel comfortable opening up. As a result, I have naturally taken on an informal counseling role in my teaching career, listening, guiding, and supporting students beyond their academic pursuits.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I remember how impactful it was to have a counselor during high school who truly saw me. That counselor helped me explore my identity, worldview, and future goals. Their guidance came at a time when I needed it most and played a significant role in shaping who I am today.

Because of that personal experience and the connections I have already formed as a teacher, I see myself working primarily with adolescents, particularly high school students. Adolescence is a pivotal and challenging period, and I want to be the kind of counselor who helps students feel seen, heard, and supported as they navigate identity, relationships, mental health, and their future.

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My goal is to create a safe space where students can ask big questions, work through difficult emotions, and begin to understand who they are, just as someone once did for me.

## **Personal Counseling Theory**

My personal theory of counseling has been shaped both by my own experiences as a client and through my study of various counseling models. I believe counseling should be active, empowering, and grounded in the present moment while also honoring a client's personal history and unique path toward healing.

I am particularly drawn to Gestalt therapy because of its emphasis on the here and now and its holistic view of the mind, body, and feelings. I believe the body is often overlooked in traditional talk therapy, yet physical exercise and somatic awareness can play a crucial role in managing emotional crises. Helping clients regulate their bodies in the moment through grounding techniques or movement can reduce escalation and create space for clearer thinking and emotional insight.

Adler's theory of individual psychology also deeply resonates with me, especially its focus on belonging, significance, and purpose. Many of the students I hope to work with struggle with feelings of inferiority, isolation, or a lack of direction. Adler's framework helps clients explore early experiences, identify patterns rooted in family and social dynamics, and move toward a more empowered, goal-driven life. I also value

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Adler's approach to healing from trauma and his emphasis on encouragement and strengths.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) stands out as an essential tool in my practice. I see CBT as the "active work" part of therapy, helping clients not only understand their challenges but also develop practical, goal-oriented strategies to address them. This is especially helpful for adolescents facing academic pressure, relationship difficulties, or emotional dysregulation. CBT provides tools that individuals can carry beyond the session to build confidence, promote emotional resilience, and support lasting change.

Together, these three approaches are Gestalt, Adlerian, and CBT. These align with my worldview, which holds that healing is both emotional and practical, rooted in connection, and ultimately directed toward a more meaningful, self-directed life.

## **Expectations of Clients and My Counseling Role**

Based on the theories, I am drawn to Gestalt, Adlerian, and CBT. I anticipate taking an active and collaborative role in the counseling relationship. These models encourage the counselor to be present, engaged, and responsive to the client's needs. I do not envision myself sitting silently in the background. Instead, I see my role as a guide, supporter, and collaborator. Someone who offers tools, insight, and structure while empowering clients to take ownership of their growth.

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Therapy, in my view, is not something done to the client; it is a shared process. For example, in CBT, clients are expected to engage in goal-setting and practice new skills between sessions. In Gestalt therapy, they are encouraged to increase awareness through present-moment reflection. Adlerian theory emphasizes mutual respect and the co-creation of goals, drawing on the client's strengths.

I believe in setting clear expectations early, ensuring that clients understand their role in the therapeutic process. Especially when working with adolescents, structure and empowerment can go hand in hand. I aim to create a space where clients feel safe and heard, while also being challenged in healthy, growth-promoting ways.

**General Feelings About the Counseling Profession**

As a teacher, I have long felt that I was serving not only as an educator but also as a counselor. I began my career in special education, where I supported students experiencing emotional and behavioral dysregulation. I taught social skills and coping strategies and was often the first person to respond when a student was in crisis.

After transitioning to general education, I continued to be a resource for students experiencing emotional or personal difficulties. Teachers are often the first to notice when something is wrong, and I have always tried to be that person who checks in. Some of the most meaningful moments in my teaching career have come from students listing me as a trusted adult on school surveys, even those who weren't in my class.

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These experiences inspired me to enroll in the counseling program. I want to move beyond informal support and be trained to help students with intention, depth, and skill. I love teaching, but I feel called to focus on the social-emotional needs of students and to become the kind of counselor who provides a safe and empowering space for growth.

## **Faith-Based Perspective in Counseling**

As a member of the Congregational Church, my faith in God has played a significant role in my personal journey, particularly during periods of struggle. Before I had access to formal counseling, the church was a place of reflection, grounding, and emotional healing. The community I found there supported me through times when I felt lost and was searching for identity.

Because of this experience, I understand the deep value that faith and spirituality can have for clients. However, this is a personal and individual choice. In my future counseling practice, I will always honor and respect each client's spiritual beliefs or lack thereof. Whether a client draws strength from their faith or prefers a secular approach, I will provide a safe, nonjudgmental, and inclusive space.

## **External Support Systems**

I am fortunate to have a strong support system as I pursue this journey. My wife is my greatest source of encouragement. She knows when I'm overwhelmed, often

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without me having to say anything, and supports me in ways that bring peace and balance to my life.

I have also been fortunate to connect with mentors and counselors already working in the field. Their guidance has been instrumental in shaping my direction and keeping me grounded.

At the same time, I possess a strong internal motivation to succeed, both academically and financially. My wife and I do not follow traditional gender roles; she is currently the primary provider. Still, I feel a personal drive to contribute more meaningfully, especially as we plan to start a family. Counseling offers me not only a fulfilling career but also a path to long-term stability and growth.

## **Reflections on Progress in the Program**

As I complete my first course in the Graduate Counseling Program, I feel excited to continue. I am especially interested in the mind-body connection and how brain chemistry influences behavior. With both my father and wife in the medical field, I have always been interested in how biological and psychological systems interact. Counseling allows me to explore that connection further.

While I do feel some nervousness, especially given past academic struggles, I view this nervousness as a positive force. It keeps me accountable and reminds me

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how much this work matters. I am grateful for this opportunity and eager to continue growing both personally and professionally through the rest of the program.