

Educational Platform Paper
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Preferred Counseling Profession Setting

When I first wrote this paper, I envisioned beginning my career as a school counselor while eventually opening a private practice that incorporated nature-based or adventure therapy. That vision has remained consistent, but it has expanded through my experiences in the Individual Counseling and Group Counseling courses. I still believe the school setting is where I want to begin my career because I enjoy being part of students' daily lives and collaborating with teachers, families, and administrators. However, I now see myself providing counseling both inside and outside of schools. My long-term goal is to offer individual counseling, group counseling, and outdoor therapeutic experiences through a private practice.

One of the biggest changes in my thinking came from leading and participating in counseling groups. Before this course, I viewed group counseling as another counseling skill. Now I see it as a powerful intervention that allows clients to realize they are not alone, learn from one another, and experience genuine support from peers. I hope group counseling becomes an important part of my future work.

Preferred Client Population

My desire to work primarily with adolescents, especially high school students, has only become stronger. Throughout my practice counseling sessions, I realized how much I enjoy helping students explore who they are, navigate difficult emotions, and think about their future. I also found that I naturally connect with adolescent boys because of my background as a teacher and the role models I had growing up. At the same time, I have become more open to working with adults in private practice,

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particularly those experiencing life transitions, anxiety, or family challenges. While my primary passion remains high school students, I now see myself serving a broader range of clients throughout my career.

Personal Counseling Theory

My theoretical orientation has become more integrated since writing my original paper. I continue to identify most closely with Gestalt Therapy, Adlerian Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy because I value present-moment awareness, encouragement, goal setting, and practical coping strategies. However, my experiences in Individual Counseling taught me something that I could not have learned simply by reading textbooks. Before techniques matter, clients need to feel understood, accepted, and emotionally safe.

Because of this, I have developed a much greater appreciation for Person-Centered Therapy. The counseling relationship itself is one of the most powerful tools we have. When clients experience empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, they become more willing to explore difficult emotions and make meaningful changes.

I have also gained an appreciation for Motivational Interviewing. Rather than telling clients what they should do, I learned the importance of asking thoughtful questions that help clients discover their own motivation for change. I now view theories less as separate approaches and more as tools that can be integrated based on the client's needs.

Expectations of Clients and My Counseling Role

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One of the biggest changes in my expectations is recognizing that clients do not need me to solve their problems. Earlier in the program, I believed my role was to help clients find solutions. Through Individual and Group Counseling, I learned that lasting change often happens when clients discover their own answers. My responsibility is to create a safe environment where clients feel comfortable exploring difficult emotions while supporting them through that process.

I also learned the importance of allowing clients to experience uncomfortable emotions without trying to rescue them. During Group Counseling, I realized that many of us naturally try to make people feel better immediately. While that comes from compassion, it can sometimes interfere with the therapeutic process. I now understand that sitting with emotions can be just as important as helping clients move beyond them.

General Feelings About the Counseling Profession

I feel even more confident about becoming a counselor than I did when I first wrote this paper. Individual Counseling and Group Counseling challenged me in ways I did not expect. I experienced moments of uncertainty, nervousness, and even self-doubt. However, receiving constructive feedback from classmates and professors helped me recognize that I have strengths I can continue building on.

One of the biggest areas of growth for me has been confidence. I realized that I do not need to have the perfect response every time. Being fully present, listening carefully, and building genuine relationships often matter more than saying exactly the right thing. That realization has helped reduce some of the pressure I place on myself.

Faith-Based Perspective

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My faith continues to be an important part of who I am and provides me with hope, purpose, and perspective during difficult times. At the same time, my counseling coursework has reinforced the importance of honoring each client's beliefs and worldview. I have become even more committed to creating an environment where clients feel accepted regardless of their spiritual beliefs or whether they identify with any faith tradition. My role is not to impose my beliefs but to support clients in whatever gives their lives meaning and purpose.

External Support Systems

My wife continues to be my greatest source of encouragement throughout graduate school. She has consistently supported me through the demands of coursework while reminding me to maintain balance and take care of myself. This summer also reminded me how important my family is as my father continued navigating cancer treatment. Watching him face those challenges strengthened my appreciation for the importance of emotional support during difficult seasons of life.

Another support system I did not anticipate when I first wrote this paper has been my classmates. Through our practice counseling sessions and group experiences, we developed trust and encouraged one another through challenges. Those relationships have reminded me that counseling is not something we do alone. Having supportive colleagues will continue to be valuable throughout my career.

Reflections on Progress in the Graduate Counseling Program

As I prepare to begin practicum, I feel both excited and appropriately nervous. Earlier in the program, I questioned whether I would be able to effectively lead

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counseling sessions or know what to say when clients shared difficult experiences.

Through Individual Counseling and Group Counseling, I gained confidence by practicing these skills, receiving honest feedback, and reflecting on both my successes and areas for growth.

One of the greatest lessons I learned is that counseling is built on relationships. Techniques and theories are important, but clients are most likely to grow when they feel genuinely understood and accepted. I also discovered that confidence develops through experience rather than waiting until I feel completely ready.

Although I still experience nervousness before leading a counseling session, I now view those feelings differently. Instead of seeing them as signs that I am unprepared, I recognize them as reminders that I care deeply about serving others well. As I begin my practicum placements at Bayside Middle School and Cedarburg High School, I feel prepared to continue learning while applying the skills I have developed over the past year. I know I still have much to learn, but I also know that I have found the profession I am meant to pursue.