



THE ART OF COUNSELING

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The Fortune Society

At the core of The Fortune Society's mission is guiding motivated individuals with criminal justice involvement to recognize and act on their potential to be positive and contributing members of society. One of the most important tools to help someone succeed during reentry is the availability of counseling. Fortune believes that counseling can play a vital role in shaping someone's future and as such has allowed me to create a counseling position as a community liaison to be focused on the idea of modeling change therapy. The combination of counseling and modeling change therapy can be an effective tool in combating violence, internalized oppression, and mass incarceration.

It is important to first understand the goals and objectives of counseling in the context of criminal justice. The first goal of counseling is to help break and reduce the cycle of recidivism (Sun, 2013). However this cannot be accomplished without helping the individual to understand and overcome their internal and external conflicts by understanding themselves and their interactions with others (Schrink & Hamm, 1989; Sun 2005).

The Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders defines "modeling therapy" as a therapy based upon: "the importance of observing and imitating role models, and learning about

rewards and punishments that follow behavior.” In my experience, I found that use of modeling change therapy has been quite effective when employed with individuals who are dealing with criminal justice involvement. By providing these individuals with positive role models, they can begin to understand how to make better choices in their own lives.

The key to a successful outcome is the development of a strong relationship between the client and counselor. According to Phil Monroe, a Christian psychologist and biblical counselor, “counseling is both art and science, relationship and action.” Monroe further notes that “the art of counseling trumps knowledge and intervention. Knowing what to do is of little value if trust hasn’t been fully formed. There’s no substitute from having repeated interactions with another and getting detailed feedback related to one’s relational habits and idiosyncrasies.” The Fortune Society similarly believes that in order for counseling to be effective, the counselor must truly understand the client in order to develop a successful modeling program. From behavioral to structural barriers, individuals walk through Fortune’s doors for a variety of reasons. We can establish trust and show examples of meaningful use of clients’ time by connecting effective counseling with modeling change. Under this specific approach, we have the opportunity to encourage clients to fight back against the negative impact of the internalized oppression causing criminal uproars in our communities.

To insure a positive outcome to this process, we make sure all our clients get the opportunity to see work in progress, to lift their voices, and to understand that life can be different through weekly counseling. In addition, clients are introduced to and observe advocacy work, rallies for change, gun violence prevention groups, the promotion of equal education, discussions about poverty, the importance of child safety, issues with mass incarceration, importance for reentry work, and the purpose of ATI.

The connection between counseling and community liaison work has been acknowledged and established. The combined approach has made powerful and meaningful sense. The actions described are compatible for addressing the impact of internalized oppression that may contribute to deviant acts and criminal behavior. This simultaneous act of counseling and modeling change is the art of counseling. Knowing when to implement specific activities and provide insightful counseling that rebuilds and strengthens clients can lead to long term positive outcomes. The

resulting feeling is therapeutic for both the counselor and client. These positive feelings can enable clients to establish relationships with various societal groups and can simulate the development of family connections which can lead to a stronger sense of belonging.

As counselors, we understand that we deal with multicultural matters of concern and know the nature of this work. The art of counseling aims to help clients make developmentally appropriate choices and, as effective counselors, we are working for positive changes.

These results happen by listening to and understanding the needs of our clients, anticipating potential problems, and preempting them, thus providing a channel for them to be heard and seek out opportunities for help. Together, this makes counseling powerful and establishes it as an art that will follow clients throughout their lives.

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