

Talk on college counseling given to  
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by  
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Well, let me introduce it this way. What I have on these cards is sort of the residua of, oh let's say fifteen years' experience doing all kinds of counseling and psychotherapy. I've not counted up the hours or the number of people, but I'd say it covers, oh, a thousand--mostly students, college students, some high school students, some older people--during which time I was also conducting different kinds of psychotherapy, that is long term private practice, money paying psychotherapy, so called intensive psychotherapy. And also during those years a few psychoanalytic patients, long-term, knock-down, drag-out, year in and year out, four times a week psychoanalysis.

I wanted to share that with you because I want to show that it qualifies me to let you in on a trade secret. And that is--and it is a kind of mystique that you find especially on the east coast, or rather around large cities where a lot of people make a really good living conducting psychoanalysis and long-term psychotherapy--the illusion that counseling--that is three or four hours with a student, under the conditions that I am going to talk about, is some kind of junior league psychotherapy is relatively inconsequential, a kind of make-do thing with thin resources etc., etc. And that the real thing has to be done by a psychologist or psychiatrist, and it has to be long term, it has to take years and years and years. That is a lot of bullshit. Not to say that psychoanalysis or long-term psychotherapy isn't a distinctive kind of experience. It is, and it's highly educational, especially for a psychologist or psychiatrist. But from the standpoint of being able to cope with problematic situations, from the standpoint of let's say mental health or increasing one's self-awareness, I can tell you that as much and sometimes more can be accomplished in a very short period of time. In well timed, well conducted counseling sessions, sometimes as few as three or two--well timed, especially in the college years. It is important to bear this in mind because the attitude of the counselor makes up a large part of what makes for effective counseling, and if the counselor is sitting there thinking well shit I guess I'll have to help this student out because even though I am not trained etc., etc., although it would be ever so much better if he could be referred to a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist for six months, that would really do it. But I can count among my most gratifying and most effective experiences as a therapist counseling cases. I have seen more radical change, really radical personality transformations, take place during a period of relatively brief counseling than I have in long-term psychotherapy.

[Okay, so we all know that counseling has to do with problems, personal problems; has to do with problems relating to family, teachers, friends, enemies; has to do with religion, sex, ideologies, morals, values, tastes; and conflicts about all these things; as reflected in career plan indecisions, fears, guilts, dreams etc., etc.. They take such concrete forms as these kinds of questions: Why am I here? Why am I living? What's it all about? My father wants me to be a doctor and I want to be....And every time I go home we have a battle, and I can't think afterward, etc. Or, I was really in love with this gal and my whole life was involved and she just told me she wasn't interested anymore and I can't sleep, can't eat, can't think and I really think maybe I'll take to the gas pipe. Or, I eat too much, or I jerk-off too much, or my father just had a heart attack and it's a week after our last battle and he still wants me to be a doctor and I still want to be...And I've got to make this decision next week, how am I going to tell him, or don't I tell him, then how do I deal with the secrecy, etc. Or my mother is an alcoholic I think, or I think maybe I am impotent, or I think maybe I am homosexual, etc., etc. Those kinds of questions.]

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[Now the layman's response to these kinds of problems, when we are confronted with them in the capacity of laymen, is usually to take a kind of friendly but defensive stance. You know, "well don't feel so bad." We may not say this but our layman's response is what can I do to help this person not feel so bad. Or, it will pass, you know, just give it time, get your mind off of it. Or, "I remember when I was in a similar kind of situation and this is what I did about it." Now that's fine--defenses have a very important place in the mechanics of our mental health. And there are usually plenty of people around who can help a person in that way, but that isn't counseling.] The student who comes to a counselor and wants counseling isn't looking for that kind of help. Not to say that that isn't helpful, but it's not the kind of help that a student should get from a counselor. [An amateur counselor, a counselor who doesn't really understand the nature of the counseling process, and this is where teachers usually stumble, tends to feel that he has to help the student solve that problem, whatever the problem is. And he usually tries to help the student solve that problem by giving some advice or other. Again, that can be useful and can be helpful but it ain't counseling because a counselor doesn't try to help a student solve a problem.] That is ground rule number one--that whatever the problem is and however familiar it may be to you as a problem, and it may be one that you have solved, you don't help the student as a counselor by helping him solve that problem.

So rules of thumb number one and two, I have here in negative form: don't try to be friendly and don't be an amateur. If you're going to be a counselor you don't be friendly and you don't be an amateur; be a pro. What both of these reduce to is don't get personally involved. Now that requires a word of amplification. I don't mean by that that you should be cold, objective, distant, stand-offish and unconcerned. What I mean when I say don't get personally involved is do your best not to get your needs into the thing, so that what you're saying to the student and the way you're listening to the student is really in the service of your own needs and not his. That's what I mean by don't get personally involved, and usually the impulse to be friendly, that is to say "everything will be okay fella, just calm down and don't feel so bad or let's see if I can help you solve that problem"--when we are tempted into either of those directions it is usually that we personally involve our own needs. We're getting uptight, getting anxious. We're really saying that to ourselves, not to the student.

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[What is the objective of counseling in respect to problems, if it is not to solve them? ~~And it isn't even to help the student solve the specific problem that he comes with?~~ That is to say, if it's not to figure out how a student can change his reality, it isn't calling up the housing administrator and suggesting that the student who can't get along with his roommate be shifted to another room? That might be one way of dealing with the problem, but again that's not counseling. And it isn't trying to change his environment in any way or get him out of a program into another program, or trying to influence somebody else's behavior towards him...All those things are the kinds of things people do for each other but it isn't counseling. What a counselor tries to do is to help a student feel less alone and/or less helpless in respect to his problem. That is, insofar as words can capture it, a counselor, whatever he does, what ever he says or doesn't say, however he listens ~~or doesn't listen~~, what he is trying to do is help the student feel less alone and less helpless in respect to his problem. And in respect to the whole network of feelings, thoughts, impulses, fears, hopes, etc., that surround that problem. You are really counseling a person living a life. You are not counseling in respect to a given problem. In some ways that's what makes counseling, in terms of its objectives, for all the complexities and skill that it requires, a pretty simple thing. Because the objective is always the

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same whatever the problem is. However up-tight the student is about that particular problem you are sitting there saying to yourself, and I don't mean in the New Yorker cartoon smug psychiatrist sense, you are sitting there very calmly saying to yourself that the real problem is he feels too alone with it or feels too helpless in respect to it--whatever the specific problem is that he is concerned with. In a sense that's what gives the counselor the relative sense of confidence, poise and coolness that when a student senses it is extremely reassuring to him.]

[So let's distinguish again between a friend and counselor. A friend is saying to himself in some way or other, "I want to help you with that problem." Good friends do that very well. A counselor is saying "this person is trying to help that person feel less alone and less helpless with his problems, whatever his problems may be." The paradox here is that really good friends sometimes achieve the purposes of skillful counseling and a really skillful counselor sometimes ends up being a very good friend.]

[What does it mean to feel too alone with respect to this or that problem? It usually takes, if it could be verbalized, and that's usually the problem, that it can't be verbalized; but as it becomes verbalized it usually takes this kind of a form: I am the only one in the whole world ~~that~~ has this problem or who feels this way about this problem. Or, I think I am one of the abnormally few who have this problem, and that's really scary, and I can't talk about it because if I talked about it I might find out that I really am the only one. So I can't talk about it. And the next step is, in order to not talk about it I can't think about it, and if that goes on long enough I really can't think about it and it doesn't exist. But something is grabbing me. That thing doesn't exist, but nonetheless I can't think, or I can't sleep or I can't eat or I keep having these funny thoughts, or eat too much, etc., etc.] And eventually--well that's the symptom formation process there.

[What does it mean to be helpless in respect to a problem? It doesn't mean only that I can't solve the problem. When it really means is that I can't even relate to it, I can't place it, I can't put words on it, I can't identify it, I can't trace its origins. I can't make it my own, I can't place it as a part of me. It has a hold on me that makes me feel rotten, and I don't even know what it is, and I don't know how to start the process of getting a handle on it.] That's what I mean by feeling too helpless in respect to it.]

Okay, so much for objectives. It's really as simple as that, but it's only simple when you are talking about it, and not simple when you are trying to do it. But that is the objective and the only objective of counseling. [In a sense you might say that counseling therefore is what nobody else can do for a person--not a friend, not a teacher, not a parent, not a lover--because if any of those people tried to do it they would be extremely awkward, they would be seen as awkward. It would be inappropriate, because [in these relationships to try to create the conditions I am going to talk about now would be seen as kind of gosh. It would be embarrassing] to everybody. But within these guidelines, under these conditions, it is appropriate and it can be, as I say, extremely effective and very, very useful.]

Well, how to do it then? Here's the "how to do it" kit. How to be a really professional counselor in seven easy lessons. Anyone who feels comfortable after they hear these conditions should do it. I think every teacher who is a good teacher not only can but should do it. Well the first thing is you have to make a contact, which usually means a confrontation of some kind,

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leading to an acknowledgment that there is a problem, and that the student wants some help with it. This can take one of three forms, and I'll list them in order of difficulty, that is difficulty in making this contact, and getting this acknowledgment. The first and the toughest is when the teacher has to take the entire initiative in making the contact, after observing that the student must have a problem because he is either disruptive of other peoples' lives or seems terribly self-defeating etc., etc. At any rate, on the basis of the teacher's observations, he concludes that that student has a problem that he needs to work on, is in trouble and that he needs help; but the student hasn't made the contact, the student hasn't come to the teacher, the teacher is going to the student. This is the toughest one because all you can do at this point is confront the student with his behavior and you're not a counselor at this point, you're a teacher. You ask him into your office and you say "Jack, there is something about your seminar behavior that really bothers me. Every time some of the more retiring ones are about to get into the discussion you have an unfailing way of getting in with your loud voice and your very, very able command of the language and you keep messing up the seminar, always monopolizing things." Now at this point you hope that this will make some kind of a contact with the student and you hope he will say "Yah, I know that, and I've been working on that but, god dammit every time I feel that I haven't got anything to say or that if I did have something to say no one would value it, I really get uptight and I get nervous and this is the way it comes out. What do you think I could do about it?" Now you hope that this would happen. Usually it doesn't. And all you can do here is to keep confronting the student as a teacher with his behavior and keep hoping. Now sometimes what will happen is the student will acknowledge to some extent that there is something that is bugging him. But he doesn't go so far as to indicate that he wants your help, but he does give you a little opening, just enough so you can raise the question whether he would like to talk to somebody, and this is the point where you try to make a referral to maybe some other teacher. You might ask, "well sounds to me like you would like to work out something and you would like some help. Is there anyone on the faculty that you would feel comfortable in confiding in, so maybe I could help make the arrangements?"

The second kind of contact comes through other students. This can take two forms: friendly intervention and hostile intervention. That is, three or four students come into your office one day and they say "Dick Brian, you know we really like that guy and we just think he is in trouble and we hear that you're pretty good at helping students with problems, and we would just like to tip you off that if you could start some work with Dick we'd appreciate it. Or, we really, up until last month, thought he was a real good roommate and we used to have great talks. Last week I found this razor on the sink with blood all over it and he's been keeping his wrist covered and I am just scared." That's one kind. The other is a group of students come in and say you've got to get rid of Dick Brian. "That god damn bastard is just queering the seminar and we know what's bugging him but he's just intolerable and he's either got to get some help or we're going to back out of the seminar ourselves." In both instances the rule here is to say: "great, I'm glad you thought enough to bring this to my attention. Glad to have the information and I would like to help and I will, on condition that I can share with Dick Brian where I got this information and how it came to my attention." That is, "do I have your permission, Nancy and Jack, to call Dick in and say that the reason I am calling him in is because you told me something I didn't know before that indicates to me that he needs help." Is it clear why this is absolutely necessary? Otherwise it dumps you back into the first bag with even less to go on. Then all you can say is "I have a crystal ball that tells me you need help." Now this is really nice to work with because in both

instances, whether this is a hostile intervention or friendly one, it's hard evidence to the student that somebody cares about him which in itself helps make a person feel a little bit less alone, even though it may come as a surprise to him that people care that much either negatively or positively. The wrist business comes to mind because I've had real good luck with suicide risks--so called serious ones and not so serious ones. I haven't lost any yet and in the really serious cases it has always been because other students were around who were in on it. In case of suicide risk you can't be there when the student really needs the help, when he's really got the razor out or he's really got the bottle in his hand, but other students are usually around and it's nice to be sure that there's somebody around who knows what the problem is and who's in on the counseling plan--who have been in on it from the beginning because they initiated it.

The third kind of contact, and by far the most frequent and easiest, is when the student takes the initiative, usually in an office hour. Either he comes in and explicitly says "I'd like to take a few of your counseling hours to work on such and such, something is really bothering me and I'd like some help in straightening it out." That's real simple, because then all you do is start the next step. Or the student comes in on the rather flimsy pretext of wanting to talk about an assignment or book or some academic problem, in order to get through the door. He really comes in with a personal problem and this is simply a matter of the teacher being relatively sensitive and seeing that the student really doesn't want to talk about that book, and waiting for an appropriate moment to say "look, you know if you want to I'll talk about the book, but it just occurred to me that you might rather use the time to talk about something else." There may be a little tear at the corner of the eye and that's pretty good evidence that he doesn't want to talk about the book. But that contact is really essential to get the focus on the inner life of the student and not behavior and not academic stuff.

Now, having made that contact, whatever form it takes, whether you take the initiative and the acknowledgment follows, or whether students have brought this to your attention and with their permission you have made the confrontation or it's happened on the student's initiative, the next few minutes are probably the most crucial part of the whole counseling process. And that's when you want to be at your most unrattled routine workaday, self-confident best because all you do now is listen. The dam has been broken, the contact has been made, the acknowledgment is there and the student just pours out. Or the student blocks, having made the admission he or she can't make it, just sits there--tries to get some words out, can't. In either case this is your time to just sit there and listen, listen to silence if necessary, but just listen. And you listen just long enough, no longer, just long enough to get a feeling that you've got a comparatively clear grasp of what the problem might be. It's been identified in your mind and you get a little feeling that the student is about to invest some confidence in you, some trust. You listen just that long, it may be 5 minutes it may be 10, rarely in the teaching office hour set up more than I would say 15 minutes until you have a feeling that you are ready to go to work, but then you stop. It's very important to stop at this point and not let it go on too much longer, because you haven't really made an agreement with the student yet. The constraints of counseling aren't there yet, which means responsibility is not there yet and it can be actually dangerous to let a student who has made this contact, perhaps has been storing this steam up for years--he's finally found someone who's listening and he's finally had the guts to get it out and start talking about it; sometimes you can get seduced into saying more than he is ready to cope with. As a teacher you haven't yet set the other conditions that make the counseling

a distinct and special experience. It is very important that you spend some time just listening before you make the agreement. It is also important that you not listen too long before you stop the whole thing and say "Okay I've heard enough", or however you say it in terms of your own personality;" I am glad this came up, glad you're able to unburden yourself this way. Now if you would like to work on this, I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll set up a series of sessions, (I'd even use a number depending on your experience. After a while you get a feeling for what would be an appropriate number. Or depending on the realities of your own schedule is probably even a better yard stick to use). I'll tell you what, why don't you plan to come in for a half hour every Tuesday at 3:00 for three sessions and we'll talk about this."

Now there are some other things you want to make explicit and I'll get to those in--no why don't I talk about it right now. You also want to indicate that these will be confidential sessions; that whatever transpires will be between the student and you; and that you will not divulge anything under any circumstances to anybody. It also needs to be made clear that the student doesn't stand to lose anything through you as a result of the counseling sessions--that is to say, he's not going to be flunked, etc. I'll go back over this ground again. What you're really trying to do here is to get the student, now that he has acknowledged that he has a problem, that he wants help with it--that he's now going to work on it. That is, he's going to get help, but he's not going to be given something; he's going to be helped to work. So what you're after here is a kind of agreement, almost like a contract, an agreement that includes; how many times; when and what your terms are; and what his terms are, if he has any; and then after you've gone through all this and the student says "yeh, okay that's what I want to do" and you say "now any more questions; you want to ask any more questions about this, is there anything that isn't clear?" He might have some questions, usually he doesn't. Then you say "okay, see you next week" or "see you in two weeks" or whatever it is. Stop it right there. As a rule this takes maybe 15 minutes, it really shouldn't take much longer than that. Now this in itself, that 15 minutes, often breaks the aloneness cycle in a pretty radical way--not only in respect to what the student has shared with you in those 15 minutes but in terms of potentially sharing something that has been really troubling him, that 15 minutes usually has included a hell of a lot. So just that has broken the aloneness cycle. Also what the student can imagine himself later on talking about has a kind of strengthening feeling. Very often if the counselor has really felt good about that 15 minutes there is a kind of implied confidence. The student kind of soaks that up, he identifies with the confidence and that in itself begins to get him feeling less helpless in respect to his problems. That's shaky ground because it doesn't last very long, but it's a start. And sometimes, this is really nice when it happens, a student will call up in a couple of days and say, "Hey you know I don't think I really need that session, everything's cleared up, everything's great. I really went home and had a good talk with my roommate," or "I just had a good thought session myself and I really was able to think this thing through and thanks a lot." It's really nice when that happens. Sometimes, and you can always tell this if you are at all sensitive, sometimes what this means is the student has realized he is way in over his head and he is too scared and he's chickened out. But more often than not it means the simple experience of having acknowledged the problem and committed himself to working on it has been all he needed, and you've helped as much as he needed help. I really like those because it's nice on your schedule.

Well, okay, let's go back again to how often it should be and how long it should be, how long the sessions ought to be. I think this is best determined by the realities of your own schedule and not by your sense of how much that student

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needs to work. It's really more reassuring to the student to realize that you want to help, you're willing to help, you're able to help, and you're going to help; but you're not going to be a martyr, you're not going to jeopardize your home life, you're going to be good to yourself.

Question: What do you do when the student calls to cancel and you feel it's because he's chickened out?

Say, "Well I am glad to hear that but I have the session free anyway and am not going to fill it up with anything else. This is a relatively light week for me and why don't you come in and talk about it anyway. If it's cleared up, let's just talk about how you cleared it up."

Let's put it this way: I am going to imagine what my year will be like next year. I think I am going to devote four hours a week to counseling. That may change when I get into next year, but that now feels like an appropriate number. And that may mean sometime in October I'll be using only three of those hours and I'll have the time to spend, let's say an hour with each student in counseling. I would expect by November that's going to start getting filled up and I'll probably go to half hour sessions. I think, incidentally, a half hour is about minimal. I don't think you would want to cut the sessions to less than a half hour. Certainly not more than an hour. But I must say a half hour, I have found, can result in very effective counseling. Sometimes I would rather work with a student in half hour shots rather than hour shots because it places a premium on the session that is really conducive to good work. There is no time for bullshitting around and everyone knows that and then the work really gets done. This is especially so if it is clear to the student that you're not doing half hour sessions because you're stingy with your time, it's just that you only have a certain amount of time for counseling and other students are using that for counseling and a half hour is what you've got. It's very acceptable and sometimes considerably effective. Well, I expect that those four hours of my counseling time next year will rather quickly be filled up and I'll soon be seeing eight students in half hour blocks every week. And that's going to get filled up and there's going to be another student coming in and the contact will be made--that short burst of confidence sharing will take place--and I am going to stop and say, Okay let's work on this in counseling. Do you know about counseling? Well let me tell you about counseling and also about confidentiality etc., etc., and do you want to do it? Yep. Okay, I look at my schedule and I see that two weeks from today Merv Cadwallader will have finished his agreed on number of sessions so I'll have a free time there, and I'll say to the student, okay we'll start two weeks from today at such and such a time. What I am trying to say here is that the whole question of how long you should see a student in a session and how many sessions he should have is best determined by the reality of your own schedule. That means there is no need for a crystal ball, and that the number of sessions you agree on to begin with is tentative anyway and everyone agrees that it can be modified. Although here too, if I've set up an agreement with a student that we're going to work on this for three sessions, if at the end of the three sessions something comes up that is a real ball buster that hasn't come up before, and both the student and I realize this is another ball game all together and really the appropriate thing to do is have more sessions, even there I suggest that the teacher acknowledge this and say well this looks like more counseling, but for one thing my schedule is full and I can't just continue this because I promised this time to somebody else for next week, so why don't you try this on your own for three or four weeks, and we'll make a definite date to go back at this. That's important I think, because frequently the student can work this out by himself; having



worked something else out with you. And he gets much more out of it in terms of his own basic strength of character if he can solve it by himself, that is if he really does it and doesn't just go through the motions. The one important thing to remember here is that you never try to make this agreement without listening for a little while. The one thing you don't do is confront Larry with the fact that he is monopolizing the seminar and then he says "I know that god damnit, what's really bugging me is etc., etc., and before you even listen for 30 seconds, you say "ah that means counseling, let's set you up for it." Obviously that doesn't work.

Question: Dick, before you said it wasn't the specific problem. Then you said when the problems had been identified. What problem do you mean? The specific issue that's bothering Larry or the alone or helplessness that's involved? What do you mean by that?

I don't mean the problem. When you've got the feeling that he has faced up to something in himself which he hasn't been able to do before, and that he has said, implicitly at least, I want some help with this, I want your help with this, that's the moment. What you're listening for is investment of confidence in you. This can take place without any problem even being identified. The student, you know, a girl just may come in and sob for 10 minutes and she begins to say something and gets a few words out and can't say anything then, you know, that would be an appropriate time to say, "Look I really think you have something personal on your mind and we don't have time to go into this today but I can see you want to work on something, it looks like you want to work on it with me so why don't we set up a plan." There is hardly anything said, but the contact has been made.

[ Now that the agreement has been made and the student shows up for his next appointment it's sort of all down hill from here. It's really not much more than listening, conversing, sharing your observations, your hunches, your hypotheses, asking questions, clarifying issues. However you do that within your personality and your own style you just go ahead and do that. Within the framework of a certain number of conditions that I'm going to talk about now. ] I've mentioned a few very briefly. [ Really these conditions get translated into a counselor's attitude. It's the way you listen, the way you ask questions, the way you share observations, the way you raise hypotheses, questions, contradictions and so on and so on. Six conditions. The first I've already mentioned, that there be an agreement between the two, there be a time limit on it. ] I'll just tick off these conditions and talk a little bit about each one of them. [ The first one is neutrality; second is confidentiality; third is one-sidedness, that is student centeredness; the fourth is open mindedness on the counselor's part; and the last one is an awareness on the counselor's part of the symbolic properties of his role. ] I'll go back over each one of those and spell out what I mean. Let me just say--I didn't mention the purpose that I think is served by this time limit and this agreement. [ I think what it accomplishes is that it assumes, and therefore it reinforces, the student's basic sense of independence and autonomy. When you say "okay let's work on this problem, let's set a time limit on it," what you're saying is "okay you need help and I am going to give you that help but you are really on your own. This is your life, this is your problem and you're going to really solve this. I'm going to help but you're going to do it." Now you can say that in words but it doesn't mean a damn thing. But when you say it in actions--namely the guy has just said there are times when I think I am going to really kill myself and you do whatever you do in terms of your own personality to meet that and then you set up the agreement of three times. "Let's talk about this three times." What that says is I really am confident in your ability and my ability to lick this one, and I am not falling over dead

at the prospect of you having to solve a problem--as a matter of fact three sessions, I think, will do it. That's a kind of magic.]

[The other thing, the time limit, the purpose this serves is that it really defines the relationship as strictly business. I don't mean that in a cold mercantile sense, but this is not a time for gossip; it is not a time for bull sessioning, not a time for chit-chat. This is valuable time because it's something valuable that you're bringing to it and this is really high premium time. Again you can say that and it doesn't mean a thing, but you demonstrate it by setting the agreement and the time limit.] → middle of 8

[Now neutrality, what does that mean? That means that the student should not stand to gain or lose anything more tangible than what he infers about his esteem in your eyes as a result of these sessions.] That usually means that the counseling can only be done by a person who is not in a position of authority in respect to the student. So, in traditional academic set-ups what that means is a counseling center staffed by people who are not teaching, to whom students can go without any fear of jeopardizing their record, etc., etc. At Evergreen that's going to be a special problem because we are by definition going to be in position of a teacher, counseling our students. Now the fact that we're not going to give grades is going to help; nonetheless, we're going to be writing evaluations, we're going to be putting stuff in the portfolio and I think we're going to have to just feel out a way of being neutral in a sense that serves the counseling purposes of neutrality without undermining our academic plans. I think what this will come to is that it would probably be well to make it explicit when we make counseling agreements with students to say "look this won't work if you feel that this is going to have an influence in evaluations of your work," etc., etc. "So let's agree ahead of time that nothing will go into your portfolio as a result of your counseling sessions unless you see it and approve of it." It's conceivable that something would come up that a student would want in his portfolio. He may have resolved a career conflict or something and he would like to have that in his portfolio.

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self-esteem

Two main ones

Well [what is the purpose of neutrality] in the counseling frame? Several. One, it makes it possible for personal interactions and personal impressions to be put to work. When a student says, "god damnit I want to talk about something but I can't" -- "what do you mean you can't?" "Well you'd hate me if I did." "Do you hate me or don't you?" "Do you like me?" "What do you like about me?" What you want to be able to say is "That's irrelevant whether I like you or I don't like you. You know when all the sessions are over, and if we accomplish what we set out to do, well I'll tell you what I really think of you; but if I told you now that would stop the whole process. Because what's important is what you think I think of you, so what do you think I think of you?" Now if you were to say that in a friendly, you know in a friendship context, then you would really sound like an oof, stiff like the caricature of Carl Rogers. The patients says "do you like me?" Rogers says "you feel you'd like to know whether I like you" which sounds crazy, but it doesn't sound crazy if the agreement has been made that the student is working on something that's bugging him, and everything that goes on and everything that transpires is for the purpose of clarifying his own doubts, his own fears, etc. So it isn't within this context inappropriate or gauche to do those dumb things, dumb in a social context. Another thing that this condition of neutrality accomplishes is that it defines, and it focuses on, the real ingredients of counseling. That is thoughts, feelings, attitudes, fears, ambitions, etc., etc., everything but behavior. You're not there to help the student behave this way or that way--that's his business.

mostly  
re-sent  
students  
and  
personality  
change

Your job is to help him clarify his thoughts about his behavior, his feelings about his behavior, his fantasies about his behavior. What he does is none of your business. He may be stealing books from the library in your program. He may need to own up to that and your job is to sit there and say to yourself "there goes my budget" but your job is, "what do you think about that, how do you feel about it, why did you want to tell me about it?"

This creates a problem with the outside world especially of teachers because there will be people who will say, "if you knew this why, didn't you stop it?"

Question: (Inaudible)

Absolutely, that's where it gets sticky. But nonetheless, you're not doing counseling unless you can say to that person "that's privileged information;" And I wouldn't have it if it weren't clear that I can't use it this way. I'll never forget, this brings up the confidentiality issue which I'll get into next. It reminds me of old Dean, what's his name--I forgot his name for all kinds of good reasons. The dean of students at Brandeis; who finally said it this boldly, "God dammit I know that it's absolutely essential to the counseling service, that you have the policy of confidentiality and I have no objection to it, I just want to be included in it." This whole business of neutrality and confidentiality is fine until a girl gets pregnant and the girl's parents are down the dean's neck, or there has been a blatant case of plagiarism or theft or rapes--that kind of thing. Well rape is something else again. This gets into the clinical part, I just mention it in passing, but in clinical counseling the confidentiality is absolute with two exceptions; that's if the information you have leads you to believe that a person is destructive to himself or other people, then all bets are off. You don't call a cop but you tell the person I can't keep that confidential, as a matter of fact I think we ought to etc., etc. But in these other cases that's when the whole academic system begins to holler tilt, tilt, tilt because it's against the mores of academic life that you keep things confidential. You always share with your colleagues information about students, and if you know that the father of this pregnant girl's unborn child is Johnny Jones because you have Johnny Jones in counseling and his family is beating on the president's door, they want some responsibility around here. The president knows you've got Johnny Jones in counseling and he thinks Johnny Jones was the guy and he wants hard information--then is when the crisis comes. That's usually when counseling centers are busted because they get forced into breaking the confidentiality rule and as far as the students are concerned, you're out of business.

Question: This raises a problem that I have never even thought of before. In the coordinated studies one of the items of business in regards to the seminar will be the discussion of students with problems. Now if members of the faculty are going to (inaudible)

I think what you'll find Merv, is that this occasion is very infrequent; that is, even the temptation to divulge, when it does come up, it will be relatively clear whether it is best to keep your mouth shut, or whether it is a good time for you to go back to the student and ask him what he would prefer, that you confide in your colleagues or not. In a sense you are continuing the counseling there. And again you're helping him feel less alone, less hopeless.

Question: It's proper then to take back to him the kinds of discussions that are going on in faculty meetings?

Just share with him what your problem is as a counselor and as a teacher, the decision you want to make. We're all going to have to learn to do this with-

in our own styles. I wouldn't want to legislate.

[On this neutrality thing, and you can count on it, the greatest pressure on you to depart from your neutral role is going to come from the student. It's going to come precisely when the student does not want to face up to some conflict of his own or does not want to take responsibility for some kind of a problem and that's when the real pressure is going to be on. This is where the real skill comes in. It can take the form of a student saying "look, I've asked you fifty times now what you think I ought to do, ~~and we monkey with that for three sessions~~; and I've played your game long enough and I know god damn well that with your twenty years or more experience on me you know precisely what I ought to do and I don't want to fool around anymore. I want your advice." This is the time to redefine, recall to his mind what the agreement was in the first place, that this is designed to help him supply his own advice, and if what he really needs is advice maybe he should go to someone for advice, this isn't your job.]

Question: Would part of counseling include listing options? Aren't these exceptions?

All I am setting down here, Dick, are basic ground rules, and in the hands of a real pro you break these rules as often as you observe them, but until you learn the ground rules you don't break any of them.

Question: But I mean if you could neutrally say well it seems to me that you have the following choices, this, this and this.

I can see that, but I can't see it in the first session or even the second session. I can only see it when you've already gone through these other steps and the student knows that he can trust your advice because you're not offering it for your benefit. He has already tested you on this.

Question: I really wasn't thinking of it as advice, but more or less helping to organize and to explore all the options that are available to him.

But usually you get sucked into that one if you've already got sucked into the temptation of working on that problem. Helping the student solve that problem. If you still have your eye on the ball and that means you're helping this student feel less alone and helpless in respect to all problems, then you're not tempted to give advice about this particular problem so much. Then when you list the options, it's for the sake of testing his ability to relate to his own options.

There are all sorts of tactics, that's up to you. Whatever feels comfortable and consistent with the ways you relate to people. The important thing is that you find your own way of abiding by this condition of neutrality, and not get suckered off of that for anything, whether it's pressure from a student or from a colleague or from your boss.

Question: You may cover this and if you will then just stop me, but one of the biggest problems I see in this is what I jotted down here as an expertise problem and that's this: you're a psychologist and that fact to a student makes the counseling session more official. Or a counseling center is an official center for counseling. Now laying out the ground rules and all this is going to be much more difficult for me or Larry or Merv just because they're not, well they're not in that frame of reference and that's going to be very difficult to not make it look silly, funny, game playing or amateurish.

Do you have any points there? I think that's going to be hard, really hard, because when I've gotten into what you're describing here as real counseling sessions, it's kind of happened through the back door and through some other session, through maybe friendship that eventually can change to counseling, but to take it on directly as counseling would have been extremely awkward.

Question: In other words, what happens if Bob says to his students "I am setting four hours aside for counseling; if you need counseling come to me;" and they'll say, "but you're a biologist...."

Well this, I hear you Bob, what this means to me is that we really are on the forefront of something new, really new, and this is why I started this whole business by trying to scotch the illusion that really effective psychotherapeutic counseling has to be done by professionals, has to be done on a long term basis, etc., etc.

Oh, I agree with you.

What you're telling me now is that to some extent you would find this awkward and you think students would find it awkward and inappropriate, but what that means to me is to some extent you're also caught in this illusion. Now it is a problem and it is a problem we're going to have to work on, but it's not a problem based on reality, it's a problem based on illusion, itself a counseling problem. I think my only suggestion would be to tackle it head on by actually setting aside certain counseling hours, letting the students know you're setting aside these counseling hours, doing your best to follow these ground rules and when a student comes in and says "gee I don't think this is going to work because you're a biologist, you're not a psychologist" well, you know, you might say "try somebody else, go to Dick Jones," or something. But you might also say, "that's true but I am setting aside four hours a week for counseling and I've had some luck before and if you want to try it out come ahead." If it works it will get around very fast by way of the grapevine communication network that will get set up around the campus: "God dammit you know I really did get help from Nancy last week; maybe you should try it." If the help is there and it really works, the whole illusion that it takes professionals to do it will dissipate.

Question: On this matter of neutrality if say a student comes to me and makes the initial contact to figure out what the basic problem is and we agree that it would be best for the student to go to you.

That probably would be a rare instance in which it would probably be a good idea because it may be that having taken the position of confronting him with his behavior you've already used up all your chips as a neutral person. You couldn't possibly be neutral after you've just told the person what you think of him. But I think that's the infrequent case and you'll just have to play that one by ear. I can't imagine any other instance unless the student is a real personal friend of yours. Routinely, I would rather assume that if a student comes to you for counseling you are the counselor.

Well let's go on. The next basic condition is [confidentiality]. Let me talk about [its purposes] first. [It used to be that the primary purpose of confidentiality in counseling was to offer the student privacy, and to create conditions in which he felt safe to divulge things that to him are dangerous. Something has happened in this culture in the past 10 or 15 years that makes this a much less pressing issue. Students don't seem to be all that concerned anymore when they come to a counselor. They don't have to be reassured that

this is confidential for the sake of safety.] At Brandeis we use to practically beat drums to the students, we had to repeat each time, "this is confidential. Are you aware of that; are you sure of that; do you trust it," etc., etc. Because the atmosphere at that place was so filled with suspicion and hostility toward the administration that we otherwise couldn't do our work. That started to die out when I was leaving Brandeis and at Sant Cruz it hardly ever came up. But it is still important for the counselor to make this very explicit for another entirely different reason--and in some ways a more important reason. Because it has instructional value. It says as nothing else can say, the purpose of these sessions is not to talk about superficial things; the purpose of these sessions is to bring up things that could be dangerous if they weren't kept confidential, that could be destructive. The purpose is maybe to bring up very embarrassing things. This is not a place for false modesty or shyness. That doesn't mean you can't have these feelings but we're not going to be ruled by them." It's for that purpose that I think confidentiality ought to be considered a basic ground rule and ought to be made explicit as part of the agreement.] In the early years I think we're going to find ourselves having to really spell it out with students, but as soon as we start getting some history the students will understand and it will be clear that both of you understand this; therefore, it doesn't have to be talked about. But if you feel it has to be talked about, then it should be. Freud when he started all this business used to have a little lecture that he gave his patients telling them what free association meant. Anything that comes up without regard to its embarrassment or possible triviality or the feelings of the therapist etc., etc. Really spell it out for them. The purpose of that was to teach the person that one of the difficulties, one of the reasons he felt alone and helpless, was that he couldn't relate to himself, he couldn't even get his thoughts out, he couldn't get words out. Just to tell a student that everything that comes up in the discussion will be kept confidential by you under all circumstances, and that if you are going to divulge it, it will always be with the student's prior permission. It accomplishes the same thing that Freud use to accomplish with that little lecture of his. This kind of confidentiality in any other kind of relationship would be perceived, and rightly so, as awkward, inappropriate, even grotesque, but within the counseling frame the only appropriate thing to do is maintain confidentiality. This is where I think we're going to fail more often than anywhere else. Because it just runs completely counter to the mores and basic reflexes of the teaching tradition. You know, the assumption is that you always discuss students. And where it's really going to break down is I think Dick is going to be counseling Susie Smith; Susie Smith is going to come up with a real spectacular, exciting, story about something she did last week; and Dick is going to go home and say, "hey, Virginia you know what I heard today?" Then the ball game is all over gentlemen.

This is the way we have been behaving for years.

Right, but that's all over. I mean it's the mortal sin, the grounds for excommunication. I use to drive Susie nuts in Santa Cruz. There was one time one of the junior staff people, one of the counselors on the staff, got into a jam -- very, very exotic interesting problem and she asked if she could see me for a few sessions. I said okay, set up the ground rules, she knew them by heart anyway, so we had a few sessions. Now this girl was a very close friend of other friends of ours and lots of people knew what she was into, what she was doing, it was part of the gossip circle. Susie knew I was seeing her in counseling but that's all she knew. So, she'd ask me questions, "hey you know what I heard, what about that?" "Come on Susie, you know we don't talk about that kind of stuff." That used to drive her up a wall. She would say, "yes, I understand with students and all that, but not Kathy for Christ's sake".

So that is absolutely essential. Confidentiality has to be maintained except in those rare instances of professional consultation, and usually then with permission and approval. Try to develop a little cell in your head that only has one door--in. That's just part of the discipline, and it's necessary.

Okay what do I mean by one-sidedness. That means that in everything you do, think, everything you say, everything you wonder about, every decision you make in the counseling session, the attention is always on the student. The focus is on the student. Should I say this, should I not say it; should I share this observation, should I hold it back? Should I ask this question, should I not ask it? Should I share this experience of mine or should I not? All these decisions should first pass the test of what's in this for him, ~~what might be in this for him~~. Is it too soon for his sake, is it something that I may want to say in a different way for his sake? Not for his sake meaning to make him more comfortable--but will this enable him to get a better handle on his feelings? <sup>on his file</sup> Even during a silence when the student is sitting there and not able to say anything. What one-sidedness means here is that you don't take that three minutes to think of what you're going to buy on the way home. This is important time for him. You use that time to think about what he might be thinking about, what might be inhibiting him, what might have him hung up right now. It's a time maybe for just reviewing the last session. Inevitably there will be involuntary lapses. Somebody brings up something in his sex life and it just happens to remind you of the first time you got laid, and quite involuntarily, you start remembering, and 10 seconds pass before you realize that you're breaking the rule and want to get back. Even then you want to ask yourself, "now maybe I can use that lapse." "Is it possible that I could share that with him?" Again to get it back, even use the involuntary lapses to get back, to the student's focus. Nine times out of ten you can't share the lapse, but just the exercise of asking whether you might gets you back into the counseling attitude. Where this pays off, and it's probably the most important part of the discipline of counseling, it pays off in unpredictable ways in terms of intuition, in terms of empathy, you know, in terms of really understanding and comprehending that other person.

Ron's  
no needs

I don't think any of us ever, unless we get involved with professional counseling, really have much chance to behave that way.

No, it would only be during the four hours or whatever hours you set aside.

As you were describing I was flashing back to times when I have, I thought, listened very carefully to a student who was spilling out a tough, sad story; I realized that I was not being as attentive as I could.

It's exhausting in some ways, and it's also extremely gratifying. The gratification of craftsmanship. To have someone come in and tell me something that they assume if they ever told anyone would result in the person shrieking in horror, and to see that that is what they expect and not to do it, and realize the benefit that other person is getting out of your not doing it--not because you're trying not to do it, simply because that's part of the discipline. Not reacting with your own emotion but thinking well what did you expect, why did she expect that, what has that got to do with her feeling incompetent, and not being confident etc., etc? Just thinking that all she sees is a guy sitting there concerned about her and trying to help.

Now what I mean by open-mindedness--that's really a tough one to describe because everybody is, of course, open-minded in his own eyes. [Everyone assumes that he is open-minded until he discovers that he isn't. Again what this really means is maintaining the discipline of being tuned in only to the student's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and so on. It's another side to the ~~neutrality~~ point, the open-mindedness thing, but there will in fact be times when a student will, say, really have had an experience that maybe you would like to have had all your life and never had, and maybe you can resign yourself now to not having it; and you sit there and you think god-damn son-of-a-bitch it ain't fair, why should I be helping him, he's experiencing joys that I never experienced and never will experience. At that point the danger of becoming closed minded is imminent; nonetheless the ability to remain open minded, that is keep <sup>trying to see life from his</sup> your eye on the ball and keep working, is extremely gratifying.]

*emotions  
judgments*

*W. J. W.*

Question: You were making a distinction between thoughts, attitudes, feelings, behavior. What about your attitude about his attitudes and thoughts, and feelings?

Right, you will have all sorts of <sup>biased</sup> judgments that you will be making about how stupid he is and how blind he is, but they will hardly be value judgments if you have your work cloak on. Those will immediately translate into questions of why does he feel this way, why is he doing that. Of course it's stupid to spend three hours cleaning up your desk every night and then find that you're so tired you can't go to work. That's a pretty dumb way to behave, but your impulse as a counselor is not to say "that's a pretty dumb way to behave, why don't you shape up." Your reflex is to start asking questions. Why would he behave this way, what's he trying to do, why does <sup>it come up now</sup> that ~~make him say it~~, why does he need to feel safe, what's really threatening him. etc., etc., and trying to get him to think that way.]

[Two things that I've discovered that are useful practices, from the point of view of maintaining open-mindedness, are to keep a journal, not during the session, some people can do that but I haven't been able to keep notes and also pay attention. Some people can, I can't. But I have found it useful, sometime soon after the session, to keep <sup>some</sup> notes not only from the point of view of remembering the sessions and keeping track of what the student was saying and what he's working on, but what you're learning from it. So if Dick Brian has come in and he's really had an experience that's made me envious and has reminded me of the times I haven't lived as happily as I would like to have, and it's too late now and I may not have thought of it the last three or four years, here's an occasion for me to sit down and have a reflection session with myself, a little self-counseling and jot it down. That's one way of getting something in lieu of the health you lost. Another, I can't really spell this out too well, always try, at any rate when you've heard something that you think is reprehensible or is extremely weak, or it's something that would make you terribly ashamed if you were the person that was behaving this way; something that you instinctively find yourself judging as bad, weak, dirty, rotten, insane,-- whatever--to ask yourself: once this person has worked on his problem, once he is a healthier kind of person, how would what he's putting into that reprehensible behavior change. What would be the good in it?]

*(sometimes)  
↑  
personally  
professionally*

*→ Anger  
all  
symptoms*

[I'll give you one particularly dramatic example, when I learned this and never forgot it again. I once had a patient--~~this wasn't a counseling patient, this was a private patient, but~~ I was then getting supervision from a very smart cookie. This guy, after about ten sessions, went through a god-awful one in which he finally fessed up to something that had been



bugging him all his life. He never thought he could tell it to anybody and he finally told me what it was. What it was was that he'd jerk-off pretty much every night; this he'd already told me about and he worried about this, but the thing that really got him and he found very difficult to tell me was that he did it in a particular way that would allow him to perform fellatio on himself at the same time. What he did was to rig up a kind of Rube Goldberg thing, kind of apparatus -- rubber tube and jerk off and swallow the semen. Well first it got to me personally but also I wasn't very skilled then in terms of diagnosis, and I thought oh Jesus what have we got on our hands here, schizoid behavior, real primitive stuff, and I began to think Jesus the prognosis here is not very good. Well in the consultative session I told my teacher, expecting that he would confirm my fears, about the prognosis. He listened and sort of complimented me on my ability to get this much confidence from the patient, and then he said, "what do you think of that little trick of his?" I said "I don't know what the hell to think of it," and he says "have you ever heard of it before?" I'd never heard about it before and I had never read about it before either. He says "Well you know there must be; I've never heard about it before either, it just occurs to me this is a very extreme kind of behavior and it's just possible that this guy has a unique capacity for self-containment, being a complete self-contained unit, maybe it is just possible he has a rare capacity for integrity of some kind. But look at the way he is frittering that away in that silly trick of his; maybe you might tell him that sometime." And I thought ah ha this is the trick; the real trick to therapy is to see the kernels of latent health-- that is in the sickest, most reprehensible kind of behavior. And if you start thinking this way then you're really in a position to be open-minded, rather than to recoil and start judging. Boy, that lesson really paid off over the years. It's not easy to perfect but just working on it is helpful. This is the one place where perhaps some book knowledge of personality development and that kind of thing can be useful, but it can be learned from students themselves if you ask them this question and then have your responses influenced by your having asked the question.

Question: Wouldn't you say that person had some problems with aggression?

Well, if you look at it that way it tends to be, well that really is reprehensible, but I can find something good in you anyway. That isn't it. It's what might really be healthy that's in that very behavior. What is the healthy tendency that's been distorted in that behavior? So that you can get out the healthy tendency and work on it, not just the distortion.

Okay now what do I mean by awareness of the symbolic power of your role?

In clinical circles this is what is referred to as transference. That's a much misunderstood term. It does not mean that all patients fall in love with their therapists because they remind them of their mothers. What I mean by that is that to the extent the counselor succeeds in meeting all these other conditions of ~~mutuality~~, neutrality, confidentiality, one-sidedness and open-mindedness, it puts him in a position symbolically to represent all of the adults, all of the authorities in that student's life who have either exploited him by not being open minded, by not being concerned about him, etc., etc., or whom he has exploited, and it puts you in a position to represent all those people symbolically. And if he can work something out with you, the real pay-off here, the by-product of all this is, that in some ways he's come to terms with lots of ghosts and lots of parent figures and lots of poor teachers, etc., etc. He is not necessarily conscious of this but the fact that he has one experience with an authority that was based on mutuality, mutual respect, mutual ability to face up to problems and ~~face up to them in a manly way~~, work on them. In a sense it shows that since he's

done it once he can do it again. In some ways you might say ~~it~~ puts the counselor in position to be a kind of a broker, symbolic broker, helping the student forgive himself and his parents ~~parents~~ for times when they've exploited each other, one way or another. This is real magic.

Question: You were talking sometime back about the confrontation process. Is this the kind of process where the student identifies you as (inaudible)

No not necessarily. That's what I mean that awareness of these symbolic properties is not necessarily explicit. I am glad you asked that because this is where psychoanalysis as psychoanalysis differs from counseling. In psychoanalysis it's considered that unless that has been made explicit and traced in all of its ramifications so that all the symbolic leverage is made conscious.... As I say that's a very educational experience, but it's not necessarily any more helpful in dealing with problems than to allow it to go unspoken. You may be aware of this, it may occur to you, for example, that now that Susie Smith has finally faced up for the first time to an authority and said that what has been the trouble all along was that she was more sensitive to your needs than to her own and that she was therefore all along behaving in such a way as to please you and that's why she hasn't been getting anything out of her own life. Having said to yourself that you may think to yourself ah-ha I wonder how many people in her life this represents. Good, in terms of your understanding, but I wouldn't normally bring that up --

*— vs  
suggested  
tends to read*

Now there are three things that you might find yourself doing that mean that you've forgotten this symbolic power you have and forfeiting it. One is when you find yourself being buddy-buddy with a student. To the extent that you're buddy-buddy with the student you're usually breaking some of the other conditions too, you're usually meeting your own needs as well as his. But one thing you're certainly doing, is forfeiting the role of authority and therefore the symbolic properties of that role. You might help the student in lots of ways but you won't be representing all the people that he's never been able to be buddy-buddy with.

The second one is if you've taken sides. Now there you've already broken the neutrality condition anyway. But if you've taken sides, either for him or against him, you've said for example "well that run-in you had with Dean Cadwallader troubled you all right and I'm glad to see you're working on your end of it, but you know Cadwallader was really right. You've broken the other condition but you've certainly given up your role as an authority there, that is as one that can be representative.

The third is when you take the position "that--"well! this is just a growing pain; a phase you're going through, and stuff. You're right, it is a trival problem." You wouldn't say that but sometimes that attitude can get across to the student, especially one who is trying to demean himself or belittle his problem.

Question: (inaudible)

That's the kind of question, Jack, I really can't answer and so won't even try. Again it's good to have that kind of question raised, however, because this and the thousand other kinds of questions, you could ask "how do you do it". Nobody can tell you. All I am saying here is that's relatively unimportant. Ways will occur to you if you're observing all these conditions. They will be Jack Webb ways, they won't be my ways, they won't be Larry's ways. If you're aware

of these conditions, are really working at them, what you should be asking yourself in terms of how to do it is if I break a condition, how did I do it and how do I stop doing it? The rest of how to do it I will say in a few words about a few practical guidelines and that's all. These are very general guidelines.

First is contradiction. Whenever you hear a contradiction you might ask yourself the question of whether or not it would be in the interest of that student to confront him with the contradiction. What it usually means is you're onto a conflict the student didn't know he had. Another, if the student spends a whole session talking about his past, his parents, his mother, his father his childhood, it's usually a good idea to think "I wonder if it might be good to raise the question in the present or ask him to relate what he's been talking about to the present; "and conversely, if the student is constantly talking about his current problem, it is usually a good idea to think of raising the past and getting him to relate the past to the present. Timing and all that is up to you. The same with fantasies and realities. If the student is constantly talking just about the real problem but never brings up daydreams or memories or anything like that, you might ask yourself if it would be in his interest to ask if he ever has any daydreams or "Did you ever have any fantasies about this when you were a kid?" Then again, conversely, if the student is always talking about his daydreams and dreams and so on, it might be wise to ask yourself if it would be in his interest to raise the question of how this relates to his everyday life.

I might talk about the strength within weakness tactic. That's more one of attitude. It's just good for you to be thinking that way. Here is one that I find useful; it may be more a reflection of my style and personality than anything else, and I'll put it in quotes. I just call it the "sandwiching technique." This happens usually when a student is having a devil of a time either identifying the problem or relating to the problem. Now, you are pretty sure what it is. The one thing you don't want to do is tell the student, "Hey, I think I know what it is." That is the one thing that is not very courteous, but it can be useful, if you're pretty sure you know what it is, to say something like, "You know, I think it would be useful for you if we could get a handle on that and really identify what the problem is; what its origin might have been. I don't know for sure, but I'll give you the benefit of my experience and say what it has been in the experience of other students I've worked with. With one student, as I recall, it was the fact that his mother was working all the time and he never saw her, and he used to feel that she didn't like him. With another student it was that he used to wet the bed all the time when he was a kid and he was very embarrassed about it. In another student that I worked with one time this kind of a problem was traced back to a time when he was five years old and he used to have little sex games with his sister," and so on and so on. You want to sort of sandwich the one that you know is on the beam with five or six equally upsetting, if they were true, which enables the student to say with a little more comfort, "Yeah! That might be the one. Let's talk about that."

Multiple choice?

Yeah, it's a multiple choice. Now, I say, I don't know if that is as generally useful as the others I mentioned."

Finally, the question of courtesy. In some ways courtesy is irrelevant under these conditions--that is, the normal day-to-day niceties that guide us in our day-to-day relationships with people. They are irrelevant because of the conditions that have been set up--the neutrality, the agreement, the confidentiality,

etc., etc. But it's therefore all the more effective to be courteous, to say for example just before you are about to get into some really deep water that you know is going to be cold, "I'd like to raise a question with you, and if you think it's being too personal let me know and we won't go into that." I've never had anyone yet, after I've said it, object; but the fact that I've thought enough to be aware that this might be really uncomfortable, that to just give a gesture of courtesy really pays off. It pays off in terms of the student's respect for you, and more than that, his self-respect. He begins to learn to deal courteously with himself.

Well, just to get this on tape, the counterpart to these positive tactical guidelines are some negative ones. The first has to do with advice. Usually the thing to do is not give it. If you think of giving some advice, usually it is best to at least save it and wonder--give it another session. Defer that until next time, because it's usually not called for. When you are confronted with questions and are tempted to give the answer, again, maybe it would be a good idea to give the answer sometime, but more often than not, it would be best to wait. Then, the question of silence. The temptation for a beginner in this business is to break silences and not allow them to happen. They are extremely uncomfortable, extremely uncomfortable. If Bob and I were sitting having a drink in a local bar and we were sitting there looking at each other and not saying a blasted word for five minutes, I think one of us would just get too up tight to allow it, and one of us would break the silence. But silence is one of the best things that can happen in a counseling session--real silence. Even five minutes of it. You will find that sweating out five minutes of silence for the first time is rough. You get feeling tingly, you start to itch, all kinds of things. It will be very uncomfortable. But it pays off. It pays off in the sense that it communicates as nothing else can the one sidedness, that you are here for his benefit and not for anything else. It pays off in demonstrating that you are strong enough to withstand anxiety of your own and to live it through with the student. On the other hand I've found, now again this maybe mainly my style, I find that about five minutes of silence is all that pays off for the student. There was one occasion when I sat through a whole hour and not said a word. A word did not transpire. That was because I'd made the judgement that this guy was strong enough to just throw a whole hour away or ---. That's happened once in my experience. But more often than not, the interest of the student is not served by more than five minutes of silence. You have passed all the tests of confidence and it's more a mark of courtesy than anything else then to say "maybe it would be a good idea for me to think out loud to help you over what you're---." Or, "would you like to sit through this some more or what?" Because about five minutes is about all that pays off in terms of the student's interest. Again, I don't know why five minutes--something about me and counseling maybe.

The question of support. You frequently hear in counseling circles of supportive work. This is usually a put-down in professional circles. You know, psychiatrists say "Social workers, what they do is support, they do supportive work." And what that can mean when it's misinterpreted, and it's even misinterpreted by psychiatrists, is baby-sitting, hand-holding, patting on the back, buck up, everything will be okay. Again, that is fiction. That is not support. The most supportive thing for a person is to face up to his problems and if you really want to be supportive to the person you behave exactly like a psychiatrist even though you're not one. You're a counselor, you're doing the really difficult work. I really mean this, psychotherapy is a snap compared to counseling. It takes much less skill and in some ways is much less rewarding than good successful three-session counseling. That takes real skill. If you want to hear the end of that one, the toughest thing of all is the thing that amateurs are doing all the time and you've been failing at. Referring. A successful referral requires more skill than any other single thing in all of psychiatry. The real pro is the guy who can make referrals.

But that is another point. The point that I want to make is even if you're objective is to support this person, to make him feel less alone and less helpless, then all you do to "support" the person is what you are doing anyway. You are helping that person talk about things that he never thought he could talk about before.

What about reinforcement?

What do you mean reinforcement?

When you see and he sees a step being made, well, do you then enter into some kind of a reinforcement technique?

Well, you are asking one of those questions again, Jack.

Yep.

Maybe, maybe not, but that's something you decide for Jack Webb. If you are observing all these conditions, you may decide yes, you may decide no. You know, a student who comes in originally saying "Dammit, I think I'm impotent. I've been out with this girl three times. She wants it and I want it but it doesn't get up. You know, I'm really scared." Okay, let's work on that. Three sessions, next Tuesday, 2:30." Not all that officiously, but you do it in your style, as we discussed here and after the third session; hell, let's say after the first session, he goes out with the girl and has a ball. Gets it up. Boy, it's great. First time he's ever had it WOW! Life is great! You know, now here is the specific question. Depending on who I am, Jack Webb, Larry Stenberg, Dick Jones, I might sit there and just sort of smile. Or I might get up and say "God damn man, join the group." Depending on me, depending on him. On the other hand, let's get at this support thing. The same guy comes in and in the first session the two of you just agree, depending on what he says. You come to the conclusion that the reason he's not getting it up is that whenever he gets this close to a girl he gets scared and from what else he's told me, the source of feeling scared has to do with other women in his life, and now let's talk about that next time. He takes the position that it's all a question of technique. It's the way you deal with your fly, the way you get it out fast enough, or etc., etc. He's convinced that it's technical problems. I'll share this anecdote with you because it reminds me of the time when I had one like that. This was not a three hour one, it was about a six hour one and this guy, he was adamant. It was surely a technical problem. A question of getting the girl at the right time. It was a question of timing, of having the right smells in the room, everything just right, music on, etc. Just all that kind of thing, that was the way to do it. Not to talk about ---- with women.

That's what playboy teaches ya.

Right. So this is where the support comes in. One session he was going out. He knew that the girl was right. He had the problem solved and he was going to do it right this time. Now, I knew goddamn well there was no way of doing it right until he dealt with some of his fantasies. And one of his fantasies was that there were sort of broken beer bottles and rusty razor blades in there. That was a dream he had, a fantasy he had. And on his way out the door, he was all set. This time he was going to show me it was all technique. On his way out, knowing how much he wanted to have a good experience, I said "Well, watch out for the rusty razor blades and broken beer bottles." He said, "You son of a bitch. How can I do it if I'm thinking those kinds of thoughts." Well now, that was really a very supportive statement. What I was communicating was my confidence first in my own judgment based on the information he had willingly given me; and further and more importantly, my con-

confidence in his solving the problem, not the wrong way but the right way. And eventually he did get at the source of the problem. This is an example of support being nothing more than doing the work.

That's about it.

Is there anything else? Well okay. For the psychology of it, you know, there are books to be read--it would be useful to read, etc. etc. But even having read the books, you don't learn psychology unless you have learned it with and, also had it confirmed by working with students. I really feel very comfortable in saying to a group of non-psychologists if you observe these conditions and you work on these conditions and you finally adapt your own personality and style to these conditions, the students will teach the psychology. But you really don't need a helluva lot of psychology if you are a relatively sensitive person and you observe these conditions. It's really as simple as that. It's simple when you are saying it, it's not simple when you are trying to do it. And that's the point that Dick raised about exceptions. I suppose I should say that, you know, the real artist in this game breaks these rules as often as he observes them. That's because he's found more elegant ways or more sensitive ways to achieve their purposes. But for openers, it's really good to observe all the rules all the time.