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### THEORIES OF COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY *Systems, Strategies, and Skills*

VICTORIA E. KRESS   LINDA SELIGMAN   LOURIE W. REICHENBERG



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FIFTH EDITION

**THEORIES OF COUNSELING  
AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**  
**SYSTEMS, STRATEGIES, AND SKILLS**

**Victoria E. Kress**

*Professor, Youngstown State University*

**Linda Seligman**

*Late Professor Emeritus, George Mason University*

**Lourie W. Reichenberg**

*Licensed Professional Counselor, Falls Church, Virginia*



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*This work is dedicated to the world's helpers and healers:  
You leave something of yourself in every interaction you have  
with another person. Never underestimate the power of human  
connection and the positive impact you can, do, and will have  
on others. You are important not just to your clients but also  
to the people around them who benefit from their growth  
and development—their children, family, partners, friends,  
and community. One warm connection at a time,  
you are making the world a better place.*

**~ Victoria Kress**

# PREFACE

I want to thank Linda Seligman (deceased) and Lourie Reichenberg for constructing and developing the earlier versions of this text. It was an honor to have the opportunity to be involved in the new edition of this book, and I am grateful to Pearson for this opportunity, and to Linda and Lourie for the work they invested in previous editions of this text.

This text was first published in 2001, and since that time it has been used by tens of thousands of students. Many changes to the text have been made based on developments in the helping professions; feedback and reviews received from students and faculty who have used this text in their courses; and feedback received from practitioners and instructors about what students and new professionals most need to know relative to counseling theories.

The basic structure of the text has been maintained, but extensive changes were made to this version. The BETA (**B**ackground, **E**motions, **T**houghts, and **A**ctions) format used in the previous text was removed to reflect the organic evolution of the theories, and to allow more space to thoroughly address the theories presented. In addition, the discussions of relevant research, documenting the validity of each approach, have been expanded. Updated information is provided on all approaches presented in the text, with considerably expanded information on many (see the “New to This Edition” section later in this Preface). Descriptions of important theories, skill development sections, case studies, and reflect and respond activities (formerly referred to as exercises) were retained.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS TEXT

This text organizes the major theories of counseling and psychotherapy in a unified format. Each chapter that presents a theory follows the same organizational format to facilitate comparison and ease of use, beginning with a brief overview of the approach and a biographical sketch of its developer, and then moving on to the theory’s key concepts, therapeutic process (including therapeutic goals, the therapist’s function and role, and the role of the relationship between the therapist and client), therapeutic techniques and procedures, application and current use, and strengths and limitations. Particular attention is given to the application of each theory to people from diverse backgrounds. Finally, at the end of each chapter, skill development and personal development activities allow students to apply the knowledge they have gained around each theory. These activities are as follows:

- ***Skill development section:*** This section teaches one or more key skills associated with the treatment system under review.
- ***Case illustration with the Diaz family:*** Edie, her husband Roberto, and their daughter Ava appear throughout the text to illustrate how treatment approaches can be used and applied.
- ***Reflect and Respond:*** These activities will help readers develop self-awareness and solidify learning.

Although this text focuses primarily on counseling theories that are designed for use with individuals, an overview of family systems theory is included in Chapter 14. Chapter 15 discusses the nature, strengths, and shortcomings of integrated and eclectic counseling approaches, and provides summary tables and overviews of all the major theories discussed in this text.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

Based on reviewers' comments and the feedback received from various sources, significant changes have been made to this fifth edition. It was my intent to make the text practical and functional for both students and instructors.

### Changes to the Text

- The theories discussed in this text have some foundational common threads, yet they are unique. The BETA model was removed from the text to create more space to engage with the richness and complexity of the theories. As such, the four overview chapters that applied the BETA model were removed.
- Three new chapters were added: Contemporary Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (Chapter 8; e.g., acceptance and commitment therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, schema therapy, and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy), Feminist Therapy (Chapter 12), and Postmodern Therapy (Chapter 13; e.g., solution-focused brief therapy and narrative therapy). The contemporary cognitive behavioral theories have a solid research base which supports their use, and the feminist and post modern therapies play an increasingly important role in our diverse, rapidly evolving society. This edition addresses these theories more explicitly and systematically.
- The individual application activities at the end of each chapter—intended to help students apply aspects of the theories to their own experience—were expanded and additional activities were included. This section was previously referred to as “Exercises” and it is now called “Reflect and Respond.”
- The fifth edition of this text brings a stronger multicultural focus. In each theoretical chapter in the text, a revised multicultural section intended to draw attention to cultural considerations was provided.
- To permit more space in the text to expand on important theoretical concepts, the large- and small-group activities that had been in each chapter were moved to the instructor's manual. Instructors are encouraged to use these activities in class so that students have an opportunity to apply what they are learning.
- A glossary was added to the text. In the eText version of this book, readers can click on the highlighted terms and be digitally linked the corresponding definition.
- Each chapter has been updated to include an overview of the latest research available on each theory.
- The common factors approach and support for the importance of an effective and sustained therapeutic alliance have been the focus of much newly published research. This information is integrated where relevant (usually in the discussion of the therapeutic alliance) throughout the text. Chapter 1, Foundations of Effective Counseling, includes an extended discussion of this topic, as does the chapter on theoretical integration.
- Changes were also made to the writing style of the text to help improve the flow and readability, and thus enhance the reader experience.
- Additional content was added to all of the chapters, as were updated resources and references.

## **EFFECTIVE WAYS TO USE THIS TEXT**

This text has been designed for flexibility and ease of use. Although each college and university has its own curriculum and required courses, this text can be adapted to almost any curriculum in counseling, psychology, social work (or any other helping professions) and also can be used for training and staff development. Here are a few suggestions for using the text:

1. Most schools offer a counseling theories course in only one term, and the entire text could be covered in a one-semester course.
2. The text is also ideally suited for use in a two-semester or two-quarter course on theories and techniques of counseling and psychotherapy. The first part of the text could be covered in the first semester, with the remaining sections covered in the second semester to provide students with an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the counseling theories.
3. The Skill Development sections are designed to accompany the theories taught in that particular chapter. However, these sections can be used independently of the theoretical portions, perhaps taught in a subsequent semester following a course on theories of counseling and psychotherapy or used as part of a practicum or internship to facilitate skill development.
4. Like the Skill Development sections, the Reflect and Respond activities are intended to accompany review of the theory in each chapter. However, they are designed to be used flexibly. These activities offer people the opportunity to work alone and apply their learning to themselves.

The large-group and small-group exercises have been moved to the Instructor's manual and are appropriate for encouraging classroom discussion. Small-group exercises allow clusters of a few learners to practice and improve their clinical skills with the benefit of peer feedback and support. Faculty members, of course, can choose to use any or all of the activities that accompany each chapter. Ideally, time should be allocated, either during or outside class, for at least some of the activities in each chapter. However, if time is limited, the individual activities enable students to continue their learning and skill development outside class. Although instructors may decide to review students' journals at the end of a course to determine whether they have completed the individual activities, I encourage them not to grade or evaluate these journals so that students feel free to express themselves, try out new skills, and gain learning and self-awareness. Students should be told at the beginning of the course whether they will be required to share their journals in any way so that they can determine how much they share.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

A big thank you goes out to my publishing team at Pearson. Kevin Davis taught me so much over the past 5 years; his wisdom, support, and patience have been priceless, and I will miss working with him as he moves into retirement. Rebecca Fox-Gieg's never-ending warmth and support provided me with the confidence I needed to get creative in developing this text. Thank you to both Kevin and Rebecca for believing in me! Because of their unconditional support, I have been able to reach my potential as an author.

Sometimes the universe gives you a gift when you most need it. With regard to this text, my gift came in the form of one Christine A. McAllister. It is impossible to communicate in words how grateful I was to have Christy assist me in developing this text. Christy is wise and gifted beyond her years. Her insights and opinions greatly informed the development of this text. She is a wonderful writer and editor. I could not have made my tight deadlines were it not for her support.

Thank you to Linda Seligman and Lourie Reichenberg, who constructed the original version of this text. I dramatically changed the structure and content of the text, but underneath those changes are the words and ideas they constructed. This text would not be what it is were it not for them.

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I would also like to thank the following people who offered useful suggestions that helped in developing this text: Eric Baltrinic, you are always exceptionally thoughtful, and I appreciate your insights around what constitutes a "good" theories text; Richard Watts, thank you for sharing Adlerian resources; Dana Unger, thanks for taking time to talk with me about what you look for in a theories text; and David Johnson, you are a deep thinker, and I so appreciate your assistance in thinking through the presentation of the forces that have influenced the development or waves of counseling theories.

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Last, but not least, writing a book necessarily requires sacrifice not only from the authors but also from the people who surround them. My profound thanks go out to my husband, Rob, and my children, Ava and Isaac, for their patience during this text's development. Thank you to my Department Chair, Jake Protivnak, for your flexibility and the support you regularly offered.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Victoria E. Kress, PhD/LPCC-S (OH), NCC, CCMHC**, is a professor, counseling clinic director, and the director of the clinical mental health and addictions counseling programs at Youngstown State University. She previously worked as the director of advocacy for the National Board of Certified Counselors. She has over 25 years of clinical experience working with youth and adults in various settings, which include community mental health centers, hospitals, residential treatment facilities, private practices, and college counseling centers. She has published over 130 refereed articles and book chapters, and she has coauthored 5 books on counseling youth and adults. She was identified as the top producer/publisher in counseling journals between the years 2000 and 2017. She previously served as the associate editor of the Theory and Practice Sections of the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, and as an editorial board member for the *Journal of Counseling and Development* and other counseling journals. Dr. Kress has lectured throughout the United States, as well as internationally, on various topics related to counselor practice. Dr. Kress served two terms as a governor-appointed member of the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board, and served as the chair of the Counselor Professional Standards Committee. She also served as the ethics liaison for Ohio's state regulatory board and presently serves as a consultant/expert witness for counselor ethics cases. She has been the recipient of over 40 professional and community service awards, most of which were for her advocacy, leadership, scholarship, community service, and mentorship initiatives. She has also received awards for her work with people who have intellectual disabilities, for empowering girls in her community, for her sexual assault prevention efforts, and for her child abuse advocacy work. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) honored her with the Martin Ritchie Award for Excellence in Advocacy. She also received the following American Counseling Association (ACA) Awards: the ACA Fellow Award, the Gilbert and Kathleen Wrenn Award for a Humanitarian and Caring Person, the Distinguished Mentor Award, the Counselor Educator Advocacy Award, and the Government Relations Award. She has been the recipient of the following Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Awards: the Counseling Vision and Innovation Award, the Outstanding Mentor Award, the Robert Stripling Award for Excellence in Standards, and the Leadership Award. She has also received a number of Youngstown State University awards (e.g., the Giant Award, Distinguished Scholar, Distinguished Public Servant) as well as various Ohio Counseling Association awards, including the Counselor of the Year Award, the Research and Writing Award, the Legislative Advocacy Award, and the Leadership Award. She is a past president of Chi Sigma Iota International and the Ohio Counseling Association; she is a past ACA region chair; and she is the president of the Association for Humanistic Counseling. She has also worked and volunteered in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, and Rwanda, promoting mental health awareness and training, as well as the professionalization of counseling.

**Linda Seligman, PhD**, received her doctorate in counseling psychology from Columbia University. Her primary research interests included diagnosis and treatment planning as well as counseling people with chronic and life-threatening illnesses. Dr. Seligman was a professor at George Mason University for 25 years. She served as codirector of the doctoral program in education, coordinator of the Counseling Development Program, associate chair of the School of Education, and head of the Community Agency Counseling Program. She was later named professor emerita. Dr. Seligman also

served as associate at Johns Hopkins University and as a faculty member in counseling psychology at Walden University.

During her lifetime, Dr. Seligman authored 15 texts, including *Selecting Effective Treatments, Diagnosis and Treatment Planning in Counseling, Developmental Career Counseling and Assessment*, and *Promoting a Fighting Spirit: Psychotherapy for Cancer Patients, Survivors, and Their Families*. She also wrote more than 80 professional articles and text chapters. She lectured throughout the United States, as well as internationally, on diagnosis and treatment planning and was recognized for her expertise on that subject. In 1990, the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) designated Dr. Seligman as Researcher of the Year. In 2007, AMHCA honored her with the title of Counselor Educator of the Year.

**Lourie W. Reichenberg, MA, LPC** is a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Falls Church, Virginia. She also provides clinical supervision for therapists and interns at The Women's Center in Vienna, Virginia. She earned her master's degree in counseling psychology from Marymount University. She has taught crisis counseling, abnormal psychology, and counseling theories to graduate and undergraduate students.

She is currently on the executive committee of the Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors and serves on the board of directors for the Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors.

Reichenberg is a member of the CrisisLink LOSS team, which provides assistance in the community after a suicide has occurred. She served on the CrisisLink Board of Directors from 2003 to 2006 and is on the organization's Advisory Council. She is a past editor of the Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors and was the editor of the *Journal of the College and University Personnel Association* from 1988 to 1993. She coauthored *Selecting Effective Treatments* (2007, 2012) with Dr. Seligman and has published many professional articles, including a chapter on grief and loss in *Crisis Assessment, Intervention and Prevention* (Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2010, 2013). She has edited more than 30 texts and monographs. Her primary interests include crisis counseling; grief and loss; and helping individuals, couples, and families cope with life transitions. She approaches her work as a therapist, educator, and community volunteer from a humanistic, person-centered, and emotionally focused perspective, and incorporates mindfulness into her practice.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Katherine A. Feather, PhD**, is a licensed professional counselor and an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at Northern Arizona University. Katherine has an extensive clinical background working with persons with disabilities—specifically, children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and adults adjusting to their visual disability. She has published and presented on these topics at the regional, national, and international level. Her research interests include ASD and establishing competencies for the counseling profession, counselors' preparedness to work with persons with disabilities, school-to-career transition of students with disabilities, and psychosocial adjustment and family adaptation to a disability.

**Jessica A. Headley, PhD**, is an assistant professor in the Counseling and Art Therapy Department, as well as codirector of the Women's Center, at Ursuline College. She is also a licensed professional clinical counselor in private practice, specializing in women and gender issues. She has additional clinical experience working in community mental health, college counseling, and hospital settings. Her research interests include women and gender issues, feminist therapy and supervision, and the use of relational-cultural theory and creativity in counseling. She has published and presented in these areas and has experience serving as an assistant editor for feminist academic journals, including *Psychology of Women Quarterly* and *Sex Roles*.

**Christine A. McAllister, MAEd.**, is a licensed professional counselor. She has conducted research and presented on topics such as mood-related disorders, best practices for clients who are suicidal, counseling clients who have sexual abuse histories, and counseling individuals with intellectual disabilities. Her clinical and research interests include trauma, suicide, chronic illness, and LGBTQ+ issues. She was a 2019 National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Minority Fellow and is passionate about serving diverse populations, specifically people who identify within the gender and sexual/affectional minority spectrum. She is active in the profession and engages in professional service work with the American Counseling Association, Chi Sigma Iota, the American Mental Health Counseling Association, the Eastern Ohio Counseling Association/Ohio Counseling Association, the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, and the Association for Humanistic Counseling.

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## 1

# Foundations of Effective Counseling

## Learning Outcomes

When you have finished this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the development and commonalities of Counseling Theories.
- Identify the characteristics of successful clients and of successful counselors.
- Describe why clients' developmental levels are important in the context of counseling and counseling theory selection.
- Describe how culture/diversity issues and legal/ethics issues are important in the context of counseling theories.
- Explain the value of a strengths-based perspective in counseling.

Before considering specific theories of counseling and psychotherapy, it is important to pave the way by providing some information on the history and development of these approaches. This chapter focuses on some of the foundational elements that relate to effective counseling (e.g., the counseling relationship) and considerations that influence the counseling theories used (e.g., the counseling setting, a client's developmental level). The chapter addresses the following topics:

- Characteristics of clients who benefit from counseling
- The therapeutic alliance
- Helpful personal and professional characteristics of the counselor
- Client developmental considerations
- Culturally competent counseling
- The importance of a strengths-based perspective
- Counseling settings and how this relates to counseling theories used
- Ethical and legal guidelines and standards that relate to counseling theories.

Later in this chapter, the Diaz family—Roberto, Edie, and Ava—make their first appearance. The Skill Development section focuses on a review of effective questioning and interviewing techniques that lead to productive intake assessments. The Reflect and Respond section includes activities that reinforce those skills. The use of minimal encouragers and the Reflect and Respond section center on questioning and interviewing for a productive intake/initial assessment.

## DEVELOPMENT OF COUNSELING THEORIES

Prior to the late 19th century, people understood little about mental and emotional difficulties and approaches that could be used to help individuals change. Many people with severe mental health symptoms were forcibly confined in institutions and exposed to largely ineffective therapies, while those with mild or moderate difficulties typically received no professional help.

The development of psychodynamic approaches to psychotherapy, spearheaded by the work of Sigmund Freud, led to the emergence of what has been called the first force of psychotherapy. Viewing past experiences as the source of people's present emotional difficulties and emphasizing unconscious processes and long-term therapy, psychodynamic approaches provided a solid foundation for the field of psychotherapy, but that approach had clear limitations.

The research and practice of B. F. Skinner, as well as more modern theorists such as Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck, William Glasser, and Donald Meichenbaum, led to the emergence of the second force of psychotherapy: behavioral and cognitive theories and interventions. Behavioral approaches, which originated in the 1950s, have been integrated with cognitive approaches, developed primarily in the 1980s, leading to the cognitive behavioral approaches that received considerable attention and empirical support in the 1990s. Cognitive and behavioral approaches emphasize the interaction between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They use interventions that generally focus on the present and seek to minimize dysfunctional cognitions and behaviors while replacing them with more helpful and positive thoughts and actions.

Carl Rogers' innovative work emerged in the 1960s and led to the development of the third force of psychotherapy: existential-humanistic psychotherapy. The work of Fritz Perls, Viktor Frankl, and others contributed to this force, which emphasizes the importance of emotions and sensations and of people taking charge of and creating meaning in their own lives. These approaches also drew attention to the importance of the therapeutic alliance.

During the later part of the 20th century and the front end of the 21st century, therapists have entered the era of the fourth force of psychotherapy: therapies that focus on Contextual/Systemic approaches (e.g., feminist, family systems, postmodern, multicultural). Contextual/Systemic therapists concentrate on individual identity (e.g., gender, culture, age, race, and sexual orientation) and consider context and culture as they impact clients' experiences and their change processes. Becoming culturally competent, being an ally with clients, and remaining open to their multiple perspectives of themselves and their world are essential for today's therapists. Networking and collaboration with other mental health professionals, providers of community resources, and important people in clients' lives are now viewed as integral to successful counseling. Theories of counseling and psychotherapy, as well as their implementation, have changed in response to the fourth force.

More than 400 counseling theories have been identified and described in the literature (Zarbo, Tasca, Cattafi, & Compare, 2015). Of course, all these theories cannot be reviewed in this text. Therefore, the following criteria were used to select the theories covered in this text:

1. The theories are clear, coherent, and easily communicated.
2. They are compatible with or can be adapted to include the therapeutic commonalities.
3. They encompass a concept of positive emotional development and health that can be used in setting goals and assessing progress.
4. They help therapists organize and make sense of information.

5. They are comprehensive, explaining and addressing a broad range of concerns and disorders.
6. They give therapists direction, steps, and guidelines for facilitating positive change.
7. They encompass strategies and interventions that grow out of and are consistent with the underlying theory.
8. They provide therapists with a common language that facilitates counseling and collaboration.
9. They are widely used in practice and generate research. Even if these approaches have not been conclusively validated by empirical research, the research is promising and their widespread use or growing popularity suggests that therapists find these approaches beneficial to their clients.
10. They focus on individual counseling and psychotherapy. (This book primarily addresses counseling with individuals, with the exception of one chapter that summarizes the major family therapy theories.)

Whether therapists describe themselves as integrative or eclectic (incorporating a variety of themes and techniques into their work), or affiliated with a particular theoretical model, counseling theories all shed light on people's challenges and change processes and provide skills that promote emotional health. It is difficult to determine the most popular theoretical orientations of various mental health providers. Little research on this topic exists, and when practitioners are asked about their theory preferences, only a small number of theories are presented to them as options, thus limiting the findings. With that said, Table 1.1 presents an overview of the theoretical orientation of choice of U.S. counselors, clinical psychologists, counseling psychologists, and social workers.

**TABLE 1.1** Theoretical Orientations of Mental Health Providers in the United States

Orientation	Clinical Psychologists (%)	Counseling Psychologists (%)	Social Workers (%)	Counselors (%)
Behavioral	15	2	11	8
Cognitive	31	19	19	29
Constructivist	1	1	2	2
Existential/Humanistic	1	7	4	5
Gestalt/Experiential	1	1	1	2
Integrative/Eclectic	22	31	26	23
Interpersonal	4	8	3	3
Multicultural	1	2	1	1
Psychoanalytic	3	1	5	2
Psychodynamic	15	9	9	5
Rogerian/Person-Centered	2	3	1	10
Systems	2	4	14	7
Other	2	12	4	3

Source: Data from Bechtoldt, H., Norcross, J. C., Wyckoff, L., Pokrywa, M. L., & Campbell, L. F. (2001). Theoretical orientations and employment settings of clinical and counseling psychologists: A comparative study. *The Clinical Psychologist*, 54(1), 3–6; Bike, D. H., Norcross, J. C., & Schatz, D. M. (2009). Processes and outcomes of psychotherapists' personal therapy: Replication and extension 20 years later. *Psychotherapy*, 46(1), 19–31; Goodyear, R., Lichtenberg, J., Hutman, H., Overland, E., Bedi, R., Christiani, K., . . . Young, C. (2016). A global portrait of counselling psychologists' characteristics, perspectives, and professional behaviors. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 29, 115–138. doi: 10.1080/09515070.2015.1128396; Norcross, J. C., & Karpiak, C. P. (2012). Clinical psychologists in the 2010s: Fifty years of the APA Division of Clinical Psychology. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 19, 1–12.

## UNDERSTANDING COUNSELING THEORIES

Counseling, at its most basic level, is about helping people grow and change. When clients present for counseling, it can be difficult to know what information needs to be gathered and how to proceed in best helping clients make the changes they seek. Therapists use theories to organize and simplify the vast amount of information that clients present. Therapists' theories serve as the roadmap for determining the best way to help clients change. Theories assist counselors in organizing information about clients and in determining how to use such information to support clients.

Available resources on various techniques and interventions to facilitate client change are abundant. A quick Internet search reveals millions of counseling techniques and interventions. As an example, the Jongsma (e.g., Jongsma, Peterson, & Bruce, 2014) series includes numerous treatment planning books, which provide examples of short-term objectives, long-term goals, and therapeutic interventions for helping clients achieve their goals. There has also been a recent trend toward the use of computer software systems that generate predetermined counseling goals, objectives, and interventions based on clients' presenting concerns.

These resources can be very helpful tools, but counselors must pull on a counseling theory that can guide their conceptualization of their clients' situations and help them identify what interventions might be most useful (Kress & Paylo, 2019). Counselors who rely on a hodgepodge of techniques or interventions that are not thoughtfully linked to theory run the risk of harming their clients. Clients deserve to have counselors who thoughtfully conceptualize their situations and select counseling techniques grounded in both theory and science (Kress & Paylo, 2019). Anyone can apply counseling interventions and techniques, but skilled therapists will apply a theory and use this theory to guide and focus counseling and to determine when and how to apply specific interventions; the application of theory is what makes us unique and what separates us from the proverbial "armchair psychologists" of the world.

At the most basic level, theories are important because they help counselors to do the following:

- Weed through a vast amount of presenting information and understand and recognize what client information needs to be identified, gathered, and organized
- Conceptualize clients' situations and identify what is supporting their problems in living
- Identify ways of approaching clients that can help them make changes.

Theories of counseling and psychotherapy have been referred to as counseling or therapy approaches, treatment systems, treatment approaches, and theories of change, along with other terms. In this text, the terms therapy and counseling will primarily be used to refer to an integrated set of concepts that provides explanations for and descriptions of the following:

- Stages, patterns, and important factors in people's emotional development
- Healthy emotional development, as well as problematic or abnormal emotional development
- How to help people develop in positive ways and reduce symptoms that are distressing and/or cause impairment in functioning
- The role of therapists and how that role contributes to counseling
- Strategies for putting the theory into practice (e.g., identifying and modifying cognitive distortions, reflecting feelings, developing a clear plan for behavioral change)
- Specific skills or interventions that can enhance implementation of the counseling approach (e.g., use of earliest recollections, analysis of dreams, diaphragmatic breathing)
- Information on people who are likely to benefit from this counseling approach; this information might include people's age, cultural background, strengths, presenting issues, counseling settings, and other factors.

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