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7TH EDITION

LEARNING THE ART OF HELPING

Building Blocks and Techniques

MARK E. YOUNG



LEARNING THE ART OF HELPING

BUILDING BLOCKS AND TECHNIQUES

Seventh Edition

Mark E. Young

Professor Emeritus

University of Central Florida



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To
SKSJM

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PREFACE

HOW IS THIS BOOK DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BOOKS ABOUT HELPING SKILLS?

This book is unique in five ways. First, it is based on lessons learned through years of practice and supervision. I have tried to infuse what I learned from my clients, students, and teachers about the practical aspects of helping. For example, we will talk about what a therapeutic office environment should look like and how to appropriately terminate a client. My work with students has helped me understand the common problems in learning the art of helping and how to overcome them.

Second, the most important innovation of this book is that it involves you personally in your learning. Throughout the book you are asked to “Stop and Reflect,” to consider thorny issues and challenges that you will face. If you wish, you can journal using Journal Starters or do outside homework to deepen your interaction with the material. In addition, you will have the opportunity to practice on your own by watching videos of helpers and clients and then identify the best helping responses. Every chapter contains Application Exercises in which you can follow the steps of a particular technique and get feedback on your answers.

Third, this book emphasizes that the relationship between helper and client is the most powerful ingredient for success. The relationship (vitamin R) potentiates all the basic techniques that you will learn. If you and the client are on the same wavelength, progress is possible. When the relationship fails, the helping process falters. In this book, I talk about how to develop a therapeutic relationship and how to repair ruptures that threaten it.

Fourth, I have tried to incorporate the latest research on effective treatments. Staying close to the research can be called “evidence-based practice.” At the same time, we must recognize that there is such a thing as clinical wisdom or “practice-based evidence.” Not every method, technique, or client problem has been researched or even discovered. Thus helpers-in-training need to learn from their clients about what is working for that specific person. I suggest that in every session, the helper should elicit feedback from the client about the relationship and progress toward goals.

Finally, this is a book with an integrative perspective. That means that I have drawn from the techniques of many different theories rather than presenting a purely person-centered or cognitive behavioral approach. At first this may sound like chaos. How can we possibly learn to arrange treatment by blending so many competing theories? In this book, we do not blend theories but instead take a common factors approach to organizing the techniques using the REPLAN method. Common factors are those therapeutic effects that underlie the various theories. REPLAN is an acronym that describes each of the healing factors. R stands for establishing and maintaining a therapeutic Relationship, E is Enhancing efficacy and self-esteem, P means Practicing new behaviors, L is Lowering and raising emotional arousal, A is Activating expectations, hope, and motivation, and N is providing New learning experiences. Every theory emphasizes one or more of these common factors, and even advanced therapeutic techniques tend to fall into one of these categories. We have found that categorizing the techniques in this way provides a rational basis for

deciding what kind of help the client needs. Is it more important to raise self-esteem or practice new behaviors? This forms the skeleton of our treatment plan and is guided by the goals that are collaboratively formed between helper and client. This approach can incorporate both time-honored methods and cutting-edge techniques.

WHAT IS NEW IN THE SEVENTH EDITION?

- The seventh edition of *Learning the Art of Helping* has additional coverage of cultural issues. Throughout the book are Culture Check sections that highlight issues of culture in research and personal experiences as they relate to helping skills.
- In addition, a new chapter, Chapter 3, moves this material to the beginning of the text and includes coverage of religion/spirituality and gender dimensions.
- Chapter 2 now contains expanded coverage on the therapeutic relationship and new research that supports maintaining and monitoring the client/helper alliance.
- In Chapter 10, there is an additional coverage of the section on using basic helping skills with children.
- The text is supplemented with more than 100 new references for further reading and to update and promote evidence-based helping techniques.
- In addition to the end-of-chapter activities, such as homework, activities, exercises, self-assessments, and journal starters, we now identify specific points of practice. In the e-text, you can watch a video of the skill you are learning or complete written exercises and receive feedback on your answers. You can now access these ancillary materials at the same time you are reading about them.

Also Available with MyLab Counseling

This title is also available with MyLab Counseling, an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program designed to work with the text to engage students and improve results. Within its structured environment, students see key concepts demonstrated through video clips, practice what they learn, test their understanding, and receive feedback to guide their learning and ensure they master key learning outcomes.

- Learning Outcomes and Standards measure student results. MyLab Counseling organizes all assignments around essential learning outcomes and national standards for counselors.
- Video- and Case-Based Exercises develop decision-making skills. Video- and Case-based Exercises introduce students to a broader range of clients, and therefore a broader range of presenting problems, than they will encounter in their own pre-professional clinical experiences. Students watch videos of actual client–therapist sessions or high-quality role-play scenarios featuring expert counselors. They are then guided in their analysis of the videos through a series of short-answer questions. These exercises help students develop the techniques and decision-making skills they need to be effective counselors before they are in a critical situation with a real client.
- Licensure Quizzes help students prepare for certification. Automatically graded, multiple-choice Licensure Quizzes help students prepare for their certification examinations, master foundational course content, and improve their performance in the course.

- Video Library offers a wealth of observation opportunities. The Video Library provides more than 400 video clips of actual client–therapist sessions and high-quality role plays in a database organized by topic and searchable by keyword. The Video Library includes every video clip from the MyLab Counseling courses plus additional videos from Pearson’s extensive library of footage. Instructors can create additional assignments around the videos or use them for in-class activities. Students can expand their observation experiences to include other course areas and increase the amount of time they spend watching expert counselors in action.

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In my own journey, there have been many who have taught and inspired me to be a better person and a better helper. I must acknowledge my teachers Rajinder Singh, J. Melvin Witmer, Harry Dewire, and James Pinnell, my first supervisor, who took me as a raw recruit in a mental health clinic, sacrificing his time and talent to teach me as an apprentice. We shared a zeal and passion for the profession, and his wisdom infuses every chapter of this book. I must also mention those who have encouraged me in my writing, Sam Gladding, Gerald Corey, Jeffrey Kottler, Adam Blatner, James Framo, John Norcross, and Jerome Frank. I appreciate those who contributed to this edition: Daniel Gutierrez at the College of William and Mary, John Super at the University of Central Florida and Michelle Mitchell at Wake Forest University. In addition, the following reviewers supplied insightful feedback for updating this edition: Elizabeth O Brien, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; Jessica Martin, Lamar University; Melissa Zeligman, University of Central Florida; Zarus Watson, University of New Orleans.

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Helping as a Personal Journey



LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- 1.1 Identify ways of reflecting that you can begin implementing to deepen your learning of helping skills.
- 1.2 Recognize that there are personal and developmental challenges in learning helping skills, such as recognizing the time needed to master skills and dealing with ethical dilemmas as you train with fellow learners.
- 1.3 Identify the therapeutic factors, building blocks, and stages of the helping relationship.

THE DEMANDS OF THE JOURNEY

Learning to be a professional helper is a journey that takes years. Besides gaining knowledge about people's personalities and motivations, strengths, and challenges, one must be constantly learning and updating knowledge, just as a physician needs to know about new treatments and new diseases. But helping is also a personal, "interior" journey because you must be committed to

The Demands of the Journey

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

- Using Reflection to Help You Overcome Challenging Helping Situations and Enhance Your Learning
- Using Reflection to Help Clients with Backgrounds Different from Your Own
- Using Reflection to Accommodate New Information About Yourself
- Learning to Reflect Through Exercises in This Book

What Is Helping?

- Psychological Helping
- Interviewing
- What Are Counseling and Psychotherapy?
- Coaching

Challenges You Will Face in Learning the Art of Helping

- The Challenge of Development
- How a Helper Develops: Perry's Three Stages
 - The Dualistic or "Right/Wrong" Stage
 - The Multiplistic Stage
 - The Relativistic Stage
- Taking Responsibility for Your Own Learning
- Finding a Mentor
- Finding the Perfect Technique
- In Limbo
- Accepting Feedback and Being Perfect
- Following Ethical Guidelines
- Individual Differences

Who Can Be an Effective Helper?

- What Can You Bring to a Client?

The Nuts and Bolts of Helping

- Learning Basic Skills and Common Therapeutic Factors
- Therapeutic Building Blocks
- Change Techniques
- The Importance of the Building Blocks

The Stages of the Helping Process: A Road Map

Summary

Exercises

- Group Exercises
- Group Discussions
- Written Exercises
- Self-Assessment
- Homework
- Journal Starters

understanding yourself as well as your clients. The most important skill you have is you.

In this book you will learn the essential helping skills, but it is not enough to be skilled; at every turn, you face emotional challenges, self-doubt, personal prejudices, and feelings of attraction, repulsion, and frustration. You will experience self-doubt when your clients encounter complex and unfamiliar problems, and attraction and repulsion because of your personal needs and prejudices based on your cultural conditioning. Moreover, all helpers become frustrated at times when clients fail to reach the goals we expect of them.

These reactions and built-in biases can be roadblocks on our journey if they interfere with the ability to form a vibrant client/helper relationship or when we see the client as a reflection of ourselves rather than as a unique human being. Irvin Yalom, in his book *Love's Executioner* (1989, pp. 94–95), describes his treatment of an obese woman who is depressed. From the moment he meets her, he is disgusted by her body and yet realizes his reaction is extreme. It makes him think about the rejection he received for being Jewish and White during his childhood in segregated Washington, DC. He thinks that his repulsion is perhaps a historical attempt to have someone to reject as he was rejected. It makes him wonder why he cannot accept fatness even though he was able to easily counsel people who were criminals when he worked in a prison. He remembers overweight women in his life whom he resents. All these thoughts flood into his mind before the client even opens her mouth. Becoming aware of our prejudiced responses to others is part of the journey of the professional helper. This journey is difficult because it requires that we simultaneously focus on the client while keeping a close watch on our own tendencies to judge, react to our own past experiences, boost our egos, or force our viewpoint on others.

BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Because of the challenges caused by our personal reactions and unique client characteristics, we believe that helpers need a method for integrating new learning and coping with moments of indecision and doubt. In this text, we teach one method of dealing with the dilemma of understanding the client and monitoring the self. This is an approach called the **reflective practitioner**. Being a reflective practitioner means that you make a commitment to a personal awareness of your automatic reactions and prejudices by taking time to think back on these reactions and perhaps to record them in a journal or discuss them with a supervisor or colleague. In other words, the reflective practitioner

CULTURE CHECK

Do Words Matter?

Labels are ways of grouping information about a group of people. For example, calling a person a “hippie” tends to outweigh all the other features of the person. It evokes peace, free love, and drugs. When we use labels, we are frequently parroting what we see on the news or in films. Yet these words have an effect whether we intend it or not.

How can a professional helper avoid labeling? First, we must be more conscious of the words we use. We should talk about “people with schizophrenia” or “people with disabilities.” Otherwise, if we phrase it the opposite way (e.g., schizophrenic people or disabled people), we run the risk of letting the label define the whole person. The following are some ways in which labels and words influence our perceptions and the people around us.

- Granello and Gibbs (2016) gave college students, community adults, and professional counselors a test that measured tolerance for people with mental disorders. Half of the participants were given a version that used the phrase “the mentally ill,” and the other half received a version that used the words “people with mental illness.” When the term “the mentally ill” was used, the subjects, including professional counselors, showed lower levels of tolerance.
- Labels for women are sexualized. For example, although 220 different words can be used to denote a sexually promiscuous female, only 20 such words exist for men. Using these terms influences us to perceive women as sex objects. There are no positive words in this context for women, such as *Don Juan* or *stud* that can be applied to men.
- Labeling people has a tarnishing effect. Slurs against a racial group and gay individuals influence those people who hear the derogatory statements (cf. Goodman, Schell, Alexander, & Eidelman, 2008).
- Research has shown that we talk differently when we meet someone from an unfamiliar background or if the person is older or has a disability. We are likely to talk down to them. We put them in the category of incompetent. Consider the restaurant server who refers to aged customers as “young lady” or “young man.” Although the server may be trying to get a better tip, it is ageism.
- When we give feedback to someone from another ethnic background, we give feedback that is vaguely positive and unhelpful in changing future performance (Ruscher, Wallace, Walker, & Bell, 2010). In other words, helpers must be on their guard to be honest and direct when giving feedback when there is a cultural difference.

consciously reviews what has happened and decides on a plan of action. Jeffrey Kottler (2012) says that being reflective is not only a necessary characteristic of an effective helper but also a form of training. Reflection trains one to be open to contemplation, consider alternative plans of action, become resourceful and creative, and be inquisitive in one’s everyday life as well as in one’s work.

Your teachers might ask you to use reflective methods in class and on your own. For example, a teacher might use techniques such as Socratic questioning (asking leading questions), journal writing, watching and then reflecting on video segments, conducting small groups to react to case studies, or even reflecting teams (Parsons, 2014; Willow, Bastow, & Ratkowski, 2007). Just as every client will respond to the same technique or skill in a different way, you, as a student, will react to different learning situations based on your history and favored learning styles. Some students learn best by listening and then

reflecting, others need to write down what they are learning, and some do best when they can have hands-on experience and then talk about the theory. Reflection can help you even when a teacher's method, or this book, does not suit your preferred learning style. You can record what you understand and then write your own reaction and rebuttals in the margins. You can come to class with questions and concerns based on the previous week's lesson. In short, the method of the reflective practitioner challenges you to be more than a receptacle of knowledge. It asks you to chew everything thoroughly before you swallow it.

Using Reflection to Help You Overcome Challenging Situations and Enhance Your Learning

If you are engaged in a course of study to become a professional helper, you will be confronted with many challenging experiences in the classroom and when you meet your own clients. The process of reflection is especially helpful when tried-and-true methods are not working (Cook, Simola, McCarthy, Ellis, & Stillman, 2018; Mickelborough, 2015). Let me give an example from my own experience. When I was first learning group counseling, I read in several textbooks that clients should never receive both group and individual therapy at the same time. As I began to practice group counseling, I found support for this rule in the fact that when clients received both forms of treatment, they did not contribute to the group, saving their most personal issues for their individual sessions. One day, I received a new client for my group who had undergone several traumatic events and was still being seen individually by another therapist. She performed beautifully in group, and she felt that individual counseling was a vital support in her life. She seemed to be profiting from both forms of treatment. Normally, I would insist on the client dropping out of individual counseling while she attended my group, but now my rule of thumb was in jeopardy because it did not seem to be limiting her progress or stifling the group. In fact, she was applying the insights of individual counseling to her interpersonal world! I went to my supervisor with my dilemma, and she helped me put my old rule and my new experience together. With her help, I constructed a revised rule: "Most of the time, clients will not benefit from simultaneous treatments; however, there are times, especially when the client is in need of a great deal of support or has been traumatized, that both modalities might be beneficial." I have found that the process of reflection allows me to better accommodate new information rather than rejecting it out of hand or following an out-of-date rule. For example, you may be shocked when you discover that the methods you have always used to help your friends are not recommended in a therapeutic relationship. At times like these, reflecting about your experience can help you meld old and new information.

Using Reflection to Help Clients with Backgrounds Different from Your Own

An important and frequent challenge occurs when you encounter people who are completely different from you in one or several ways: culture or ethnicity, language, socio-economics, education, race, religion/spirituality, or family rules and relationships. For example, you will encounter family situations where people openly express their thoughts and feelings and other families where they rarely if ever reveal their inner lives to each other. Because of your own upbringing, you might be shocked, or you might even disapprove of a family's way of interacting. If you undertake the challenge of becoming a reflective practitioner, allow yourself to register surprise and all the other emotions as you encounter these novel situations. Later, take time to think back on what you know about

yourself and what you have learned. Then contrast it with your new experience of this client. Through reflecting, you will be better able to separate your personal prejudices about what is normal and perhaps see the situation through the client's eyes. The ability to see another perspective is enhanced when you take the opportunity to reflect with teachers, fellow students, and supervisors. Growth means that we consciously stretch and try to see multiple viewpoints. That is why we think of helpers as *expanders* rather than as “shrinks.”

Using Reflection to Accommodate New Information About Yourself

Perhaps more than any other profession, helping requires helpers to become aware of their own personalities, preferences, values, and feelings. Reflection can help you integrate new discoveries that you make about yourself. It allows you to carefully consider the feedback you are getting from supervisors, teachers, fellow students, and even your clients. During your training, others will comment on your interpersonal style (the typical way you interact with others), your words, and even your gestures and posture. You will frequently become defensive, rationalizing your mistakes, discounting the giver of feedback, or blaming the client for a lack of progress. These are natural reflexes to the threat of feeling uncertain, impotent, or incompetent. Yet the reflective practitioner is one who examines critical incidents and strong personal reactions during a supervision session with a knowledgeable mentor rather than making excuses or blaming others. Helpers learn from difficult clients, unpleasant interactions, the failure of a technique, and unexpected successes (Gordon, 2004). So, being a reflective practitioner also means having the courage to ask for feedback from others and then to reflect on how you can work more effectively in a particularly difficult situation (Kinsella, 2010; Schön, 1983, 1987).

Following are some ways that you can be proactive in reflecting on your practice, including asking for supervision, developing a support group of fellow learners, becoming a client yourself, and keeping a personal journal. In addition, this book provides opportunities in every chapter to personally respond to the material, including exercises to help you become accustomed to the reflective process.

ASK FOR SUPERVISION Supervision is the practice of a helper and a supervisor sitting down to review the helper's problems and successes. In supervision, you will reflect on alternative courses of action, ethical issues, and personal reactions. You may look at transcripts or watch tapes of your sessions. Everyone in the helping field needs periodic supervision whether one is a student or an experienced practitioner. Professional helpers are required to be under supervision while they are students and during their post-degree internships. Supervision can also focus on your personal wellness and help you avoid burnout (Callender & Lenz, 2018). Lawrence LeShan (1996) reported that his own mentor still sought supervision for herself, even when she was in her 80s, indicating that the reflective process is necessary at all stages of the journey. Supervision does not spawn dependency, and the purpose is not just to provide guidance. Supervision's real value is that it is a time set aside for you to listen to yourself as you explain your situation to someone else. As a student, you may have the opportunity to ask supervisors and faculty members to look at your videos and discuss cases with you. Make use of this valuable opportunity to reflect on your work. Schön (1987) indicates that having a “master teacher” is important, but it must be in a setting where you have the chance to face real problems, try out various solutions, and make mistakes. The best learning environment involves **reflection in action**.

DEVELOP A SUPPORT GROUP OF FELLOW LEARNERS Another golden opportunity for reflecting on your new learning is to develop a supportive group of co-learners with whom you can discuss your personal reactions to the material. Many therapists in private practice are members of such groups. In some training programs, students are part of a cohort or group that goes through every class together. If you are not part of a cohort, you can still develop a supportive group that meets regularly, shares information, and studies together.

BECOME A CLIENT Another way of building a reflective component into your learning plan is to enter a therapeutic relationship as a client. More than half of therapists become clients after their advanced training and about 90 percent consider it to be very beneficial (Norcross, 1990). Many universities offer free services to students, and this can be a way for you to experience what it is like to sit in the other chair. You should be aware that some schools restrict their counseling centers to people who are in critical need.

KEEP A PERSONAL JOURNAL One of the most popular methods for reflecting is to keep a personal journal (Jordal, Carneiro, & Russon, 2016). Helpers recommend journaling to their clients, but it is also a useful learning tool for the beginning helper (Miller, 2014). Personal journaling is available on your smartphone and computer using applications such as Diarium, Glimpses, Journey, Penzu, Dabble.me, Memento, and Five Minute Journal. Choose the journaling option that suits your platform and preferences.

OTHER METHODS FOR REFLECTING Reflection does not have to be a separate activity. It can be incorporated into your daily life as a student or practitioner. Several writers (cf. Miller, 2014) have compiled lists of opportunities for reflection. The examples that follow were submitted by helpers working in the field. They found that reflecting can take place at any of the following times:

- When writing case notes
- During group supervision
- During individual discussion with a supervisor
- In personal therapy
- While journal writing
- During meditation
- As a part of a course assignment such as a paper
- While listening to recorded sessions
- When talking informally to fellow practitioners
- When unexpectedly thinking about a client
- In online groups, synchronously or asynchronously

Learning to Reflect Through Exercises in This Book

As you read this book, we will offer several opportunities to develop this reflective habit. In every chapter, we have included “Stop and Reflect” sections that ask you to consider your reaction to real cases or situations. These sections have no right or wrong answers. Instead, they ask for personal reactions and hopefully stimulate your thinking. They can make your learning more interactive if you take the time to respond as authentically as you can.