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From the Inside-Life As An ACS Intern

 FEBRUARY 13, 2012 BY [ACSTEENS](#) 0 COMMENTS
By: [Ildiko Ran](#)On-Campus Counseling Program Intern at [Menlo-Atherton High School](#)

"I feel so much better that I got all that off my chest. I can go back to class now" – said one of my clients after a session when she unloaded the overwhelming stress that surrounds her everyday life. She keeps up the appearances, her impeccable school performance and her friendships, yet she appreciates the oasis, the safe place where she can be truly herself, which she found in this unexpected place: my quiet office nested among the busy guidance counselors' offices.

I started as a trainee at [Menlo Atherton High School](#) in 2010 and returned for a second year as an intern. I love working with teenagers and the diverse population of this school has given me ample opportunity to see and work through many different problems and circumstances with teens and their families.

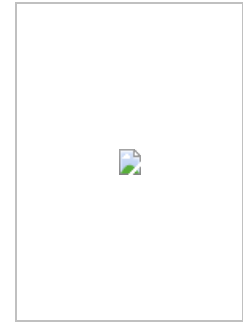
Working with teenagers is a challenge that can be greatly rewarding: their everyday experience is on the verge between childhood and adulthood – if they feel lost, it can be devastating for them and their families. When counselors listen to them without an agenda other than keeping them safe and helping them finding their own way, it can be an empowering experience for teens. I appreciate the opportunity that I can provide this service to my clients day after day.

As an ACS counselor, I fill up most of my days seeing clients, who come weekly for several months, some for the whole school year. In fact I have two students who decided to continue with me for the second consecutive year. There is also ample opportunity in our on-campus work to check in with students who are in various crisis situations – suicidal thoughts, angry outbursts, urge to run away from home, or being devastated over a loss of a loved one– are among situation I have dealt with in the past year.

As part of the teens' treatment I usually meet with their parents a couple of times. These meetings are very different from the sessions with the teens: it includes psycho-education and parenting information. In exchange for their insights about their children, I encourage them to continue parenting with the love they feel, armored with some understanding of their adolescents' needs.

Our ACS office doors are always open (when we are not sitting in session with clients), so students are familiar with the ACS counselors. "No, it is not mandated. No, it is not punishment. It is *your* decision to show up. Once you commit to it, the only way to make it work if you are serious about it." – I often repeat these cautions and clarifications.

I enjoy seeing my clients engaged in their sessions, taking it seriously, appreciating the time they spend thinking about their own feelings, thoughts and actions, in an honest, open way. Teenagers call us adults out on our phony behaviors and in return they really appreciate when we do the same for them. Not only am I happy to see that I can be helpful for my students but sometimes I sense an inward smiley feeling that I have honored my own high school teachers and counselors who did just that for me – genuine, respectful relating. Teens can do wonders with it.



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Idiko interns with Adolescent Counseling Services' On-Campus Counseling Program. Through this program, ACS provides free counseling to students and their family members at 9 schools in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

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