

= Counseling ( The Office ) =

" Counseling " is the second episode of the seventh season of the American comedy television series The Office and the shows 128th episode overall . It originally aired on NBC on September 30 , 2010 . The episode was written by B. J. Novak and directed by Jeffrey Blitz . " Counseling " guest stars Eric Zuckerman as a store clerk , Vincent Angelo as a vendor , and Michael Schur as Mose Schrute . Evan Peters also appears as Luke Cooper in archival footage from the previous episode .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In the episode , Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) is forced to have six hours of counseling with Toby Flenderson ( Paul Lieberstein ) after he physically reprimanded his nephew Luke ( Peters ) , but Michael refuses to make Toby 's job easy . Meanwhile , Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) attempts to finagle a promotion to office administrator and Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) boycotts the Steamtown Mall after a shop owner refuses to serve him .

" Counseling " received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The episode was viewed by 7 @. @ 36 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 7 rating among adults between the age of 18 and 49 , marking a significant drop in the ratings when compared to the previous week . Despite this , the episode was the highest @- @ rated NBC series of the night that it aired , as well as the highest @- @ rated non @- @ sports NBC broadcast for the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) is assigned six hours of counseling with Toby Flenderson ( Paul Lieberstein ) after he physically reprimanded his nephew Luke ( Evan Peters ) , but Michael refuses to speak to Toby . One hour into their session , Toby tells Michael that he will not fill in the official assessment form unless Michael talks to him , so Michael begins telling ridiculous stories . Toby then tries the common counseling method of playing games with the client to get them to open up more . The method works , and Michael opens up to Toby about his personal history and relationships with people ( he mentions seeing a baseball game with his stepfather where he was told that the team 's manager deserved respect and how he never forgot that ) , and Toby makes an important discovery that Michael needs to be liked . Michael realizes what is happening , gets angry at Toby , and denigrates his counseling ability . Toby gives up and gives Michael the official form , allowing him to fill it out however he wants . In his haste , Michael accidentally checks off on the form that he is severely depressed and homicidal . Gabe contacts Toby , confused by his extreme assessment of Michael . Although Michael initially blames Toby for the mishap , he turns his ire to Gabe Lewis ( Zach Woods ) , even making Toby laugh . Michael openly offers to return to the break room with Toby and " bang this out " . At the end of the episode , they are both talking and drawing pictures .

Meanwhile , Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) realizes that although she has her dream job of salesman , that she just might not be cut out for it after all since she makes few sales and very little money . A chance visit from a vendor gives her an idea to finagle a promotion to office administrator , hopefully for some added income . She informs Gabe of her promotion " from a few months back " and tells him she has not been paid accordingly , to which Gabe promises her he will get the missing wages if she can get all of the department heads to sign off on it . While she is busy convincing everyone that she has become the new administrator , Gabe catches on that she might be lying , and confronts her about it . Using a strategy she learned from watching poker , she stands her ground against Gabe and becomes de facto office administrator .

Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) has decided to boycott the Steamtown Mall after a shop owner refuses to serve him , going so far as to cancel orders to businesses there . Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) and the rest of the office convince Dwight to get revenge on the shop owner by making Dwight appear to be high @- @ class , and then having him refuse to buy from the shop , a scheme the office references from the movie Pretty Woman . Using tips from the rest of the office to make himself appear more sophisticated , Dwight , with Jim and Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) , return to the shop . To their surprise , the shop owner immediately recognizes Dwight even in his new attire , and

explains that they did not serve him before because they were intimidated by his blood @-@ soaked hands ( actually beet juice ) . Dwight , somewhat flustered from the truth of the situation being revealed to him , stumbles over his words before finally saying the line he had come all the way there to say , " You made a big mistake . Huge ! " , while waving his shopping bags . The group leaves somewhat embarrassed , but not before Dwight buys what he came for : a pewter wizard statuette holding a crystal ball .

= = Production = =

" Counseling " was written by B. J. Novak , a producer and screenwriter for the series who also portrays the character of Ryan Howard on the show . The entry was directed by Jeffrey Blitz , who had also directed the previous episode " Nepotism " . " Counseling " features Eric Zuckerman , Vincent Angelo and Michael Schur in guest appearances as a store teller , a vendor , and Mose Schrute , respectively . Evan Peters also appears as Luke Cooper in archival footage from the previous episode . With the seventh season of The Office being Carell 's last , the writers decided to divide the season into two distinct halves ; the first half would " celebrate Carell 's finale year and highlight different actors on the show " , whereas the second half would focus on his departure and the search for a new manager . As such , " Counseling " was one of the first episode of the season to specifically highlight other characters , in this case Lieberstein 's character , Toby .

The Season Seven DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Stanley discussing boycotting Kellogs , Dwight putting on his fancy clothing , Dwight getting his pipe from Creed , Kevin giving Dwight a tissue , extended footage of Michael 's counseling session , Michael discussing dogs , and extended footage of Dwight in the mall .

= = Cultural references = =

At Dwight 's daycare , a poster for the American hip hop duo Insane Clown Posse is hung on the wall ; however , Dwight has scribbled out the words " Insane " and " Posse " to make it fit into the daycare . In the episode , Dwight 's subplot is inspired by as Julia Roberts 's character did in the film Pretty Woman . Dwight even attempts to use Roberts 's line , " Big mistake " , but instead renders it as " You made a big mistake . Huge ! " During Michael 's counseling session , he sardonically tells Toby that he was probed by ALF , the alien star of the eponymous television series . Michael and Toby later pass the time playing Connect Four . Darryl notes to Pam that he saw a TLC show about Kate Walsh 's home office , and he wants one similar .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Counseling " was viewed by an estimated 7 @.@ 36 million viewers with a 3 @.@ 7 rating / 10 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @.@ 7 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This marked a decrease in a million viewers and a 14 percent decrease in the 18 ? 49 demographic from the previous episode . The episode became the highest @-@ rated non @-@ sports related NBC program for the original week it aired and also became the twenty @-@ first most @-@ watched show for the week of broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 .

Joel Keller of AOLTV called it a " vast improvement " from the previous episode " Nepotism " , because he felt that " everyone at Dunder @-@ Mifflin [ sic ] Scranton acted like themselves " . Keller called Toby and Michael 's counseling session " great " and enjoyed the way Toby was able to trick Michael . Kelly Gerlach of TV Equals enjoyed the episode and noted that it " felt like the earlier seasons " because " there wasn 't forced humor , nothing made me cringe in my seat because of bad writing , and the awkward situations were written specifically to be awkward . " In the end , she called the episode " decent " .

Alan Sepinwall of HitFix felt that the main story employed " one of the show 's most reliable running

jokes " . Furthermore , he felt that Michael softening to Toby was an interesting element to the episode , and he wondered if " this was a one @-@ time thing , or if Michael 's treatment of Toby will be softened , even a little . " Sepinwall also felt that Pam 's story was the stronger of the two subplots , and felt that an office controlled by her would be interesting . Dan Forcella of TV Fanatic awarded the episode four out of five stars and called it " pleasant " . While he noted that each of the three stories " weren 't flat out funny " , he wrote that they were all " enjoyable " . Furthermore , he positively commented on the main plot , noting that the Michael and Toby rivalry was fun .

Not all reviews were positive . Myles McNutt of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " C " grade . While he enjoyed the main storyline revolving around Michael and Toby and felt that it " came together both comically and dramatically at the end of the day " , he felt the rest of the episode was " quite uneven " with elements that were " ridiculous " , such as how Pam attained her new job . McNutt 's largest complaint with the remainder of the episode was that neither ended in " a logical place " ; he felt Dwight 's plot featured a disconnect from the character , and that Pam 's story was " lazy " .