

Preface

School Counseling From a Cognitive Perspective

The issues confronted by today's school counselor demand rapid, effective resolution. Research on the use of cognitive strategies and techniques with school-aged children makes a compelling argument for school counselors' counseling from a cognitive perspective (e.g., Kendall, Gosch, Furr, & Sood, 2008; Choate-Summers et al., 2008).

Counseling from a cognitive perspective certainly sounds appropriate for a school setting. And, it is! In the pages that follow, you will be introduced or perhaps reintroduced to the fundamental principles underlying counseling from a cognitive perspective. The descriptions and illustrations will point to strategies to use with your students in the creation of "therapeutic" cognitive dissonance and the reeducation process needed to facilitate their development of adaptive beliefs and responses. But, the fundamental principles, techniques, and intervention strategies employed by a school counselor operating from a cognitive perspective are only part of the focus of this text.

More than sixty years ago, Pepinsky and Pepinsky (1954) recognized that if counseling is considered, in part, a cognitive activity, then the process of becoming a counselor must involve the acquisition of cognitive skills, and not just behavioral skills of social interaction. However, it is not unusual to find school counselors who have gone through training programs that provided extensive training in theory, research, and relationship building but very little guidance or training on how to translate these theoretical concepts and empirical findings into *practice*.

For those in training and those recently graduated, encounters with "real clients" are most often accompanied by apprehension and anxiety about knowing *what to do* and *when to do it*. It is an apprehension that is the hallmark of the novice counselor and one that distinguishes novice from expert. Understanding the theory is insufficient. The practicing

counselor must translate theory into specific, action-oriented steps that will help to discern relevant client information and then formulate and implement effective intervention strategies.

Thinking and Acting Like a Cognitive School Counselor addresses this need to help counselors learn to, first, think like the experts and, then, *act* accordingly. The unique value of *Thinking and Acting Like a Cognitive School Counselor* is that it goes beyond the presentation of a theory and assists the reader to step into that theory, embrace it as an organizational framework, and then—and most importantly—employ it to guide their procedural thinking when confronted with client information.

TEXT FORMAT AND CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The book will be organized around the following parts. In Part I, the reader is introduced to a reflective-practitioner model of school counseling (Chapter 1) and the fundamentals of a cognitive orientation (Chapter 2). With these serving as a foundation, Part II identifies specific therapeutic targets and strategies that can be used to reach each target. Chapter 3 discusses strategies for assisting students to understand and “own” the connection of thoughts to feelings. Chapter 4 presents strategies to employ in helping the student discern functional from dysfunctional cognitions. Chapter 5, the final chapter of this section, presents strategies that will assist in the reeducation process and facilitate the student’s development of more adaptive and functional ways of viewing him- or herself and the world, thus affecting change in both emotional and behavioral reactions. The final part of the book, Part III, invites the reader to first “observe” the thinking of a school counselor operating from a cognitive-orienting framework (Chapter 6), and then to actually apply this orientation to case materials (Chapter 7).

Research suggests that procedural knowledge—that is, knowing what to do when the student does this or that—is acquired as the result of practice accompanied by feedback. As such, *practice and feedback are central to this text*. Case illustrations, and case presentations with analyses of counselor actions and the decision-making processes underlying them, along with guided-practice activities, will be employed as “teaching tools” throughout the text.

As with all texts of this nature, this book is but a beginning. For school counselors embracing the value and efficacy of a cognitive framework to guide their reflections “on” and “in” their practice, additional training, supervision and professional development is a must. Hopefully, *Thinking and Acting Like a Cognitive School Counselor* provides a good springboard to that end.

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