

Person-Centred Counselling Training.

Dave Mearns. (1997).

London; Thousand Oaks, CA; & Greater Kailash - I, New Delhi: Sage (1997).

ISBN: 0 7619 5290 X

ISBN: 0 7619 5291 8 (pbk)

Mearns offered me the chance to consider various person-centered (p-c) practice elements of counselor training. His program design descriptions include several of the caveats often expressed by trainers who are frustrated by attempts to introduce p-c education in a setting not specifically arranged for training person-centered counselors. So, in addition to gleaning several options for p-c counseling training, Mearns presented me with various methods for practicing person-centered education-- even when the trainee was pursuing a cognitive-behavioral track. I incorporated Mearns' self-assessment system with a group of master's degree counselors in their year-long practice training group with student-reported success. The activity of developing a self assessment measure and self-assessment rating scales was useful in broadening and deepening students' theory-practice understanding. I additionally benefited from the trainer self-evaluation measure that Mearns presented. It enabled me to be aware of areas of strength and need for change in promoting p-c values. Self exploration of the students through a "relational depth" understanding as described by Mearns deepened my empathy with the students, and along with my willingness to be real to them as well, enhanced our self-awareness in general and as counselors particularly, and moved us toward more honest and more intimate relating as a group.

Person-Centred Counselling Training deals extensively with the personal and skill development that occurs in student participants of p-c training programs. Characteristic qualities of people who seem to benefit most from and are thus most desired within the p-c training model are elaborated upon. This discussion was also of benefit to my work with students who are not selected in this same way. My understanding of why certain attitudes might be present among students (e.g., the desire to control client fate) was enhanced, enabling me to provide more understanding and also acceptance. I improved my capacity to inquire more deeply into counselor motivations and intentions having understood Mearns' approximation of a candidate "ideally suited" for p-c counseling.

Mearns spends part of the latter portion of this 227 page text discussing large group issues, for instance the developmental stages of Polite Tolerance (I), Confusion and Disorientation (II), Glimpsing the Potential (III), and Valuing and Working in the Open Process. The section on "The Challenge for the Staff" suggested various challenges to me, including challenges of transparency, of not foreclosing on issues and processes, of tolerating the ambiguity of unstructured process, and of openly encountering staff and non-staff alike.

Interested readers might want to see another review of Mearns' book that appeared in a recent issue of the British Association for the Person-Centred Approach (BAPCA) journal, *Person-Centred Practice*. Or, perhaps they might just want to buy the book! If you ask would I recommend it, I'd say I thought it was quite good. It made an important contribution to my growth as a person-centered educator.

Reviewed by:

Jo Cohen Hamilton, Ph.D.

Policy Statement

The Person-Centered Journal is sponsored by the Association for Development of the Person-Centered Approach (ADPCA). The publication is intended to promote and disseminate scholarly thinking about person-centered principles, practices, and philosophy.

All materials contained in The Person-Centered Journal are the property of the ADPCA, which grants reproduction permission to libraries, researchers, and teachers to copy all or part of the materials in this issue for scholarly purposes with the stipulation that no fee for profit be charged to the consumer for the use or possession of such copies.