

Finding Your Way as a Counselor

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Besides the more than 20 books Kottler has authored or co-authored, many counselors have enjoyed reading his "Finding Your Way" column published since 1992 in the American Counseling Association's *Counseling Today*. What distinguishes his contributions is the genuinely described universally recognized experiences about which he writes. The other authors of the column which Kottler coordinates share his reverence for writing so cogently what the rest of us only ponder-- our fears, proud moments, nagging questions, sudden realizations, etc.

The 39 essays that make this book are the best of these columns. Some are by Kottler himself, but most are not. All are worthwhile, and there is not one reference among them! These authors speak from the heart on the process of finding their way as counselors in school, community, and private practice settings. Rather than continuing to describe this book, I can do more justice in conveying the energy that these words conduct by presenting a sampling of the words themselves:

- "I'm afraid. I'm scared I'll start a group and no one will show up. I'm afraid I'll start and group and someone will show up. I'm afraid I won't know what to say to the students the first time I meet with them. I'm afraid I'll forget how to ask an open-ended question. I'm afraid I'll say something stupid at a parent meeting" (p. 12).
- "I am finally learning that to be emotionally honest with my clients and students is not enough; emotional honesty must be a part of all my important relationships. ... My goals are simple but so difficult-- to help my clients deal with their issues and for me to confront my own" (p. 53).
- "What my best professors, mentors, supervisors and heroes all had in common was that they shared some basic attributes and values. They were passionate, confident, moral and extremely competent individuals. Most of all, they truly believed in what they were doing. ... Most of all, this means staying open to all that you experience and observe, evaluating critically what you see as most effective and making the best parts of all your mentors the best parts of you" (pp. 96-96).
- "Stage Thirteen: (Many conferences, counseling sessions and supervision encounters later) *The Humble, Ironic Constructivist*. 'I can tune into the client in his or her dilemma, yet maintain awareness of my responses. I can attempt to match an intervention with a particular client issues. I know when I don't know.' ... Perhaps this theory might serve as a reminder to you as a beginning counselor to remain tentative while being confident enough to act" (pp. 132-133).
- "We must possess clear understanding that whatever contributions we make, they are valuable to ourselves and to others regardless of quantity or lack of our life-long professional involvement. Who knows what impact occurs from one article, one presentation, several counseling sessions or even one empathic statement to a distraught

individual? ... We older counselors may be late-bloomers, but often our flowers are sweeter and fuller and provide more depth to the gardens we brighten" (p. 160).

- "There is no job more difficult than the one that we do. Feeling lost comes with the territory. We spend hours every day in the company of others who are suffering, who are manipulative, and who pressure us for answers that we don't have. Yet being a counselor gives us permission, if not the mandate, to keep searching to find our way. It is through this courageous journey that we inspire our clients to follow our lead..." (p. 172).

I recommend this book of brief but energized essays to counselors in training, to those just beginning in the field, and to professionals alike. I certainly recognized the journeys of the authors within myself. I reacted by feeling inspired, and often taking great comfort in the fact that I am not alone with my own fears, proud moments, nagging questions, and sudden realizations that create the on-going process of finding my way as a counselor.

Reviewed by:
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