

Brief Counseling for Congregational Contexts  
Loren Townsend  
214 Gardencourt  
ltownsend@lpts.edu

## Description

This course focuses on counseling theory and skills to support short-term counseling in religious congregations. Participants will be introduced to a practical, integrated approach to assessment, intervention, and follow-up using Solution-Focused, Behavioral, and Brief Strategic models of counseling. Constructing a theological frame for short-term counseling is an integral part of the class experience. Classroom time is divided between exploring essential theoretical foundations for short-term counseling and establishing practical intervention skills. This course is appropriate for both M.Div. and MAMFT students. This course meets M.Div. requirements for Pastoral Care and Counseling.

## Objectives

By the end of the semester participants will be able to:

- Describe a variety of purposes and expected outcomes for brief counseling in religious congregations
- Discuss theoretical and theological foundations for brief counseling intervention in religious congregations
- Articulate one functional model for problem assessment, planning intervention, and assessing outcome of short-term counseling
- Articulate awareness of multiple classes of problems appropriate for short-term counseling intervention
- Discriminate between cases needing immediate referral or longer-term care, and those for which short-term counseling is appropriate
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct an assessment interview, plan an intervention strategy, and evaluate outcome of a counseling intervention

## Methods

Students will engage the conceptual foundations for short-term counseling through assigned reading and classroom lecture and discussion. Class sessions will be divided between lecture/discussion and practice designed to build counseling skills. Students should be prepared to share and receive feedback from classmates and the instructor about practical skills necessary for effective short-term counseling. Students should also be prepared to videotape and review mock counseling sessions.

## Required Texts

- O'Hanlan, W., Weiner-Davis, M. (2003). *In Search of Solutions: A New Direction in Psychotherapy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Stone, H., (Ed.). (2001). *Strategies for Brief Pastoral Counseling*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Wimberly, E. (1990). *Prayer in Pastoral Counseling*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Wimberly, E. (1994). *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Townsend, L. (2006). *Suicide: Pastoral Responses*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

### **Selected Readings/Library Reference:**

- Bergman, J. (1985). *Fishing for Barracuda*. NY: Guilford Press. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Budman, S. & Gurman, A. (1988). *Theory and Practice of Brief Therapy*. New York: Guilford Press
- Cooper, J. (1995). *A Primer of Brief Psychotherapy*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Eron, T. & Lund, J. (1998). *Narrative Solutions in Brief Therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Neuger, C. C. *Counseling Women*
- Quick, E. (1996). *Doing What Works in Brief Therapy*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Stone, H. (1994). *Brief Pastoral Counseling: Short-term approaches and strategies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Townsend, L. (2009). *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Williams, D. D. (1977). *The Minister and the Care of Souls*.

### **Requirements and Evaluation:**

- I. Complete all reading
- II. 20% Class participation
- III. 20 % Mid semester attending skills tape (Due Oct. 22)  
**Assignment: Complete a 10-15 minute videotape of your work with a partner that demonstrates your ability to sit with a client, establish a working relationship, and talk with them about what brings them to counseling.**
- IV. 30% Critical book review (Due Nov. 17)  
**Assignment: Select a book on a model of brief therapy or counseling that is approved by the professor. Write a 5-8 page critical review of the book. This must be more than a summary. It should include your evaluation of the book, the theory presented, and a theological evaluation of the theory and its usefulness in ministry.**
- V. 30% Final Case Study (Due last day of finals)

**Assignment: Videotape a session (20-30 minutes) with a mock client (classmate) using counseling methods presented in class. After the videotaped session, review the tape with the client. Analyze the session with the client and write a report summarizing what you and the client found about the session as follows.**

- How well did the therapist connect with the client?
- How well did the therapist define the presenting problem?
- Did the therapist help the client set a reasonable goal?
- Identify specific segments of the tape where client behavior or comments validate the therapist's assessments, observations, or conclusions.
- Identify specific sections of the tape where methods or interventions learned in class were implemented. Identify the theory or technique used. Analyze how well the intervention or approach was used and its effect on the session.
- Write a 1-2 page summary of you and your client's observations about the session and tape.
- Write a 3-6 page summary of the case. This should include: 1) the problem the client brought to counseling; 2) your assessment of the problem and what is maintaining it; 3) a plan for how you will intervene with this client (a treatment plan); 4) what expected outcomes of counseling will be; and 4) a pastoral assessment of the case.
- ***Turn in reports and the videotape.***

### **Schedule**

**Highlighted readings indicate library reserve or e-reserve**

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|----------|---|
| Sept. 15 | <p>Introduction to Pastoral Counseling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History</li> <li>• Counseling in Parish Context</li> <li>• Theological Foundations</li> </ul> <p>Reading:<br/>Townsend, <i>Introduction to Pastoral Counseling</i>, Ch. 2. &amp; 3</p>     |
| Sept. 17 | <p>Basic processes in counseling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic counseling processes—the motion of therapy</li> <li>• Therapeutic relationship</li> <li>• Expectations in counseling</li> <li>• Boundaries and ethics</li> </ul>                          |
| Sept. 22 | <p>Brief Counseling: A general framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude and expectations</li> <li>• Structuring the counseling context</li> <li>• Theological framework for brief counseling</li> </ul> <p>Reading: Stone, in Stone (2001) chapter 1</p> |

James, in Stone (2001) chapter 2  
O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, chs. 1-3

- Sept. 24      Listening and identifying problems, resources, and desired outcomes
- Practice session
- Reading: O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, ch 4.
- Sept. 29      Classes of problems, assessment, and decision to treat/refer
- Unit of analysis: Individual, couple, family
  - Anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol, domestic violence, thought disorders
  - Decision-making
  - Assessment tools—SCL 90
- Oct. 1        Focus: Assessing depression and suicide
- Reading: Townsend, Suicide, pp. 9-53
- Oct. 6        Discussion & Practice: Responding to depression and suicide
- Reading: Townsend, Suicide, pp. 55-138.
- Oct. 8        Identifying a problem and strategy
- Problem identification, clarification, and solutions
- Reading: O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, chs.5-6
- Oct. 13      Practice: "What's the trouble?" Clarifying and amplifying solutions
- Prioritizing problems
  - Identifying stakeholders
  - Problem clarification as intervention
  - Scaling and miracle questions
  - Goal setting
- Reading: Stone in Stone (2001), chapter 7  
Childs in Stone (2001). chapter 11
- Oct. 15      Religious listening and religious themes
- Reading: Gorsuch, in Stone (2001), chapter 3  
Bidwell, in Stone (2001), chapter 9  
Wise, 51-77.
- Oct. 20      Designing an intervention strategy
- Attempted solutions
  - Finding exceptions
  - Enlisting resources and energy
  - In session/between session strategies
  - Homework
- Reading: O'Hanlon & Weiner Davis, chs.7-8

Koller in Stone (2001), chapter 8

- Oct. 22      Specific Intervention: Depression & Anxiety
- Alternatives—Solution-focused, Cognitive-behavioral
  - Spiritual issues
- Reading: Stone (1994), chapter 6, 10, & 11
- Oct. 27-29    Reading days
- Nov. 3        Practice: Intervention with depression and anxiety
- Reading: Lester in Stone (2001), chapter 4
- Nov. 5        Religious Resources: Use of prayer & scripture in counseling
- Reading & discussion: Wimberly, pp. 9-54; 77-97
- Nov. 10      Focus: Marital/couple conflict
- Shifting focus from individual to couple
  - A theory of marital problems
  - What works in marital therapy?
  - Defining marital problems, marital styles, and conflict regulation
  - Weiss-Cerreto, Locke-Wallace
  - When to refer
- Reading: Gurman & Jacobson, *Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy* (2002), chapter 12
- Nov. 12      Assessing couple violence and abuse
- Overview of couples violence and abuse
  - Assessment tools and procedures
- Reading: *Family Therapy Magazine*, May-June 2007, pp. 10-22
- Nov. 17      Practice: Assessing marital conflict for brief intervention
- Nov. 19      Designing Brief Treatment
- Realistic goal setting
  - Common goals
  - Structuring counseling sessions
  - Homework
- Reading: O'Hanlon & Wiener-Davis, ch. 10
- Nov. 24      Practice: Marital counseling
- Nov. 26      Thanksgiving
- Dec. 1        Family Problems with Children
- Classes of problems

- Identifying and prioritizing problems
- Basic assessment
- Family system, problem/solution focus, modifying behavior
- Home, school, and doctor

Reading: Stone (1994), chapter 5

Dec. 3            Practice: Defining Family Problems with Children

Dec. 8            Practice: Designing Brief Treatment for Families with Children

- Goal setting
- Session process
- Homework
- Follow-through

Dec. 10          Conversation: Supportive therapy with problems that won't change

- Chronic mental illness
- Medical problems
- Chronic marital problems
- Counseling and parish life
- Rethinking boundaries
- Record keeping and liability
- Maintaining a network of collaboration, consultation, and referral
- When things go badly

## Appendix

### ***Important Policies***

#### **Grading: Grade Scale and Philosophy**

A	96.6-100
A-	93.6-96.5
B+	90.6-93.5
B	87.6-90.5
C	85.6-87.5
C+	83.6-85.5
C	81.6-83.5
C-	79.6-81.5
D	70.6-79.5
F	Below 70.6

#### **Attendance**

Learning is a complex activity that requires conceptual and experiential participation by those who wish to learn. Student attendance and participation is fundamental to the way the learning environment is structured for this course. Attendance and participation is required to earn a passing grade. While circumstances may require an adult learner to miss class occasionally, absence from more than 10% of the classroom experience will affect student learning and (consequently) the student's grade. Extreme circumstances, such as health problems, family concerns, etc. must be discussed with the professor ***prior*** to multiple missed classes. Students unable to attend at least 75% of classes are advised to drop the class prior to the registrar's WP deadline, or receive a failing grade.

#### **Form for Writing Assignments**

All papers submitted for grades must be written in APA approved style and be double-spaced.

Major research papers, book reviews, etc. should include a cover sheet with the assignment title, your name, and the class for which you are writing.

Weekly assignments should include at the top of the first page your ***name, title of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due***. These papers are to be folded in half (vertically) with your name and mailbox number on the outside. This allows returning them to you through campus mail.

All sources used in writing assignments must be cited appropriately and according to APA style. ***Failure to cite sources is plagiarism. You must give credit for quotes and ideas used in your writing. Papers submitted for grades that***

*demonstrate plagiarism will receive a failing grade, and students will be subject to the seminary policy regarding plagiarism.*

### **Inclusive Language is a Seminary Policy**

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge and community virtue. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive.

Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse has been traditionally patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of constructing an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work shall be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God.

Racism also permeates our society and is detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to racial inclusiveness.