

# Advice on Crafting a Counseling Philosophy

\*\*Modified by Bruce W. Harvey, from “Advice on Crafting a Teaching Philosophy” by Andrea Broomfield, with full permission.

Crafting a counseling philosophy is one of the most valuable exercises that a professor can go through. It is designed to share with others your rationale for why you counsel as you do. Equally important, it serves as a personal record for you, documenting how you grow in your profession. A counseling philosophy is the first part of your portfolio at JCCC and thus, it is the reader’s introduction to you. Following your counseling philosophy should be a personal statement which describes your goals and how those goals will be achieved. By Year Four in this process, you might wish to provide further explanations regarding your counseling work, improvements you have made, new philosophies/models/ or protocols that influence your work, your professional development and service to the institution, as well as the documents that support your statements.

Following are some strategies for crafting a counseling philosophy:

## 1. Invention and Freewriting

You might begin your counseling philosophy by doing roughly 60 minutes’ worth of freewriting that is designed to limber up your brain and get you thinking in creative, substantive ways about how and why you counsel. Set a timer for 10 minutes for each of the Journalist’s Questions below, and write nonstop until the time is up. If something does not come to mind, or you draw a blank, write “can write can write can write” until something comes to mind. Write down literally everything that comes to mind in response to the question. Don’t second-guess yourself or worry if what you write is not on topic. Otherwise, you will hit a writer’s block. As you free write, if you find a theme in regards to the question starting to coalesce, great! Go with it. If you hit a dead end, so what? Just keep writing about whatever else comes to mind. Conversely, set a timer, and record what you have to say in answer to the question. Rambling is perfectly acceptable. Use a long walk in the park and take along your recording device and simply perform a dramatic monologue in answer to the questions, again, ten minutes for each. Your objective is to use this invention exercise to allow your mind to work without you necessarily telling it to. What do you come up with in this process?

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

At the end of the exercise, you should have quite a bit of writing (or recording) to pull from as you begin the formal drafting (composing) of your philosophy. Some will discover that all of the questions produced valuable ideas, explanations and how-to's, and it is acceptable to use the Journalist's Questions as an organization strategy for your actual Counseling Philosophy. Others will discover that some of the questions "bore fruit" and others did not. Read through your writing or listen to your recording, and see if you can discover a "center of gravity," a main idea that you will want to develop in detail by offering examples, stories and rationales.

## 2. Your Counseling Philosophy is a Reflection of You

Although applications for faculty positions will sometimes request that a candidate's counseling philosophy be limited to a page, the JCCC Faculty Portfolio does not require a page limit, nor does it require that all counseling philosophies look the same. You have the freedom to create a document that best articulates who you are as a counselor, both in and outside your office, and should not be bound by arbitrary rules.

## 3. Strategies for the formal drafting of your philosophy:

The best way to add substance to your philosophy is to use a variety of illustration techniques. Below are some of the most helpful:

### -Anecdotes, Short Stories, Extended Examples

Actual stories of what takes place in your sessions and detailed examples of what takes place can help you personalize your philosophy by allowing readers to visualize more effectively how you counsel.

### -Using a quotation that works an overall theme for what you wish to write

Perhaps you have a favorite counselor, philosopher, teacher, or spiritual leader whose work has inspired you and helped you articulate your own ways of learning and counseling. Some find it helpful to begin the philosophy with a salient quotation from that person and then explain how that quotation encapsulates their own ideas, methods, and approaches to counseling.

-Statistics and factual information regarding student trends, counseling center and college data, journal articles, etc.

Supporting your statements with factual evidence can bolster your confidence and allow you to demonstrate your familiarity with pedagogical trends and theories.

**Additional Resources for Writing a Counseling Philosophy (Bruce W. Harvey)**

-NACADA website, search "Counseling Philosophy"

-NACADA website, search "Core Values of Academic Advising"

-NACADA website, search "CAS Academic Advising Standards"

-Counseling Center mission statement

-CCSSE and SENSE counseling data

-Professional Counseling Code of Ethics

-Committee assignments, internal data collection, etc.

-Counseling theories

-Human development theory

-Other sources...