

A Counselor Who Questions Her Mother's Authority
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Preface

This internship report was derived from my study of LBT (Logic-Based Therapy) at the six day intensive certification workshop at Fu Jen University, Taiwan, January 17-22, 2014, and from the experience of participating in the philosophical practicum included in this workshop.

The counselee's problem

The counselee said her mother always wants her disciplines to be followed. Her mother wants her to act politely and look like a girl. The counselee thinks her mother is meddling in her life. She believes she is an adult with freedom, and does not want to be interfered with by anyone.

Step one: check emotional elements of reasoning of the counselee

(1) Find emotional elements of reasoning of the counselee; (2) construct a practical syllogism including the former reasoning.

Find the elements of the counselee's emotional reasoning:

Counselee: My mother made dogmatic disciplines, but I'm not a kid.

Counselor: Do you think your mother made dogmatic disciplines because she considers you a child?

Counselee: My mother is an impolite and arrogant woman. If she wants me to follow her disciplines, she has to follow them, too. Since she doesn't, she has no right to ask me!

Counselor: Do you think your mother should discipline herself before making

disciplines for you? Or do you feel that her rudeness and arrogance annoy you?

Counselee: When teaching my younger brother, I will be his model first, and gradually I become strict in treating people.

Counselor: Do you think your mother has no right to make disciplines for you?

Counselee: Yes, I have thought like that since I was a kid. Since understanding her better, I can see what she wants me to do is to treat people kindly, gently, and humbly. That is good for me.

Counselor: You realize your mother's intention of making disciplines for you when growing up?

Counselee: But being overly polite and humble is not my style; that's not me.

Counselor: So you do realize the intention of making disciplines, but still you do not want to, or you are unable to follow?

Counselee: My mother never does what she says. I do not want to become a loser like her.

Analysis of the client's reasoning:

If O then R

O

So R

O = My mother's parenting style will turn me into a person like her.

My mother is a loser.

R= I will become a loser like her.

Surveying assumptions:

Counselor: Are you angry that your mother never does what she says?

Counselee: Yes, I am sick of that; I don't want to follow her disciplines; I do not want to become a loser like her.

The counselor is verifying the counselee's emotional reasoning based on the above Object (O) and Rating (R):

(Rule 1) If my mother's parenting style will turn me into a person like her and she is a loser then I will become a loser too.

(Report 1) My mother's parenting style will turn me into a person like her and she's a loser

(Conclusion 1) So I will become a loser too.

Validate assumptions:

Counselor: Is your reasoning as follows? Your mother is a loser. If you follow her disciplines, you'll become a loser like her.

Counselee: Yes.

Higher-level syllogisms:

Counselor: Let's confirm your first premise, if you follow your mother's disciplines, you'll become a loser like her.

Counselee: Correct.

Counselor: Is your mother a loser?

Counselee: Yes. Because she never can do what she says.

Counselor: So you think your mother's disciplines are completely wrong.

Counselee: Yes.

Counselor: But you realize the intention of your mother's disciplines when growing up, don't you?

Counselee: Yes.

Counselor: Can you explain what you realize more specifically?

Counselee: I can understand that she wanted me to treat people kindly and politely, and that is good for me. What she says are not completely wrong.

Counselor: But you still think what your mother says are completely wrong?

Counselee: Yes. Because I think she is a loser, I have to handle everything by myself since a long time ago.

Counselor and counselee try to find the genuine reason of the counselee's thought that her mother's disciplines are completely wrong. In a later conversation, the counselee recognized the thought that her perception of her mother's being a loser leads her to neglect her mother's disciplines.

(Rule 3) If my mother never does what she says then she cannot make a correct judgment.

(Bridging Premise) If she cannot make a correct judgment then she is a loser

(Conclusion 3) If my mother never does what she says then she is a loser

(Report 2) My mother never does what she says.

(Conclusion 2) So, my mother is a loser.

(Rule 1) If my mother's parenting style will turn me into a person like her and she is a loser then I will become a loser too.

(Report 1) My mother's parenting style will turn me into a person like her, and my mother is a loser.

(Conclusion 1) So I will become a loser too.

The bridging premise (A loser cannot make a correct judgment) connects all premises. This reasoning creates the counselee's self-centered point of view and leads her to think she is always right.

Step two: Find all unreasonable premises

The counselee makes four independent fallacies of emotional reasoning: (1) A person who never does what she says is a loser. (2) You will become like the person who educates/raises you. (3) If the counselee thinks her mother is a loser then it is permissible to neglect her mother's disciplines. (4) A loser cannot make any correct disciplines. These four assumptions derived from the problem identified by LBT: The

egocentric interpretation of the world. The counselee believes her mother is a loser since she was a child. The counselee thinks she is always right and, therefore, she is unable to empathize with her mother's feelings.

Step three: Refute unreasonable premises

At this stage the counselor puts forward a philosophical analysis of the situation. American philosopher Sam Keen said: "We come to love not by finding a perfect person, but by learning to see an imperfect person perfectly". Although the counselee's mother sometimes is not perfect, she is not absolutely a loser. The counselor recognized the fact that the counselee's mother may not always do what she says, but still wants the counselee to reframe the way she sees her mother.

Step Four: Find the antidote

After a dialogue, the counselee interpreted her life experience again. She found that she subjectively thinks she is always right. This assumption ruins the relationship between her and her mother. The counselor wants the counselee to stop thinking her mother is a loser and is always wrong. The counselor also wants the counselee to communicate with her mother again. If she does not want to be closed to others, she must therefore respect the preferences and beliefs of others:

- 1 Avoid an egocentric interpretation of the world → be able to empathize (consider how the other feels).
- 2 Stop blaming others → attain greater respect for others and the world.
- 3 Stop manipulating or being manipulated by others → communicate with her mother when she tries to dominate their talk.

Step Five: Exercise willpower to overcome the challenge

After the previous steps, the counselee has become aware of her weaknesses, and

would like to adjust the way she thinks and acts. She no longer thinks that her mother is completely wrong. The counselor suggests that the counselee try to listen to her mother's feelings from now on. Moreover, when her mother dominates the discussion, the counselee should alert her mother and refuse to be dominated. This way, both the counselee and her mother can gain greater respect for one another.

Summary

After the LBT workshop, the experience made me realize how to use different methods of operation of LBT. I am more confident in the efficacy of philosophical counseling. This is my first time practicing counseling skills. I had to examine the pages of the LBT counseling manual provided to participants at the workshop and recheck the steps over and over again. In the process, I found the benefit and importance of the five steps of the LBT philosophical counseling method. I have to be more skilled in the sequence of operations and in detecting the counselee's fallacies. Although the internship is based on limited practice, I did have some deep communication with the counselee. I observed that she found antidotes to the fallacies and became more confident in the efficacy of philosophical counseling. Philosophical counseling can help people to overcome their negative feelings.

Because of the limitation of my own philosophical knowledge, I am not skilled in using the syllogism. I am going to have a comprehensive reading of the Logic-Based Therapy literature and spend more time studying logic. Knowledge of logic can help people in philosophical counseling. I plan to study counseling textbooks one hour every day. I hope to increase my knowledge of philosophy and improve my logical reasoning skills. I believe I will do a better job next time.

On the next day of the final conversation, my client told me, "I have taken your suggestion and talked to my mother last night. I told her about my feelings and so did she." I am glad that I have helped the counselee to realize that she has been self-centered and has ignored other people's feelings. This finding has helped her to start to communicate

with her mother and improve their relationship. My counselee's feedback does encourage me to work harder to move forward to the goal of being a professional counselor in the future.