



Counseling Older People

opportunities
and challenges

Charlene M. Kampfe



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

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Preface

The older population is one of the fastest growing groups in the United States (Administration on Aging, 2007). The growth of this population can be both an opportunity and a challenge for professional counselors, including general counselors as well as those who specialize in group work, employment, rehabilitation, multicultural issues, gerontology, substance abuse, grief and loss, mental health, spirituality, assessment, military, family, and forensics.

With the growth of the older population, we counselors will have the exciting opportunity to carve a place for our profession in those systems that serve older people. Currently in those systems, older people are often disempowered, and there are few programs and resources that provide gerontological counseling. Although some counselors may not have worked with older consumers in the past, they already have many of the skills necessary to do so. Counselors understand and support the concept of empowerment. They know how to provide a safe, respectful, and challenging environment in which individuals can explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They have been trained to be good listeners, advocates, problem solvers, and case managers.

The challenge for counselors is to become informed about the characteristics of the older population, specific issues faced by this group and their families and friends, services and benefits available to them, advocacy issues associated with aging, vocational interests and concerns of older people, family dynamics that may influence older people and their adult children, assessment issues associated with older people, attitudes toward older people, death and dying perspectives, systems in which older people are served, laws and regulations that

Preface

apply to the older population, and specific counseling techniques that are effective for individuals who are experiencing certain conditions associated with being older. Learning about these topics will extend the boundaries of counselors' competence and will take them closer to meeting the recommendations of both the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) codes of ethics that counselors practice in specialty areas only if they have appropriate education, training, and supervised experience.

The purpose of this book is to provide practical, anecdotal, and research-based information and perspectives to counselors who wish to work with the older population. Personal experiences, case studies, practical suggestions, and various exercises and activities are included to help the reader analyze, incorporate, and assimilate the material. The book is based on the concepts of personal power, personal choice, variability, and the dignity of older persons who counselors serve. In writing this book, I have relied on many resources: (a) my professional experience in working with older consumers and their families; (b) scholarly study of this population, including writing about this group; (c) membership in the Association for Adult Development and Aging; (d) consultation with agencies and programs that provide services to older people; (e) discussions with colleagues and professors who provided information, wisdom, perspective, practicality, and philosophy regarding aging; (f) presentations to various audiences regarding the aging process; (g) years of experience teaching about and being actively involved in advocacy issues; (h) experience with my own family members' aging process; (i) interaction with agencies, programs, and individuals that have provided services to my older relatives; and (j) my own personal journey through the aging process.



About the Author

Charlene M. Kampfe, PhD, is a professor emeritus of rehabilitation counseling at the University of Arizona, Tucson, and has also taught in the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She received her doctorate from the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Arizona and is a national certified counselor, a nationally certified gerontological counselor, and a national certified rehabilitation counselor.

Dr. Kampfe has served as a governing council member of the ACA, president of the Association for Adult Development and Aging (AADA), and board member for both the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) and the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE). She has served on and chaired many committees of these associations and has received numerous awards for her service (e.g., Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Government Relations from ARCA, Government Relations Award from AADA, Distinguished Service Award from the AADA, President's Award from the Arizona AADA, and Outstanding Member Award from the Arizona Counselors Association). She has also been involved in international consultation and capacity building with Mexico, Kenya, and Afghanistan, and she has served on local advisory committees for various projects of the Tucson Botanical Gardens Horticulture Therapy program, which focuses on aging issues.

Dr. Kampfe has published 11 chapters, 65 journal articles, and one group-written book, *The Aging Workforce*, for which she was a group editor. She has given more than 100 presentations at the local, national, and international levels regarding various aspects of counseling and the human condition, and she has been a keynote speaker or panel

facilitator of opening/closing sessions for 10 national meetings or conferences. She has served on numerous editorial review boards and received several national awards for her scholarship (e.g., Outstanding Research Award from the Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International, Outstanding JADARA Article from the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, Ralph F. Berdie Memorial Research Award from ACA, and Best Practices Faculty Research Award from ACA).

Acknowledged as an exceptional teacher and mentor, Dr. Kampfe has received numerous awards for this aspect of her professional life. Her awards include Honored Faculty Member at the First Annual Learning Disability Gala, University of North Carolina; Faculty in Models of Teaching Excellence, University of Arizona; Mentor of the Year Award, AADA; Outstanding Teacher, College of Education, University of Arizona; Outstanding Faculty Member, Disability Resource Center, University of Arizona; Sarah Folsom Memorial Award, Arizona Rehabilitation Counseling Association; Extraordinary Faculty Award, University of Arizona Alumni Association; Counselor Education Advocacy Award, ACA; and Rehabilitation Educator of the Year, NCRE. Furthermore, a student fund was established in her name by the ARCA Student Task Force. Since her retirement, she has continued to teach or act as a mentor with the Rehabilitation Counseling Program, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama; and the Humanities Seminars Program, University of Arizona.

Dr. Kampfe is a creative dancer, singer, and drummer. She belongs to the International Association for Creative Dance and dances regularly at the Tucson Creative Dance Center and at national conferences. She has incorporated creative dance philosophy into the counseling process and has given several presentations at national conferences regarding the parallels between creative dance and creative counseling.



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