



Jude T. Austin II
Julius A. Austin

Doing Counseling

**Developing Your
Clinical Skills and Style**

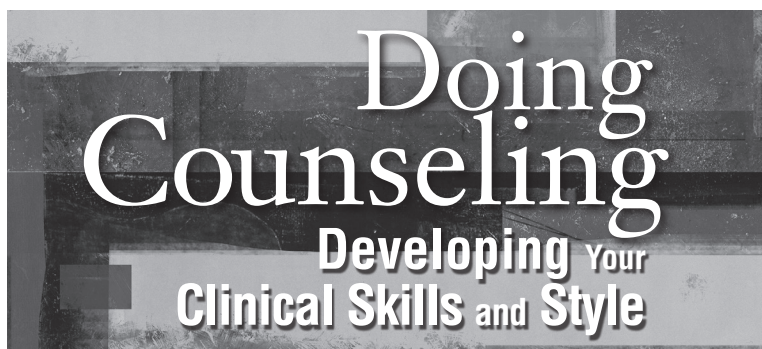


American Counseling Association

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Dedication

*To our trainers—Dr. Ty Leonard, who taught us levity;
Dr. Wen-Mei Chou, who taught us to see resilience in clients;
Dr. Ray Eary, who taught us to pay attention to old-time feelings;
Dr. Bill Benner, who taught us self-sufficiency;
Dr. Dave Howard, who taught us to see relationally;
Dr. Christina Ballard, who taught us to fight for ourselves;
Dr. Raylene Stats, who taught us grit; and
Dr. Gerald Corey and Marianne Schneider Corey, who
taught us how to use our voice—
and to our parents, who taught us style.*

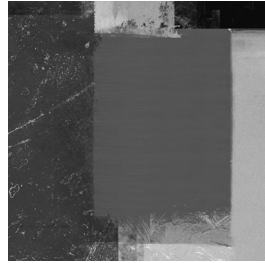


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Preface

You may have picked up this book because you feel just as lost and overwhelmed as we feel sometimes. Some days you've got it, and other days you just don't. We are not promising this book will help you find yourself or whatever you are looking for, but we can promise that you will feel less alone in this profession as you turn each page. We do not want this book to be a stuffy, professional, or esoteric manuscript we wrote from some mountaintop to get tenure. We most certainly are not on a mountaintop, and we don't have tenure—yet (fingers crossed). Before we get into specifics about what we will discuss throughout the book, we want to share a couple of things about ourselves and our motivations for writing the book. Our hope is that this brief description will help you position us correctly in your mind while reading our thoughts.

We are still raising babies and learning how to balance work and family. Our practices are not in tall office buildings where you call our assistants to schedule an appointment. We don't drive new cars, and money is most certainly not inconsequential. Over the last 8 years, we have gone through our graduate counseling program and a doctoral program in counselor educator and supervision, finished our licensure processes, and became counselor educators and licensed supervisors. There is still so much for us to learn. So much so that we ask ourselves, "Do we even know enough about anything to write a book?" Although we would love to usher you into our book with confidence, please know that this book isn't about giving you confidence. Instead, we are trying to invite you to think about who and how you are within the work we do together. To do so, we'll share ourselves, our journey, our failures, and our successes with you in each chapter.

A chief motivation in writing this book is the dissonance we sometimes feel around our identity as counselors of color and the invisible culture of Whiteness within the “how to do counseling” space. This invisible culture doesn’t just hurt counselors of color but also hurts White counselors who may not identify with the traditional way of doing counseling. When we say “the invisible culture of Whiteness,” we mean that when you think of an effective counselor, you don’t imagine them wearing Jordans.

That is the problem. This invisible culture whispers, “Be more like us and less like you,” until many counselors forget who they are. This subtle message is reinforced in research, writing, education, art, and film and television. The image most counselors have of what a counselor looks like when they enter the field does harm to a counselor’s development of self-efficacy. Now, we are not saying this book will undo decades of whitewashing in the counseling field. We just want to invite you to consider that counselors can be tweedless, uncouth, imperfect parents who cuss, laugh, and cry through sessions, listening to *A Tribe Called Quest* while wearing sneakers.

This book is written for two populations: (a) students enrolled in prepracticum, practicum, and internship courses and (b) new professionals seeking clinical licensure. Learning to do counseling is complicated. There is so much information and only a fraction of it is tested through comprehensive exams and national licensure exams. Over the course of 12 chapters, we hope to simultaneously condense and focus all that information while sparking reflection regarding your counselor identity and style.

The chapters in this book are chosen in an attempt to scaffold clinical information. The book starts by introducing readers to doing counseling. As we move through different types of therapy, we focus on helping you integrate counselor training directly into practice. We spend a considerable amount of time discussing the therapeutic relationship. Specifically, we focus on meeting the clients, building the therapeutic relationship, managing the process, and trusting that therapeutic process. We then introduce more complex skills including, but not limited to, integrating theoretical orientations into therapy, moving clients through their treatment plan from session to session, and ending therapy with positive outcomes. We also cover the work counselors do after the session is over. Then our discussion shifts to more contemporary issues in therapy, such as taking advantage of supervision, doing multicultural counseling, and, finally, doing distance counseling. We include a continual case example that we work through in most of the chapters to help us concretize many of the concepts and ideas we discuss within the chapter.

Chapter 1: An Introduction to Doing Counseling

The word “counsel” comes from the Old French *counseil* and Latin *consilium*, meaning consultation, advice, deliberation, or thought. Doing counseling requires us to do all of these things and more throughout our work with clients. Doing counseling requires us to listen to both our thoughts and emotions. To listen means to attend closely to what is being shared. The skill here involves staying with the client rather than jumping in readily with advice or problem-solving; it introduces readers to the idea of attending to clients as a way of doing counseling. In the chapter, we define counseling and the principles that guide our work. We pool information from therapeutic outcome research to explore counseling done well and not well. We then discuss using the self as a therapeutic tool, a concept that we will explore in more depth in later chapters. The chapter ends with a discussion of ways counseling is done and how it is done ethically.

Chapter 2: Doing Different Types of Sessions

After introducing readers to doing counseling well, ethically, and with principles and perspective, we want to outline the different types of sessions students and new professionals will find themselves conducting. We often hear practicum and internship students as well as new professionals say, “I have an intake session today” or “I had to do a crisis session last week.” Our goal in this chapter is to prepare readers to walk into these different types of sessions with confidence. We will identify some common types of sessions: intake, general therapy, treatment planning, assessment, individual, couples, family, child, crisis, and termination. We will discuss the purpose and major objectives for counselors in these sessions, the client’s experience, and important details counselors should consider when conducting these sessions. This chapter will highlight the voice of Dr. Judith Preston as she discusses ways to do crisis counseling sessions.

Chapter 3: Presession Preparation

Now that readers know the different types of sessions they may conduct, we next discuss presession preparation strategies. Many counselors have presession rituals just as baseball players do before they step into the hitter’s box. In this chapter, we will discuss strategies to use when preparing to attend a session, highlighting

the importance of preparing for sessions. Also, contacting clients over the phone or email is explained. Readers can learn about the tiny important details that get lost in preparing for the more obvious therapeutic focal points, such as knowing what to wear and how to act, deciding on sitting placements, taking notes in session, developing an ambiance, and preparing the room for a session. This chapter also includes plans for approaching a session, strategies for managing emotions and improving therapeutic timing, and suggestions on how to prepare for termination during the early sessions. Finally, we will discuss perhaps one of the more sobering experiences of counselors-in-training and new professionals: no-shows and why they happen.

Chapter 4: Meeting the Client

Our job as counselors is to meet our clients where they are, although this is easier said than done. Meeting the client takes a great deal of vulnerability, safety, connection, and intentionality. This chapter will guide readers through some of the complex processes involved in meeting the client. We will cover the topic of building a therapeutic relationship with clients, which involves the skills of reflecting feeling, content, and meaning. Also discussed are ways to foster vulnerability within clients, ensuring safety, enabling change, personalizing their problem, diagnosing, and using assessments when meeting the client. This chapter will highlight the voice of Dr. Dave Howard as he discusses vulnerability within the therapeutic relationship.

Chapter 5: Managing the Therapeutic Process

Once the client is met well and a therapeutic alliance is fostered, counselors must manage the therapeutic process. This is often a critical area of interest for our students and new professional colleagues. This chapter pools information from the existing literature and our personal experience to walk readers through ways to manage the therapeutic process. Discussed in this chapter are topics such as seeing the field, mapping the territory, and first- and second-order change. We will then focus on the different phases of the therapeutic process—initial, working, and closing phase—to help readers see the process as something tangible they can touch and feel in session. This perception of the process can help readers learn to manage it. This chapter will highlight the voice of Dr. Jason Martin as he discusses ways to manage the therapeutic process.

Chapter 6: Trusting the Process

The phrase “trust the process” is both enlightening and discouraging. Students and new professionals struggle, as we do, to trust the unknown aspects of the therapeutic process. The ambiguity of the therapeutic process can be frustrating at times. Learning to trust that some meaningful work is going to occur through this ambiguity is a significant challenge for students, new professionals, and veteran therapists alike. While the previous chapter might help the process become less ambiguous, this chapter will guide readers through some strategies that may make trusting the process less frustrating. We will first define the therapeutic process and then focus on the topics of trust in therapy, the self of the therapist, neurophysiology, transference and countertransference, emotions, resistance, and facing failure or rejection as a counselor.

Chapter 7: Developing Your Style

A counselor’s theoretical orientation acts as a compass in session, pointing counselors in the direction of healthy functioning. An understanding of a guiding theory in session gives counselors the freedom to flex techniques to meet the needs of clients. Managing and trusting the therapeutic process is helped with this understanding. This chapter will guide readers to find or better understand how to use their theoretical orientation. We begin the chapter by defining a theoretical orientation and why it is important to the therapeutic process. Also in this chapter is a discussion about the relationship between the person of the counselor and their theoretical orientation, including topics such as life philosophy, personality, style, and eclecticism and integration.

Chapter 8: Therapeutic Progress: Stringing Sessions Together

One of the most invalidating feelings, regardless of a counselor’s experience level, is how therapy sessions can seem disjointed, with each session feeling like a completely different, isolated experience. This sensation sparks the question, “Am I making a difference?” So far, we have guided readers through meeting the client, managing and trusting the process, and integrating their theoretical orientation into the session. This chapter focuses on using that knowledge to make counseling work for clients, which entails connecting therapy sessions together and tracking therapeutic progress. We will cover

topics such as why measuring progress matters, evaluating sessions, increasing hope, reversing negative spirals, facilitating change, and matching the parallel process in therapeutic progress.

Chapter 9: Postsession Tasks

Counselors-in-training and new professionals are sometimes just happy to have survived a session. There is also an element of survival after session that involves paperwork and processing. This chapter focuses on life after the session. No one becomes a counselor because of the paperwork, but it is a part of doing counseling. We will guide readers through the postsession process, which includes debriefing, writing treatment notes, developing or fine-tuning a treatment plan, and engaging in self-care. This chapter will highlight the voice of Dr. Eric Brown as he discusses restorative practices counselors can do between sessions.

Chapter 10: Clinical Supervision

An essential element of doing counseling is receiving supervision. Counselors-in-training and new professionals will work with more experienced clinicians to support them on many of the topics discussed in this book. However, supervision is not always a warm experience rich in growth and development. This chapter not only introduces readers to supervision but also discusses the reality of this experience. We will focus on topics such as supervision styles and relationships, the delivery method of supervision, the fears of live supervision, and ways to get the most out of supervision.

Chapter 11: Doing Multicultural and Antiracist Counseling

This chapter is dedicated to the cultural aspects and elements involved in doing counseling. These aspects are essential to doing counseling well, but they can be overlooked in session. We will attempt to balance the presentation of information with the facilitation of introspection. Topics discussed in this chapter include cultural humility, cultural competence, cultural attunement, cultural insensitivity, multicultural ruptures, social justice, spirituality and religion, and many more topics counselors-in-training and new professionals face when doing counseling.

Chapter 12: Doing Distance Counseling

The landscape of counseling has changed. The global COVID-19 pandemic pushed counselors—some kicking and screaming—into new avenues of their practice, including distance counseling. Although the therapeutic environment has changed, many of the core dynamics have stayed the same. Build a strong relationship and therapy has a chance to be successful. Obviously, this is easier said than done when webcams sometimes have less than 20/20 vision and not every client has a professional microphone and soundproof booths. Noticing and attending to nuanced aspects of the therapeutic process is more difficult now. Doing counseling is harder in some ways and easier in others. This chapter focuses on counseling from a distance. We will spend some time discussing topics like ethics, the therapeutic environment, technology, the therapeutic relationship, communicating with clients online, overcoming the many obstacles distance counseling presents, and the dos and don'ts of distance counseling.

Epilogue: Putting It Together

While this book will provide many readers comfort as they learn to do therapy, it may cause some readers to feel overwhelmed with the complexity of doing counseling. This epilogue will pull out the essential elements of the chapters and focus on the key takeaways from the book.



Acknowledgments

Doing Counseling: Developing Your Clinical Skills and Style is the result of a team effort. Not only is it a product of our effort, but our guest contributors and reviewers have brought their influence into the development of this book. Special appreciation goes to Carolyn Baker, the publisher at the American Counseling Association, and Nancy Driver, the digital and print development editor. Carolyn and Nancy encouraged us along the way and contributed their expertise by reviewing the entire manuscript, providing insightful comments and suggestions, and offering support and guidance through the evolution of this project. We appreciate their patience as we went through a lot this year—experienced the birth of a child and a natural disaster, which slowed down our writing process. We want to recognize and express our gratitude to our four guest contributors for their inspiring and honest personal stories about their experiences when doing counseling: Dr. Dave Howard, Dr. Eric Brown, Dr. Jason Martin, and Dr. Judith Preston.

We would certainly not be able to do this without the support of our families. Our wives—Lindsay, married to Jude, and Megan, married to Julius—are a constant source of support in our lives. Our sister, Dr. Jasmine Austin, who recently wrote her first book, keeps us motivated and laughing. Our children, who keep us grounded and focused on our purposes. And lastly, our parents Lorraine and Jude, who were our first counselors. They taught us how to express ourselves. It is true to say that much of what we share in this book, while it exists in literature and research, are things our parents first taught us. Thank you does not begin to cover our appreciation to many of the individuals acknowledged here.



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