



# BECOMING a Helper

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Marianne Schneider Corey  
Gerald Corey

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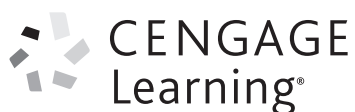
SEVENTH EDITION

# Becoming a Helper

SEVENTH EDITION

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*Becoming a Helper*, 7th Edition

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Copy Editor: Kay Mikel

Text and Cover Designer: Ingalls Design

Cover Image: Barrett & MacKay/ All Canada  
Photos/Getty Images

Compositor: Cenveo

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WCN: 02-200-203

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2014946999

Student Edition:

ISBN: 978-1-305-08509-1

Loose-leaf Edition:

ISBN: 975-1-305-40107-5

**Cengage Learning**

20 Channel Center Street

Boston, MA 02210

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Printed in the United States of America

Print Number: 01

Print Year: 2014

*To you, our readers.  
We hope this book will inspire you  
to make a significant difference  
in the lives of others.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Marianne Schneider Corey** is a licensed marriage and family therapist in California and is a National Certified Counselor. She received her master's degree in marriage, family, and child counseling from Chapman University. She is a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work and was the recipient of this organization's Eminent Career Award in 2001. She received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Mental Health Counselors Association in 2011 and is a member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association. She also holds memberships in the American Counseling Association, the American Group Psychotherapy Association, the Association for Specialists in Group Work, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and the Western Association of Counselor Education and Supervision.



Marianne has been involved in leading groups for different populations, providing training and supervision workshops in group process, facilitating self-exploration groups for graduate students in counseling, and cofacilitating training groups for group counselors and weeklong residential workshops in personal growth. Marianne and Jerry Corey have given many presentations at professional conferences and have conducted training workshops, continuing education seminars, and personal growth groups in the United States, Germany, Ireland, Belgium, Mexico, Hong Kong, China, and Korea.

In addition to *Becoming a Helper*, Seventh Edition (2016, with Gerald Corey), which has been translated into Korean and Japanese, Marianne has coauthored the following books, all with Cengage Learning:

- *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, Ninth Edition (2015, with Gerald Corey, Cindy Corey, and Patrick Callanan) [Translated into Korean, Japanese, and Chinese]
- *Group Techniques*, Fourth Edition (2015, with Gerald Corey, Patrick Callanan, and Michael Russell) [Translated into Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, and Czech]
- *Groups: Process and Practice*, Ninth Edition (2014, with Gerald Corey and Cindy Corey) [Translated into Korean, Chinese, and Polish]
- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Tenth Edition (2014, with Gerald Corey) [Translated into Chinese]

Marianne has made educational video programs (with accompanying student workbooks) for Cengage Learning: *Ethics in Action: DVD and Workbook* (2015, with Gerald Corey and Robert Haynes); and *Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges DVD and Workbook* (2014, with Gerald Corey and Robert Haynes).

Marianne and Jerry have been married for 50 years. They have two adult daughters, Heidi and Cindy, two granddaughters (Kyla and Keegan), and one grandson (Corey). Marianne grew up in Germany and has kept in close contact with her family and friends there. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, reading, visiting with friends, bike riding, and hiking.

**Gerald Corey** is Professor Emeritus of Human Services and Counseling at California State University at Fullerton. He received his doctorate in counseling from the University of Southern California. He is a Diplomate in Counseling Psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology; a licensed psychologist; and a National Certified Counselor. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Division 17, Counseling Psychology; and Division 49, Group Psychotherapy); a Fellow of the American Counseling Association; and a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work. He also holds memberships in the American Group Psychotherapy Association; the American Mental Health Counselors Association; the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling; the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; and the Western Association of Counselor Education and Supervision. Jerry received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Mental Health Counselors Association in 2011, the Eminent Career Award from ASGW in 2001, and the Outstanding Professor of the Year Award from California State University at Fullerton in 1991. He regularly teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in group counseling and ethics in counseling. He is the author or coauthor of 15 textbooks in counseling currently in print, along with more than 60 journal articles and book chapters.



In the past 40 years Jerry and Marianne Corey have conducted group counseling training workshops for mental health professionals at many universities in the United States as well as in Canada, Mexico, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Germany, Belgium, Scotland, England, and Ireland. In his leisure time, Jerry likes to travel, hike and bicycle in the mountains, and drive his 1931 Model A Ford. Marianne and Jerry have been married since 1964. They have two adult daughters, Heidi and Cindy, two granddaughters (Kyla and Keegan), and one grandson (Corey).

Recent publications by Jerry Corey, all with Cengage Learning, include:

- *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, Ninth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2016) [Translated into Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian]
- *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, Ninth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Cindy Corey, and Patrick Callanan) [Translated into Korean, Japanese, and Chinese]
- *Group Techniques*, Fourth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell) [Translated into Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, and Czech]

- *Groups: Process and Practice*, Ninth Edition (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)
- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Tenth Edition (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey) [Translated into Chinese]
- *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Ninth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2013) [Translated into Arabic, Indonesian, Portuguese, Turkish, Korean, and Chinese]
- *Case Approach to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Eighth Edition (2013)
- *The Art of Integrative Counseling*, Third Edition (2013)

Jerry is coauthor (with Barbara Herlihy) of *Boundary Issues in Counseling: Multiple Roles and Responsibilities*, Third Edition (2015), and *ACA Ethical Standards Casebook*, Seventh Edition (2015); he is coauthor (with Robert Haynes, Patrice Moulton, and Michelle Muratori) of *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions: A Practical Guide*, Second Edition (2010); and he is the author of *Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons From My Journey* (2010). All four of these books are published by the American Counseling Association.

He has also made several educational DVD programs on various aspects of counseling practice: (1) *Ethics in Action: DVD and Workbook* (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Robert Haynes); (2) *Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges DVD and Workbook* (2014, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Robert Haynes); (3) *DVD for Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy: The Case of Stan and Lecturettes* (2013); (4) *DVD for Integrative Counseling: The Case of Ruth and Lecturettes* (2013, with Robert Haynes); and (5) *DVD for Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (2012). All of these programs are available through Cengage Learning.

## PREFACE

Many books deal with the skills, theories, and techniques of helping. Yet few books concentrate on the problems involved in becoming an effective helper or focus on the personal difficulties in working with others. In writing this book, we had in mind both students who are planning a career in human services, counseling, social work, psychology, couples and family therapy, sociology, or related professions and helpers who have just begun their careers. This book provides a general overview and introduction, and you will likely take a separate course on each chapter topic we present here. It is our hope that we are able to introduce you to these topics in such a way that you will look forward to learning more about the issues we raise. We intend this book to be used as a supplement to textbooks dealing with helping skills and with counseling theory and practice. *Becoming a Helper* has proved useful for introductory classes in the fields of human services, counseling, and social work, as well as for courses such as prepracticum, practicum, fieldwork, and internship.

In this book we focus considerable attention on the struggles, anxieties, and uncertainties of helpers. In addition, we explore in depth the demands and strains of the helping professions and their effects on the practitioner. In Chapter 1 readers are challenged to become aware of and examine their motivations for seeking a career in the helping professions. We assist readers in assessing what they will get from their work. Throughout the book we keep the focus on how helpers may be affected by the problems they face and the choices they make in service to their clients.

Chapter 2 addresses the importance of helpers knowing themselves and encourages readers to explore their family-of-origin experiences, focusing on how earlier relationships continue to influence the quality of later ones. We explore how helpers can understand the developmental transitions in their own lives and discuss the implications of this self-understanding when working with transitional phases in the lives of clients.

Values are an integral part of the client–helper relationship, and we devote considerable attention to an analysis of how values influence the helping process in Chapter 3. We develop the thesis that the job of helpers is not to impose values but to help clients define their own value system. It is essential that counselors in training become aware of their values on a variety of topics. We explore the belief systems of helpers and discuss the positive and negative effects that a variety of beliefs and assumptions can have on one's practice.

Special consideration is given to understanding and working with diverse client populations whenever this topic is relevant. In addition, Chapter 4

addresses a range of diversity issues. Beginning and seasoned helpers encounter common problems in their work related to dealing with resistance, transference and countertransference, and clients who are sometimes perceived as “difficult,” and we address these critical topics in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the stages of the helping process, with a brief discussion of the skills and knowledge required to be a successful helper at each of these stages. The focus of this discussion is not just on skill development but also on the personal characteristics that enable helpers to be effective. Because helpers ask clients to examine their behavior to understand themselves more fully, we ask helpers to be equally committed to an awareness of their own lives. Without a high level of self-awareness, a helper may obstruct clients' progress, especially when these clients are struggling with issues the helper has avoided facing.

Chapter 7 is an overview of various theories with the emphasis on key concepts and practical applications. There is a discussion of an integrative approach to counseling practice, which offers guidelines on how to select a theoretical orientation.

Forming a sense of ethical awareness and learning to resolve professional dilemmas is a task facing all helpers. In Chapter 8 we raise a number of challenges surrounding current ethical issues as a way to sensitize readers to the intricacies of ethical decision making. A few of these topics include informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, documentation, and malpractice and risk management. Chapter 9 is devoted to learning how to manage boundaries, both personal and professional, and how to ethically perform multiple roles.

We challenge students to take a proactive stance in their educational program in Chapter 10. Being proactive applies to selecting field placements and internships as well as to getting the most from supervision. Therefore, we offer some practical strategies for ensuring quality experiences in fieldwork and profiting from supervision.

In Chapter 11 we discuss the group process and the value of working with groups in human services work. Emphasis is on the tasks of group leaders at each of the stages of a group. Chapter 12 describes ways of working in the community and various forms of community intervention. Chapter 13 deals with stress, burnout, impairment, and self-care. The emphasis is on how to monitor yourself to prevent burnout and how to design a personal self-care program aimed at keeping you alive both personally and professionally.

New to this edition is Chapter 14, which explores crisis management in the personal and professional lives of counselors. The relatively new field of disaster behavioral health is discussed along with strategies for helping in times of natural and human-caused disasters. This chapter provides readers with an understanding of how crisis situations affect both clients and helpers, a plan for learning to better handle crises in a helper's life and work, and interventions that can help clients cope with crises in their lives.

Although this book should be useful to any student planning to enter the helping professions, our backgrounds are in the field of counseling, and this orientation comes through in this book. Therefore, those who want to work in the counseling aspects of the human services are likely to find this book especially



meaningful. We have tried to write a personal book that will stimulate both thought and action. At the end of each chapter we encourage readers to commit to some specific action that will move them closer to their goals.

## New to the Seventh Edition

### Chapter 1: **Are the Helping Professions for You?**

- Expansion of motivations for becoming a helper
- Updated information on various career paths

### Chapter 2: **Helper, Know Thyself**

- New section on how professional practice can affect a helper's personal life
- Many new examples to make the discussions more concrete
- New material on countertransference on the helper's part
- New case examples to illustrate challenges in understanding life stages

### Chapter 3: **Knowing and Managing Your Values**

- Substantial revisions with increased emphasis on helpers learning to manage their values to avoid unduly influencing clients
- Increased emphasis on seeking supervision when maintaining objectivity becomes a problem
- New material on court cases pertaining to value conflicts, with implications for the counseling profession
- Inclusion of more case studies with discussions
- New material on managing values conflicts
- Increased emphasis on bracketing personal values in counseling relationships
- Updated discussion of end-of-life concerns

### Chapter 4: **Understanding Diversity**

- Increased inclusion of social justice perspectives as a part of multiculturalism
- New discussion on microaggressions
- Increased use of case examples to illustrate key points
- Revised and expanded discussion of understanding people with disabilities
- Revised section on multicultural competence

### Chapter 5: **Common Concerns of Beginning Helpers**

- A reconceptualization of the notion of resistance
- Alternative perspectives on understanding client defensiveness, ambivalence, and guarded behavior
- New material on motivational interviewing
- New discussion on knowing when and how to make referrals
- Many new examples to illustrate key concepts
- Expanded coverage on ways of effectively working with involuntary clients

### Chapter 6: **The Helping Process**

- Revision and update of the stages in the helping process
- Many new case examples to illustrate main ideas of applying interventions at the various stages of helping

Chapter 7: **Theory Applied to Practice**

- Increased emphasis on application of theory to practice
- Updated coverage of an integrative perspective on counseling

Chapter 8: **Ethical and Legal Issues Facing Helpers**

- New material on addressing unethical behavior by colleagues
- Expanded example of applying the eight-step model to a case
- Many new case examples with discussion
- New section on confidentiality and privacy in a technological world

Chapter 9: **Managing Boundary Issues**

- Revised material on multiple relationships and the code of ethics
- New section on a cultural perspective on boundaries
- New section on social media and boundaries
- Expanded and updated coverage of bartering and gift giving

Chapter 10: **Getting the Most From Your Fieldwork and Supervision**

- Expanded discussion on securing a quality placement
- ACES (2011) “Best Practices in Clinical Supervision” are highlighted

Chapter 11: **Working With Groups**

- New literature on the cultural context of group work
- New section addressing multicultural issues and social justice themes and competencies in group work

Chapter 12: **Working in the Community**

- More on the unique tasks of working in the community
- Expanded section on the scope of the community approach
- Inclusion of many concrete examples to clarify key themes
- New section on school counselors as social justice advocates

Chapter 13: **Stress, Burnout, and Self-Care**

- Updated literature on managing stress and self-care
- More emphasis on techniques of self-care (such as mindfulness)
- New discussion on the importance of self-compassion
- New section on the importance of physical activity and exercise as a form of self-care
- New case examples and discussion

Chapter 14: **Managing Crisis: Personally and Professionally**

- A brand new chapter on crisis management
- Understanding crisis both personally and professionally
- How crisis situations affect individuals
- Strategies for better handling crises
- How to help clients refocus through self-talk and building resilience
- Introduction to the field of disaster behavioral health

## Supplements

### MindTap

*Becoming a Helper* comes with MindTap, an online learning solution created to harness the power of technology to drive student success. This cloud-based

platform integrates a number of learning applications (“apps”) into an easy-to-use and easy to access tool that supports a personalized learning experience. MindTap combines student learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides you through your counseling course. This MindTap includes:

- Self-Inventories at the beginning of each chapter
- Discussion Questions
- Exercises and Case Studies
- A variety of curated video and role play activities, including content from the *Ethics in Action*, *The Case of Ruth*, and other video programs.
- Chapter Quizzing
- Reflection Activities

## Instructor’s Resource Manual

An *Instructor’s Resource Manual* is available for this edition. It contains suggestions for teaching the course, course objectives, key terms, class activities to stimulate interest, PowerPoint slides, a test bank for all chapters, reflection and discussion questions, and online test items. The instructor can choose from the many multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and short essay questions provided. These materials can be accessed through the instructor’s companion site at [login.cengage.com](http://login.cengage.com). Faculty can access the ancillaries that accompany this text by contacting a Cengage Learning sales representative.

## Codes of Ethics for the Helping Professions

Each of the major mental health professional organizations has its own code of ethics. Many of these codes are contained in a booklet titled *Codes of Ethics for the Helping Professions* (2015), which is available at a nominal cost when bundled with this textbook. We recommend that students become familiar with the basic standards for ethical practice of the various mental health professions. Codes of ethics for specific organizations also can be accessed through the Internet or by contacting the professional organizations directly.

## Ethics in Action DVD and Workbook

An integrated learning package titled *Ethics in Action: DVD and Workbook* (third edition, 2015) is available to enhance the seventh edition of *Becoming a Helper*. The *Ethics in Action* DVD is designed to bring to life the ethical issues and dilemmas counselors often encounter and to provide ample opportunity for discussion, self-exploration, and problem solving of these issues and dilemmas. The vignettes on the DVD are based on a weekend workshop coled by Marianne Schneider Corey and Gerald Corey for a group of counseling students, which included challenging questions and lively discussion, role plays to bring the issues to life, and comments from the students and the Coreys. Additional material on the DVD program is designed to provide a self-study guide for students who are also reading this book. This educational program is divided into three parts: (1) Ethical Decision Making, (2) Values and the Helping Relationship, and (3) Boundary Issues and Multiple Relationships. This

interactive self-study program challenges students to deal with the complexity of ethical issues and encourages reflection on their perspectives on each of the issues presented. By viewing the video program and completing the exercises, students will be in a better position to get involved in class discussions. At the end of several chapters in *Becoming a Helper* are suggested activities and guidelines for integrating the *Ethics in Action* video program with this textbook. The more students become involved in this learning package, the more their understanding of ethical practice will be enhanced. *Ethics in Action* is also available as an online program.

## DVD for Integrative Counseling: The Case of Ruth and Lecturettes

This interactive video program illustrates Gerald Corey's integrative perspective in working with one client, Ruth. The program—structured within the framework of 13 counseling sessions from the initial to termination phase—is designed to involve students in learning about an integrative approach through the use of sample counseling sessions with Ruth, interactive exercises, and questions for each of the sessions that can be done by students both alone and in small groups.

A DVD is available of *Integrative Counseling*, and as well for students and faculty who prefer to access the material online; this video is part of the MindTap program. A printed access code can be bundled with the textbook, or an instant access code can be purchased online at [www.cengagebrain.com](http://www.cengagebrain.com).

## Acknowledgments

In preparation for this revision, a Web survey was conducted with responses from 45 instructors. The comments of these instructors were helpful in guiding our revision process, especially by focusing our attention on the range of courses for which this book is selected, including counseling, human services, psychology, and social work.

We also want to express our appreciation for those individuals who participated in reviewing *Becoming a Helper* at various stages in the revision process. Although we could not incorporate all of their suggestions, we relied on their input in developing the final version of this edition. We appreciate the insights, comments, and perspectives of the following people who completed a prerevision review of the sixth edition and made suggestions for the seventh edition:

Yvonne Barry, John Tyler Community College  
 Rose Borunda, California State University, Sacramento  
 Ruby Burris, Ivy Tech Community College  
 Catherine Campbell, Roosevelt University  
 Linda Chamberlain, Pasco-Hernando Community College  
 Erica Gannon, Clayton State University  
 Abbi Hattem, Elon University  
 Eric Jacobs, Northeastern University  
 Richard Jenks, Tillamook Bay Community College

Tamala Jo Johnson, Ivy Tech Community College Anderson  
 Fred Lawrence, Corning Community College  
 Susan Renes, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Mark Stebnicki, East Carolina University

Appreciation goes to the following people who reviewed the revised seventh edition of *Becoming a Helper*:

Galo Arboleda, California State University, Fullerton  
 Catherine Campbell, Roosevelt University  
 Sherry Cormier, West Virginia University  
 Erica Gannon, Clayton State University  
 Eric J. Green, University of North Texas at Dallas  
 Robert Haynes, Borderline Productions  
 Fred Lawrence, Corning Community College  
 Deborah Lung, Pfeiffer University at Charlotte  
 Michelle Muratori, The Johns Hopkins University  
 Ed Neukrug, Old Dominion University  
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This book is the result of a team effort, which includes the combined efforts of a number of people at Cengage Learning. These people include Jon-David Hague, Product Director; Julie Martinez, Product Manager; Caryl Gorska, Art Director, for her work on the interior design and cover of this book; Amelia Blevins, Associate Content Developer, for her participation in the review process and other key aspects of production; Sean Cronin, Associate Content Developer, for coordinating the digital and supplemental materials for the book; Michelle Muratori, Johns Hopkins University, for her work updating research for this book and for providing case examples and commentaries on various topics within most chapters, updating the *Instructor's Resource Manual*, and assisting in developing other supplements; and Rita Jaramillo, Content Project Manager. We appreciate Susan Cunningham's work in creating and revising test items to accompany this text and in preparing the index. Thanks to Ben Kolstad of Cenveo Publisher Services, who coordinated the production of this book. Special recognition goes to Kay Mikel, the manuscript editor of this edition, whose exceptional editorial talents continue to keep this book reader friendly. The efforts and dedication of all of these people certainly contribute to the high quality of this edition.

*Marianne Schneider Corey*  
*Gerald Corey*



## CHAPTER 1

# Are the Helping Professions for You?

### Focus Questions

1. What has attracted you to the helping professions? Who in your life has influenced your decision to consider becoming a professional helper? What major events in your life have contributed to your desire to enter this field?
2. What is your main motivation for wanting to be a helper? What personal needs of yours are likely to be met through this work?
3. Think of a time when you needed help from a significant person in your life or from a counselor. What did you most want from this person? What did he or she do that either helped or hindered you?
4. At this time in your life, how prepared (from a personal standpoint) do you feel you are to enter one of the helping professions? In what ways do you feel prepared and in what ways do you feel unprepared?
5. What can you do to make your educational program more meaningful and derive the maximum benefit from your academic courses?
6. If you were applying to a graduate program or for a job in the field, how would you respond to the following questions on the application form or in an interview: "What qualities, traits, attitudes, values, and convictions are central to being an effective helper?" "How might these personal characteristics be either assets or liabilities for you as a helper?"
7. If you were to pursue a career in one of the helping professions, what kind of work appeals to you? With what clients would you like to work? What kind of human services work do you expect would bring you the greatest meaning and satisfaction?
8. What personal strengths do you have that will assist you in your work as a helper? What personal limitations might hinder your work? How might you go about working to improve those limitations?
9. What are some ways that you can learn about what is involved in a particular helping profession?
10. What role do values play in selecting a career in the helping professions?

## Aim of the Chapter

The *Focus Questions* at the beginning of each chapter are intended to help you personalize the content you are about to read. We believe the best way to assist you in understanding your own beliefs and attitudes about the helping role is to encourage you to be an active learner and to engage with the material in a personal way. We do not expect you to have clarified all of your thoughts about these topics before reading the chapter. Developing competence as a helper is an ongoing process that requires many years of supervised practice and introspection. Many of you are just beginning your educational program and may have had little or no contact with clients. These questions are designed to spark self-reflection as you embark on your journey of becoming a helper.

As you consider a career in one of the helping professions, you are probably asking yourself these questions:

- Are the helping professions for me?
- Will I know enough to help others when I start my first practicum?
- Will I be able to work effectively with people who are very different from me?
- Will a career in helping others be too emotionally intense for me?
- Will I be able to secure a job?
- Will my career provide me with financial security?
- Will I be able to apply what I am learning to my job?
- Will this career be satisfying for me?
- For which specific profession am I best suited?
- How do I select the best school and training program?

This book is intended to help you answer these and other questions about your career. The focus is on *you* and on what you need personally and professionally to be the best helper possible. We also emphasize the realities you are certain to face when you enter the professional world. You will be best able to cope with the demands of the helping professions if you get an idea now of what lies ahead. In addition to presenting the obstacles that you may encounter, we also point out the joys and rewards of making a commitment to helping others as a way of life. Perhaps one of the most meaningful rewards for helping professionals is the opportunity to assist people in creating their own paths.

We begin this chapter by inviting you to examine your reasons for wanting to become a helper. To help you clarify your personal and professional motivations, we share our own experiences as beginning helpers and demonstrate that learning to become a helper is a process that has both joys and challenges. This chapter also introduces you to the attributes of an effective helper. There is no one pattern of characteristics that identifies “ideal helpers,” but we encourage you to think about the characteristics you possess that could either help or hinder you in your work with others.

Most students have questions about which professional program will best help them attain their career objectives, and we explore the differences among various educational routes. Although you may think you know the career path you want to pursue, we encourage you to keep your options open while you are reading this book and taking this course. You will probably hold several different



positions within a career that you eventually choose. For example, you may begin by providing direct services to clients in a community agency but later on shift to administering programs.

Finally, keep in mind as you read this book that we use the terms **helper** and **human services professional** interchangeably to refer to a wide range of practitioners, some of which include social workers, counselors, clinical and counseling psychologists, couples and family therapists, pastoral counselors, mental health nurses, school counselors, rehabilitation counselors, and community mental health workers.

## Examining Your Motives for Becoming a Helper

In choosing a career in the helping professions, it is imperative that you reflect on the reasons you are considering entering this field. For many of us, becoming a helper satisfies some of our personal needs, such as the need to make a difference in the lives of others. It is gratifying to know that we can make a significant difference, especially when people do not have a great deal of hope that they can change or have faith in themselves to create a better life. You can be a change agent for such people and facilitate their belief in themselves. As you reflect on the needs and motives we discuss in this section, ask yourself, “How do my personal needs influence my ability to be an effective helper?”

### Typical Needs and Motivations of Helpers

Our students and trainees have had a variety of motivations for pursuing careers in the helping professions. We want you to recognize your motivations and needs, and to become aware of how they influence the quality of your interactions with others. Let’s examine some of the reasons you may have for becoming a helper.

**The need to make an impact.** Perhaps you hope to exert a significant influence on the lives of those you serve. You may have a need to know that you are making a positive difference in someone’s daily existence. Although you recognize that you will not be able to change everyone, you are likely to derive satisfaction from empowering individuals. When clients are not interested in changing, are afraid to make changes, or do not want your help, you may become frustrated. If your worth as a person is too dependent on your need to make a difference, you are likely to become disillusioned and disappointed. This may lead you to disengage from your role as a helper and ultimately reduce your effectiveness. Your professional work is one source for finding meaning in your life, but we hope it is not your only source of satisfaction. Becoming overly invested in clients can lead to blurred boundaries and burnout. As helpers we may facilitate, guide, empower, educate, and support clients, but it is important to remember that the power and decision to change rests within the client. One of our key obligations as helping professionals is to honor the self-determination of those we serve.

**The need to reciprocate.** The desire to emulate a role model sometimes plays a part in the decision to be a helper. Someone special, perhaps a teacher, mentor, or a therapist, may have influenced your life in a very special way, or the influential person may be a grandmother, an uncle, or a parent. Practicing therapists often acknowledge that they were greatly influenced by their experience in their own personal therapy to seek the education needed to become competent professionals. The phrase “paying it forward” illustrates this idea.

**The need to care for others.** You may have been a helper from a early age. Were you the one in your family who attended to the problems and concerns of other family members? Do your peers and friends find it easy to talk to you? If you are a “natural helper,” you may have sought training to improve and enhance your talent. Many of our students are adult children of alcoholics who adopted the role of peacemaker in their families. Although this pattern is not necessarily problematic, it is important that such helpers become aware of their dynamics and learn how they function in both their personal and professional lives. Helpers who were peacemakers in their family of origin may be unaware of how their aversion to conflict influences their interactions with others and may inadvertently steer clients away from examining unpleasant feelings such as anger and resentment. If this pattern of peacemaking is left unexamined, it could detract from their ability to provide quality care to others.

One of the pitfalls of being a caregiver to significant people in your life is that very often no one attends to your needs. As a result, you may not have learned to ask for what *you* need. You can easily become personally and professionally burned out, or emotionally exhausted, if you do not learn to ask for help for yourself. Learning to say “no” and setting personal limits and boundaries are crucial components of self-care. Natural caregivers struggle with these limits quite often.

Skovholt (2012b) emphasizes the importance of sustaining the personal self and developing professional resiliency. It is crucial to strike a healthy balance between taking care of others and taking care of yourself. Skovholt cautions helping professionals to become aware of the dangers of one-way caring in their professional lives. If you burden yourself with the responsibility of always being available for everyone who might need your help, you are likely to find that soon you will have little left to offer, resulting in the erosion of your ability to work therapeutically with others. As Skovholt points out, “Those in other careers realize that they must care for their instrument—the opera singer’s voice, the teacher’s mind, the wood cutter’s axe, the eyes of the photographer.... How about us?” (p. 139). You must rely on your sense of self as your primary instrument and take care to preserve and protect yourself so you can continue to be effective with clients.

**The need for self-help.** An interest in helping others may stem from an interest in dealing with the impact of your own struggles. The wounded healer can be authentically present for others searching to find themselves. If you have struggled successfully with a problem, you are able to identify and empathize with clients who come to you with similar concerns. For example, you may have experienced the difficulties of growing up in an abusive family, and you

are sensitive to this early wounding. In your professional work you are likely to encounter a number of individuals with similar struggles. Some women who were involved in abusive relationships may become counselors who specialize in working with battered women. Some men who were abused as children develop particular professional interests in counseling abused children and youth. Addictions counselors may be recovering from an addiction themselves or may have grown up with an alcoholic or drug-addicted parent.

Stebnicki (2009a) believes that professionals who have experienced a wounded spirit need to be open to questioning their own spiritual health so they can be of assistance to their clients as they struggle with existential concerns of loss, grief, trauma, and stressful life events. He reminds us that “remembering emotions related to such painful events and re-creating an internal emotional scrapbook can be extremely painful and difficult for both clients and counselors, especially for counselors new to the helping profession” (p. 54).

Sometimes individuals who are psychologically impaired study to become helpers in an attempt to understand how to fix their own problems. If you are not on the road to your own healing, it is unlikely that you will be effective in helping others. Furthermore, engaging in intense work with others can stimulate and intensify your own pain. If clients’ stories, which may be saturated with themes of anxiety, depression, grief, loss, and traumatic stress, mirror your own personal struggles, *empathy fatigue* may ensue (Stebnicki, 2008; see Chapter 14). Before you attempt to deal with the lives of others, examine your own life situation. Doing this introspective work will increase your self-awareness and help you to avoid the trap of imposing a hidden agenda on your clients. For example, a female counselor who works with women who are victims of partner abuse may try to work out her own unfinished business and conflicts by giving advice and pushing these women to make decisions they are not yet ready to make. Because of her unresolved personal problems, she may show hostility to a controlling husband. She might make the assumption that what “worked” for her will work for everyone.

**The need to be needed.** Very few helpers are immune to the need to be needed. It can be psychologically rewarding to have clients say that they are getting better because of your influence. These clients are likely to express their appreciation for the hope that you have given them. You may value and get a great deal of satisfaction from being able to take care of other people’s wants. Satisfying this need is perhaps one of the greatest rewards of being a helper. It is not necessary to deny that you like being wanted, approved of, and appreciated. However, if this dynamic is consistently in the forefront, it can overshadow the needs of your clients. An unhealthy dependence can be cultivated by a helper’s need to be needed. We do not want clients to terminate counseling before their needs are met, but we also do not want them to remain in counseling long after they have met their therapeutic goals. One of our primary aims as helpers is to empower clients to help themselves. When clients leave counseling because they are functioning well and their therapeutic needs have been satisfied, we can consider that a success!

If you depend exclusively on your clients to validate your self-worth, you are on shaky ground. In reality, many clients will not express appreciation for your

efforts, nor will some of them make changes in their lives. Furthermore, agencies often provide feedback only when your performance does not meet the expected standards. No matter what you accomplish, the institution may expect more of you. Eventually, you may realize that whatever you do it is not enough. Wanting to feel appreciated for what you are doing for others is certainly understandable, but being able to evaluate and reinforce yourself for the work you have done is an essential component of self-care for effective helpers.

**The need for recognition and status.** You may have hopes of gaining recognition and acquiring a certain degree of status, in addition to a certain income level. If you work in an agency, however, many of the consumers of the services you offer will be economically disadvantaged. You may be working with mandated clients who are on probation or incarcerated; people living in poverty who are dealing with addictions or chronic mental illness, racism, and other forms of oppression; or clients who have lost their job or are having difficulties finding employment. This work may not bring you the financial rewards and the recognition you seek; however, your efforts may be deeply rewarding in other ways and are desperately needed in society. As one counselor put it: “This work ... carries its own set of rewards and benefits that I personally find far more meaningful than money and status. From my experience, when these clients are able to find change and healing, it is huge and life-changing and has a ripple effect that improves their lives and that of their children and families.” There are many opportunities for those who continually work to enhance their education and training, and it is possible to work with marginalized client populations and still earn a living.

Conversely, you may work in a setting where you can enjoy the status that goes along with being respected by clients and colleagues. If you have worked hard and are good at what you do, accept the recognition you have earned. You can be proud yet still be humble. If you become arrogant as a result of your status, you may be perceived as unapproachable, and clients as well as coworkers may be put off by your attitude. You also may come to accept far more credit for your clients’ changes than you deserve. Some clients will put you on a pedestal, and you may come to like this position too much. You may be playing an important role in helping to facilitate change in your clients’ lives, but they are the ones who are doing the hard work both during and outside of sessions. If you want your self-esteem to rest on a solid foundation, it is essential that you look within yourself to meet your status needs rather than looking to others to provide you with affirmations that you are indeed a worthwhile person, whether by verbal acclaim or by financial gain.

**The need to provide answers.** Some students seem to have a need to give others advice and to provide “right answers.” They may say that they feel inadequate if friends come to them with a problem and they are not able to give them concrete advice. Yet their friends may really need to be listened to and cared for rather than to be told “what they should do.” Although you may find satisfaction in influencing others, it is important to realize that your answers may not be best for them. Many times there is not a “correct” answer at all. As a helper, your purpose is to provide direction and to assist clients in discovering

their own course of action. If your need to fix it by providing advice and answers sometimes gets in the way of effectively relating to others, we suggest that you explore this in personal counseling.

**The need for control.** Related to the need to provide others with advice and answers is the need to control others. All of us have some need for self-control and may also have the need to control others at times. For example, parents of young children understandably need to exercise some degree of control for safety reasons. However, some of us have a great, if not excessive, need to control what others are thinking, feeling, and doing. Ask yourself these questions: Are you convinced that some people should think more liberally (or more conservatively)? When people are angry, depressed, or anxious, do you sometimes tell them that they should not feel that way and do your best to change their state of mind? Do you at times have a strong need to change the way people who are close to you behave, even if what they are doing does not directly affect you? If you feel a strong need to provide solutions to every problem a client presents, you are meeting your own needs rather than working in the best interest of your client. Although some helpers have a need to control under the guise of being helpful, it can be a productive exercise to reflect on what the outcomes might be if you gave more control to those you encountered. Is your role to control the lives of others, or is it to teach others how to regain effective control of their own lives?

## How Your Needs and Motivations Operate

We often say that in the ideal situation your own needs are met at the same time that you are meeting your clients' needs. Most of the needs and motives we have discussed can work either for or against a client's welfare. If you are unaware of your needs, however, there is a much greater likelihood that your own needs will determine the nature of your interventions. If you are attempting to work through conscious or unconscious personal conflicts by focusing on the problems of others, for example, there is a greater chance that you will unconsciously use your clients to meet your own needs. In addition, you may be in trouble if some of these needs assume such a high priority that you become obsessed with them. For instance, if your need for control is so high that you consistently attempt to determine the path that others take, you could easily interfere with your clients' development of independence and self-determination.

In many counseling programs, instructors expect their students to examine their own vulnerabilities, struggles, and faulty beliefs as part of the process of becoming effective helpers. These programs are based on the premise that it is as much the "wounded" parts of us as the "healthy" parts that drive us to become helpers. Students are asked to examine the ways in which their personal issues and psychological histories will be an asset or a liability in their future professional work.

Helpers who meet their own needs at the expense of their clients are depriving their clients of the quality of care to which they are entitled. One guiding principle we find useful is to remain invested in the client's *process* rather than the *outcome*. If a client is considering divorce, for example, and if

our values are strongly against divorce, we help the client explore the pros and cons of either choice, while remaining neutral with respect to the client's final decision. As helpers, it is important to remember that it is our clients—not us—who have to live with the consequences of the decisions made.

As you reflect on the needs we have discussed, think about how they might either enhance or interfere with your ability to help others. If you have not yet worked with clients, recall your actions in situations with friends or family members who were struggling with some problem. How did you respond to them when they were looking for the best course of action? Do your best to identify how any of these needs can become problematic if you deny them, become obsessed with them, or meet them at the expense of others.

It is unlikely that any single motive drives you; rather, needs and motivations are intertwined and can change over time. Even though your original motives and needs change, your desire to be a helper may remain unchanged. Because personal development is an ongoing process, we suggest that you periodically reexamine your motives for being a helper. It can be a valuable tool toward self-awareness and client welfare.

## Our Own Beginnings as Helpers

This is a personal book in two ways. It is personal in that we encourage you to find ways to apply the book to yourself. In addition, we have written the book in a personal manner, sharing our own views and experiences whenever we think it is appropriate and useful. As a concrete illustration of how personal motives and experiences can affect career choice, we discuss some of our own motivations for becoming helping professionals and remaining in the field.

Beginning a helping career is not always easy and can involve anxiety and uncertainty. Although at this point we certainly feel more confident than when we were beginning our careers, we have not forgotten our own struggles. We, too, had to cope with many of the fears and self-doubts discussed in the previous pages. By sharing our own difficulties with you, we hope to encourage you not to give up too soon.

At this point in our professional lives, we continue to take time to reflect on both what we are giving and what we are getting through our varied work projects.

### Marianne Corey's Early Experience

I was a helper long before I studied counseling in school. From childhood on I responded to the needs of my brothers and sisters. At age 8, I was made almost totally responsible for my newborn brother. I not only took care of him but also attended to other members of an extended family.

My family owned a restaurant in a German village, and I worked there at a very young age. The restaurant, which was in our home, was the meeting place for many of the local men. These men came to socialize, as well as to eat and drink. For hours they would sit and talk, and I was taught that I had better listen attentively. Furthermore, I learned that I should not repeat the personal conversations and gossip to other townspeople. At this early age I learned

three very important skills: attentive listening, empathic understanding, and confidentiality. The men frequently shared their war experiences, and I saw how much healing took place for them by being able to tell their stories. I was profoundly affected by the changes I observed in these men. Even now, as a counselor, I am aware of the healing properties people experience when they reveal their painful stories to an empathic listener.

In my own life I overcame many obstacles and exceeded my dreams. As a result, I am often successful in challenging and encouraging my clients not to give up too soon when limits are imposed on them. Through my work I derive a great sense of satisfaction when I have been instrumental in the lives of individuals who are willing to take risks, to tolerate uncertainty, to dare to be different, and to live a fuller life because of their choices. When clients show appreciation for our work together, I encourage them to take credit for their hard work that resulted in the changes they value.

In my life now I find it easy to give to my friends, family, and community as well as to clients. It seems natural to me to give both personally and professionally. It continues to be a struggle for me to find a good balance between giving to others and taking care of myself. Although I am considered a good giver, I realize that I am not as good when it comes to making my needs known and asking for what I want.

It is interesting for me to compare my cultural conditioning and early role in my family with my development as a professional caregiver. Although I seemed to assume the role of caring for my brothers and sisters “naturally,” I did not feel quite as natural when I began formal helping. In my first practical experiences as part of my undergraduate program in behavioral sciences, I had my share of self-doubt.

In one of my earlier internships I was placed in a college counseling center. I remember how petrified I was one day when a student came in and asked for an appointment and my supervisor asked me to counsel this client. The feedback that I received later from my supervisor on how confident I had appeared was very incongruent with what I had felt. Here are some of the thoughts that ran through my head as I was walking to my office with this client: “I’m not ready for this. What am I going to do? What if he doesn’t talk? What if I don’t know how to help him? I wish I could get out of this!” In my self-absorption I never once considered any of my client’s feelings. For instance, how might he be approaching this session? What fears might he be having?

I was much more aware of myself than of my clients. I took far too much responsibility, put much pressure on myself to “do it right,” and worried a lot about what harm I might do. I did not allow my clients to assume their rightful share of the responsibility for making changes. I often worked much harder than they did, and sometimes it seemed that I wanted more for my clients than they wanted for themselves. I think I had a tendency to exaggerate my capacity for causing harm because of my fears and insecurities as a helper. When I shared with my supervisor my concern about feeling overwhelmingly responsible for the outcomes of our sessions and about hurting my clients, she responded, “You are assuming more power than you have over your clients.” When some of my colleagues were beginning helpers, they too expressed feelings similar to the