



**Nutrition Counseling  
and Education Skill  
Development** *third edition*

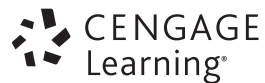
**Bauer  
Liou**

# Nutrition Counseling and Education Skill Development

Third Edition

KATHLEEN D. BAUER  
*Montclair State University*

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Development, Third Edition**  
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To my husband, Hank, and my children,  
Emily so mee Rose and Kathryn sun hee Rose  
and my grandchild, Kathleen hweng jae Rose  
Thank you for patience, support, and love.  
KDB

To my dear parents, Ming-Kung and Lihua Liou,  
who are true educators and inspirational role models.  
Thanks be to God for His wisdom and faithful guidance.  
DL



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# Preface

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## WELCOME TO THE THIRD EDITION OF NUTRITION COUNSELING AND EDUCATION SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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The third edition of this book continues to provide a step-by-step approach guiding entry-level practitioners through the basic components of changing food behavior and improving nutritional status. Behavior change is a complex process, and there is an array of strategies to influence client knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In order to be effective change agents, nutrition professionals need a solid foundation of counseling and education principles, opportunities to practice new skills, and knowledge of evaluation methodologies. This book meets all of these needs in an organized, accessible, and engaging approach.

## INTENDED AUDIENCE

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This book was developed to meet the needs of health professionals who have little or no previous counseling or education experience, but do have a solid knowledge of the disciplines of food and nutrition. Although the book addresses the requirements of nutrition professionals seeking to become registered dietitians, the approach focuses on skill development useful to all professionals who need to develop nutrition counseling and education skills. The goal of the book is to enable entry level practitioners to learn and use fundamental skills universal to counseling and education as a springboard on which to build and modify individual styles.

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE THIRD EDITION OF NUTRITION COUNSELING AND EDUCATION SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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- *Practical examples:* Recognizing that nutrition education and counseling takes place in a variety of settings, concrete examples, case studies, and first-person accounts are presented representing a variety of wellness, private practice, and institutional settings.
- *Action based:* Exercises are integrated into the text to give students ample opportunity and encouragement to interact with the concepts covered in each chapter. Instructors can choose to assign the activities to be implemented individually at home or used as classroom activities. Students are encouraged to journal their responses to the exercises as a basis for classroom discussions, distance learning, or for documenting their own reflections. Instructors can assign journal entries and collect them for evaluation. Reading journal entries allows instructors to gain understanding of how students are grasping concepts. Each chapter has a culminating assignment and a case study that integrates all or most of the major topics covered throughout the chapter.
- *Evidence-based:* Science-based approaches, grounded in behavior change models and theories, found to be effective for educational and counseling interventions, are analyzed and integrated into skill development exercises.
- *Putting it all together—a four-week guided nutrition counseling program:* The text includes a step-by-step guide for students working with volunteer adult clients during four sessions. The



objective of this section is to demonstrate how the theoretical discussions, practice activities, and nutrition tools can be integrated for an effective intervention.

## NEW EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

All chapters of the new edition have been updated to incorporate the latest professional standards, government guidelines, and research findings. In particular, resources and references were updated throughout the entire book.

### ***Selected Chapter-by-Chapter Updates***

The sequential flow of the chapters follows the needs of students to develop knowledge and skills during each step of the counseling and education process.

#### *Chapter 1 Preparing to Meet Your Clients*

- Recent studies regarding factors affecting food behavior were integrated throughout the chapter.

#### *Chapter 2 Frameworks for Understanding and Attaining Behavior Change*

- Visual diagrams of the Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Social Cognitive Theory were added.

#### *Chapter 5 Developing a Nutrition Care Plan—Putting It All Together*

- The most recent Nutrition Care Process guidelines were incorporated into this chapter.

#### *Chapter 6 Promoting Change to Facilitate Self-Management*

- A review of the U.S. Department of Agriculture ChooseMyPlate.gov guidelines was added.
- Supporting self-management topics were added to this chapter.
- The Food Management Tool Assignment was updated to include MyPlate.

#### *Chapter 7 Making Behavior Change Last*

- An exercise was added: Practice Eliciting the Relaxation Response.

#### *Chapter 13 Professionalism and Final Issues.*

- Core Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Practice Standards including Code of Ethics, Scope of Practice, and Standards of Practice were updated.
- The review of social media sites was updated.

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# Preparing to Meet Your Clients



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*Not only is there an art in knowing something but also a certain art in teaching it.*

—CICERO

## Behavioral Objectives

- Define nutrition counseling and nutrition education.
- Identify and explain factors influencing food choices.
- Describe characteristics of an effective counselor.
- Identify factors affecting clients in a counseling relationship.
- Evaluate oneself for strengths and weaknesses in building a counseling relationship.
- Identify novice counselor issues.

## Key Terms

- **Cultural Groups:** nonexclusive groups that have a set of values in common; an individual may be part of several cultural groups at the same time.
- **Culture:** learned patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are shared by a group of people.
- **Cultural Values:** principles or standards of a cultural group.
- **Models:** generalized descriptions used to analyze or explain something.
- **Nutrition Counseling:** a supportive process guiding a client toward nutritional well-being.
- **Nutrition Education:** learning experiences aimed to promote voluntary adoption of health-promoting dietary behaviors.
- **Worldview:** perception of the world that is biased by culture and personal experience.

## INTRODUCTION

Nutrition counselors and educators provide guidance for helping individuals develop food practices consistent with the nutritional needs of their bodies. For clients, this may mean altering comfortable food patterns and long-standing beliefs and attitudes about food. Nutrition professionals work to increase knowledge, influence motivations, and guide development of skills required for dietary behavior change. This can be a challenging task. In order to be an effective change agent, nutrition counselors and educators need a solid understanding of the multitude of factors affecting food behaviors. We will begin this chapter by addressing these factors in order to enhance understanding of the forces influencing our clients. Then, we will explore the helping relationship and examine counselor and client concerns. Part of this examination will include cultural components. Nutrition professionals always need to be sensitive to the cultural context of their interventions from both their own cultural perspectives as well as their clients. Some of the activities in this chapter will provide opportunities for you to explore the cultural lenses that influence your view of the world.

## FOUNDATION OF NUTRITION COUNSELING AND EDUCATION

Nutrition education has been defined as the following: “Nutrition education is any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being.”<sup>1</sup> The needs of a target community are the focus of the nutrition education process. Nutrition counselors have similar goals, but interventions are guided by the needs of individual clients. In particular, nutrition counseling has been defined as the process of guiding a client toward a healthy nutritional lifestyle by meeting nutritional needs and solving problems that are barriers to change.<sup>2</sup> Haney and Leibsohn<sup>3</sup> designed a model of counseling to enable guidance to be effective, indicating that

*counseling can be defined as an interaction in which the counselor focuses on client experience, client feeling, client thought, and client behavior with intentional responses to acknowledge, to explore, or to challenge. (p. 5)*

### EXERCISE 1.1 DOVE Activity: Broadening Our Perspective (Awareness)

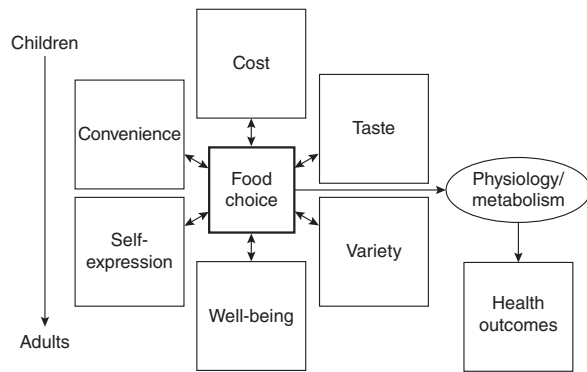
- D**—defer judgment
- O**—offbeat
- V**—vast
- E**—expand on other ideas

Divide into groups of three. Your instructor will select an object, such as a cup, and give you one minute to record all of the possible uses of the object. Draw a line under your list. Take about three minutes to share each other's ideas, and write the new ideas below the line. Discuss other possibilities for using the object with your group and record these in your journal. Use the DOVE technique to guide your thinking and behavior during this activity. Do not pass judgment on thoughts that cross your mind or on the suggestions of others. Allow your mind to think of a vast number of possibilities that may even be offbeat. How many more ideas occurred with sharing? Did you see possibilities from another perspective? One of the goals of counseling is to help clients see things using different lenses. What does this mean? How does this activity relate to a counseling experience? Write your thoughts in your journal and share them with your colleagues.

Source: Dairy, Food, and Nutrition Council, *Facilitating Food Choices: Leaders Manual* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: 1984).

## FUNDAMENTALS OF FOOD BEHAVIOR

The heart of nutrition education and counseling is providing support and guidance for individuals to make appropriate food choices for their needs. Therefore, understanding the myriad influences affecting food choices is fundamental to designing an intervention. Influencing factors are often intertwined and may compete with each other, leaving individuals feeling frustrated and overwhelmed when change is needed. Before we journey through methodologies for making change feel achievable, we will explore aspects of environmental, psychological, social, and physical factors affecting food choices, as depicted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1** The Consumer Food Choice Model

Source: Adapted from A. Drewnowski, Taste, Genetics, and Food Choice. In *Food Selection: From Genes to Culture*, H. Anderson, J. Blundell, and M. Chiva, Eds. (Levallois-Perret, France: Danone Institute), 30. Copyright 2002.

- Taste and Food Preference:** Taste is generally accepted as the most important determinant of food choices.<sup>4</sup> Biological taste preferences evolve from childhood based on availability and societal norms, but research shows that preferences can be altered by experiences and age.<sup>5</sup> Generally, young children favor sweeter and saltier tastes than adults, and relocating to a new environment will often change eating patterns and even favorite foods.<sup>6</sup> Without consumers realizing it, a number of food companies have been improving the nutritional quality of their foods by slowly changing recipes, such as lowering sodium or sugar content or increasing fiber. For example, Ragu Old World Style Pasta Sauces stealthily reduced sodium by 25 percent from 2004 to 2007 with no loss of market share.<sup>7</sup> The fact that taste preferences can be modified should be reassuring for those who want to make dietary changes. Illness may also modify food preference. Individuals going through chemotherapy may find some of their favorite foods do not taste the same, and they lose the desire to eat them.<sup>8</sup>
- Health Concerns:** Research has shown that health can be a driving force for food choice as illustrated by public campaigns to increase intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.<sup>9</sup> In a national survey, 56 percent of the participants indicated they give a lot of consideration to the

A young man in his early twenties commenting about his food habits stated, "My friends do not say 'let's eat a salad together.' If you are a guy, it is a woozy thing to do. It is kind of looked down upon if you are a guy—weak. Eat the steak, eat the greasy stuff, be a man."<sup>5</sup>

healthfulness of the types of foods and drinks they consume.<sup>10</sup> Consumers are more likely to respond to healthful food messages if the advice stresses the good taste of wholesome foods and convenient ways to include them in the diet.<sup>4</sup> Health status of an individual, such as having loss of teeth or digestive disorders, can also affect the amount of food consumed and food choice.<sup>8</sup>

- Nutrition Knowledge:** Traditionally, educators and nutrition counselors perceived their roles as disseminating information. After research indicated that many clients were not responsive to simple didactic approaches, their roles expanded to include a variety of behavior change strategies. However, the value of increasing knowledge should not be devalued. Those who have higher levels of knowledge are more likely to have better quality diets and to lose more weight in weight loss programs.<sup>11,12</sup>
- Convenience and Time:** For many individuals striving to make food choice changes, stressing convenient ways to prepare desired foods is imperative.<sup>4</sup> Our fast-food culture has created a demand for easy-to-prepare and tasty food.<sup>13</sup> In a research survey, about half of women surveyed expressed that they spend less than five minutes for breakfast and lunch preparation and less than twenty minutes for dinner preparation.<sup>14</sup> Take out, value-added (precut, prewashed), and ready-made foods have become a cultural standard.
- Culture and Religion:** Food is an integral part of societal rituals influencing group identity.<sup>15</sup> Ritual meals solidify group membership and reaffirm our relationships to others. For example, all-day eating at weekly family gatherings on Sundays or daily coffee breaks with sweet rolls are rituals that do much more than satisfy the appetite. If clients need to change participation in these rituals because of dietary restrictions, it is likely to create stress for clients, friends, and relatives. Culture also defines what is acceptable

\*Numerous first-person accounts from dietetic students or nutrition counselors working in the field are included throughout this book.



for consumption such as sweet red ants, scorpions, silk worms, or a glass of cow's milk. Culture also defines food patterns, and in the United States, snacking is common.<sup>16</sup> In addition, religions advocate food rituals and may also define food taboos such as restrictions against pork for Muslims, beef for Hindus, and shellfish for Orthodox Jews. Due to increasing diversity, minorities make up one-third of the people living in the United States. As a result, an array of ethnic foods are available in restaurants and grocery stores and have influenced the national palate.<sup>13</sup> For example, in the past, ketchup was considered a household staple; however, recent national sales of salsa now compete with ketchup and at times have surpassed ketchup sales.

- **Social Influences:** Food is often an integral part of social experiences. Sharing a meal with friends after a football game or going out for ice cream to celebrate an academic achievement helps make special experiences festive. However, foods associated with sociability are often not the most nutritious. Social eating frequently encourages increased consumption of less-nutritious foods and overconsumption.<sup>17,18</sup> Eating with friends and family increases energy intake by 18 percent.<sup>19</sup> However, even though regular family meals have been shown to be correlated with positive health outcomes for adolescents, an analysis of societal trends indicates that family meal frequency at home has remained the same from 1999 to 2010 and has declined for middle school students, Asians, and adolescents from families with low socioeconomic status.<sup>20</sup>
- **Media and Physical Environment:** North Americans are surrounded by media messages, and most of them are encouraging consumption of high-calorie foods that are nutritionally challenged. In 2004, food manufacturers spent 9 billion dollars on advertising to persuade consumers. Commercials can have powerful influences on the quantity and quality of food consumed.<sup>21</sup> Not only do we encounter food messages repeatedly throughout the day, but we also have access to a continuous supply of

A female college student stated: "The whole society does not emphasize eating healthy. When you are eating, you have to think hard about what are the healthy foods to eat."

unhealthy food and large portion sizes. Almost anywhere you go—drug stores, gas stations, hardware stores, schools, for example—there are opportunities to purchase unhealthy food. Even laboratory animals put in this type of environment are likely to overeat the calorie-dense food and gain excessive weight.<sup>22</sup>

- **Economics:** An individual's residence and socioeconomic status can influence a myriad of factors, including accessibility to transportation, cooking facilities, refrigeration, grocery store options, and availability of healthful food choices.<sup>23</sup> For those who are economically disadvantaged, meeting nutritional guidelines is a challenge.<sup>24</sup> Low-income households spend significantly less money on fruits and vegetables than high-income households, with 19 percent buying none in any given week.<sup>25</sup>
- **Availability and Variety:** Individuals with increased numbers of food encounters, portion size, and variety of available choices tend to increase food intake.<sup>26–28</sup> Variety of food intake is important in meeting nutritional needs, but when the assortment is excessive, such as making food selections from a buffet, overconsumption is probable.
- **Psychological:** Research has shown that individuals vary in their food response to stress. Some people increase consumption, whereas others claim they are feeling too stressed to eat. Certain foods have been associated with depression and mood alteration. Severely depressed individuals have been found to consume more chocolate (up to 55 percent) per month than others.<sup>29</sup>

An understanding of how all these factors influence our food behaviors is essential for nutrition

#### EXERCISE 1.2 Explore Influences of Food Behavior

Interview three people and ask them to recall the last meal they consumed. Inquire about the factors that influenced them to make their selections. Record your findings in your journal. Compare your findings to this section on influences of food choice.



educators and counselors. Since we are advocating lifestyle change of comfortable food patterns, we need to understand the discomfort that our clients are likely to feel as they anticipate and attempt the alterations. Our role is to acknowledge the challenge for our clients and to find and establish new patterns that provide a healthier lifestyle.

## UNDERSTANDING AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP

No matter what theory or behavior change model is providing the greatest influence, the relationship between counselor and client is the guiding force for change. The effect of this relationship is most often cited as the reason for success or failure of a counseling interaction.<sup>2</sup> Helm and Klawitter<sup>30</sup> report that successful clients identify their personal interaction with their therapist as the single most important part of treatment. To set the stage for understanding the basics of an effective counseling relationship, you will investigate the characteristics of effective nutrition counselors, explore your own personality and culture, examine the special needs and issues of a person seeking nutrition counseling, and review two phases of a helping relationship in the following sections.

### Characteristics of Effective Nutrition Counselors

“Ideal helpers” have been described as possessing the following qualities:

*They respect their clients and express that respect by being available to them, working with them, not judging them, trusting the constructive forces found in them, and ultimately placing the expectation on them to do whatever is necessary to handle their problems in living more effectively. They genuinely care for those who have come for help. They are non-defensive, spontaneous, and always willing to say what they think and feel, provided it is in the best interest of their clients. Good helpers are concrete in their expressions, dealing with actual feelings and actual behavior rather than vague formulations, obscure psychodynamics, or generalities.*<sup>31</sup> (p. 29)

After thoroughly reviewing the literature in counseling, Okun<sup>32</sup> identified seven qualities of counselors considered to be the most influential in

### EXERCISE 1.3 Helper Assessment

Think of a time someone helped you, such as a friend, family member, teacher, or counselor. In your journal, write down the behaviors or characteristics the person possessed that made the interaction so effective. After reading over the characteristics of effective counselors, compare their qualities to those identified by the leading authorities. Do they differ? Share your thoughts with your colleagues.

affecting the behaviors, attitudes, and feelings of clients: knowledge, self-awareness, ethical integrity, congruence, honesty, ability to communicate, and gender and culture awareness. The following list describes these characteristics as well as those thought to be effective by nutrition counseling authorities:

- **Effective nutrition counselors are self-aware.** They are aware of their own beliefs, respond from an internal set of values, and as a result have a clear sense of priorities. However, they are not afraid to reexamine their values and goals.<sup>33</sup> This awareness aids counselors with being honest with themselves as to why they want to be a counselor and helps them avoid using the helping relationship to fulfill their own needs.<sup>34</sup>
- **They have a solid foundation of knowledge.** Nutrition counselors need to be knowledgeable in a vast array of subjects in the biological and social sciences as well as have an ability to apply principles in the culinary arts. Because the science and art of nutrition is a dynamic field, the foundation of knowledge requires continuous updating. Clients particularly appreciate nutrition counselors who are experienced with the problems they face.
- **They have ethical integrity.** Effective counselors value the dignity and worth of all people. Such clinicians work toward eliminating ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that reflect racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, religious discrimination, and other negative ideologies.<sup>35</sup> Ethical integrity entails many facets that are addressed in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ Code of Ethics (a discussion of this topic can be found in Chapter 13).<sup>36</sup>

- **They have congruence.** This means the counselor is unified. There are no contradictions between who the counselor is and what the counselor says, and there is consistency in verbal and nonverbal behaviors as well. (For example, if a client shared about some unusual behavior, such as eating a whole cake covered with French dressing, the counselor's behavior would not be congruent if the nonverbal behavior indicated surprise but the verbal response did not.)
- **They can communicate clearly.** Clinicians must be able to communicate factual information and a sincere regard for their clients. Effective nutrition counselors are able to make sensitive comments and communicate an understanding about fears concerning food and weight.<sup>29</sup>
- **They have a sense of gender and cultural awareness.** This requires that counselors be aware of how their own gender and culture influence them. Effective counselors have a respect for a diversity of values that arise from their clients' cultural orientations.
- **They have a sense of humor.** Helping clients see the irony of their situation and laugh about their problems enriches counseling

#### EXERCISE 1.4 People Skills Inventory

- Do you expect the best from people? Do you assume that others will be conscientious, trustworthy, friendly, and easy to work with until they prove you wrong?
- Are you appreciative of other people's physical, mental, and emotional attributes—and do you point them out frequently?
- Are you approachable? Do you make an effort to be outgoing? Do you usually wear a pleasant expression on your face?
- Do you make the effort to remember people's names?
- Are you interested in other people—all kinds of people? Do you spend far less time talking about yourself than encouraging others to talk about themselves?
- Do you readily communicate to others your interest in their life stories?
- When someone is talking, do you give him or her 100 percent of your attention—without daydreaming, interrupting, or planning what you are going to say next?
- Are you accepting and nonjudgmental of others' choices, decisions, and behavior?
- Do you wholeheartedly rejoice in other people's good fortune as easily as you sympathize with their troubles?
- Do you refuse to become childish, temperamental, moody, inconsistent, hostile, condescending, or aggressive in your dealings with other people—even if they do?
- Are you humble? Not to be confused with false modesty, being humble is the opposite of being arrogant and egotistical.
- Do you make it a rule never to resort to put-downs, sexist or ethnic jokes, sexual innuendoes, or ridicule for the sake of a laugh?
- Are you dependable? If you make commitments, do you keep them—no matter what? If you are entrusted with a secret, do you keep it confidential—no matter what?
- Are you open-minded? Are you willing to listen to opposing points of view without becoming angry, impatient, or defensive?
- Are you able to hold onto the people and things in your life that cause you joy and let go of the people and things in your life that cause you sadness, anger, and resentment?
- Can you handle a reasonable amount of pressure and stress without losing control or falling apart?
- Are you reflective? Are you able to analyze your own feelings? If you make a mistake, are you willing to acknowledge and correct it without excuses or blaming others?
- Do you like and approve of yourself most of the time?

Affirmative answers indicate skills you possess that enhance your ability to relate to others.

Source: Adapted from Scott N, "Success Often Lies in Relating to Other People," *Dallas Morning News*, April 20, 1995, p. 14C.

relationships. In addition, humor helps prevent clients from taking themselves and their problems too seriously.<sup>33</sup>

- **They are honest and genuine.** Such counselors appear authentic and sincere. They act human and do not live by pretenses, hiding behind phony masks, defenses, and sterile roles.<sup>33</sup> Such counselors are honest and show spontaneity, congruence, openness, and willingness to disclose information about themselves when appropriate. Honest counselors are able to give effective feedback to their clients.
- **They are flexible.** This means not being a perfectionist. Such counselors do not have unrealistic expectations and are willing to work at a pace their clients can handle.
- **They are optimistic and hopeful.** Clients want to believe that lifestyle changes are possible, and they appreciate reassurance that solutions will be found.
- **They respect, value, care, and trust others.** This enables counselors to show warmth and caring authentically through nonjudgmental verbal and nonverbal behavior, listening attentively, and behaving responsibly, such as returning phone calls and showing up on time. This behavior conveys the message that clients are valued and respected.
- **They can accurately understand what people feel from their frame of reference (empathy).** It is important for counselors to be aware of their own struggles and pain to have a frame of reference for identifying with others.<sup>33</sup>

*It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Understanding Yourself—Personality and Culture

According to Brammer,<sup>34</sup> our personalities are one of the principal tools of the helping process. By taking an inventory of your personality characteristics, you can have a better understanding of the ones you wish to modify.

### EXERCISE 1.5 How Do You Rate?

Ask a close friend or family member who you supported at one time to describe what it was about your behavior that was helpful. Write these reactions down in your journal. Review the desirable characteristics for an effective counselor described in the previous section. Complete the personality inventory in Exercise 1.4, and then identify what characteristics you possess that will make you a good helper. What behaviors need improvement?

Write in your journal specific ways that you need to change to improve your helping skills.

Intertwined with a personality evaluation is a self-examination of why you want to be a counselor. What you expect out of a counseling relationship, the way you view yourself, and the personal attitudes and values you possess can affect the direction of the counseling process. You should be aware that as a helper, your self-image is strengthened from the awareness that “I must be OK if I can help others in need.” Also, because you are put into the perceptual world of others, you remove yourself from your own issues, diminishing concern for your own problems.<sup>34</sup>

Sometimes counselors seek to fulfill their own needs through the counseling relationship. Practitioners who have a need to express power and influence over others tend to be dictatorial and are less likely to be open to listening to their clients. This type of counselor expects clients to obey suggestions without questions. A counselor who is particularly needy for approval and acceptance will fear rejection. Belkin<sup>36</sup> warns that sometimes counselors try too hard to communicate the message “I want you to like me,” rather than a more effective “I am here to help you.” As a result, such counselors may be anxious to please their clients by trying to do everything for them, perhaps even doing favors. The tendency will be to gloss over and hide difficult issues because the focus is on eliciting only positive feelings from their clients. Consequently, clients will not learn new management skills, and dietary changes will not take place.

Another important component to understanding yourself so as to become a culturally

**EXERCISE 1.6 Why Do You Want to Be a Helper?**

Describe in your journal what it means to be a helper and why you want to be a helper. How does it feel when you help someone? Is it possible that you have issues related to dominance or neediness that could overshadow interactions with your clients?

competent nutrition counselor and educator is to know what constitutes your worldview (cultural outlook). Each culture has a unique outlook on life, what people believe and value within their group. Our worldview provides basic assumptions about the nature of reality and has both conscious and unconscious influences. An understanding of this concept becomes clearer when we explore assumptions regarding supernatural forces, individual and nature, science and technology, and materialism. (See Table 1.1.) Kittler and Sucher<sup>37</sup> relate this unique outlook to its special meaning in the health community:

*... expectations about personal and public conduct, assumptions regarding social interaction, and assessments of individual behavior are determined by this cultural outlook, or worldview. This perspective influences perceptions about health and illness as well as the role of each within the structure of society. (p. 37)*

My aunt died of high blood pressure. Her religious belief was that her illness was God's will and should not be interfered with by taking medicine or changing her diet.

Your worldview is determined by your culture and life experiences. Culture is shared history, consisting of “the thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious or societal groups.”<sup>38</sup> Possible societal groups include gender, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, health, occupation, and socioeconomic status. Any individual will belong to several societal groups and acquire cultural characteristics and beliefs from each based on education and experiences within those groups. Because the experiences are unique, no two people acquire exactly the same cultural attributes. In addition, we are likely to migrate to and away from various cultures throughout our lives. For example, we may change jobs, religions, residence, or health status, and as a result, cultural attributes will also alter. However, there are attributes that prevail and will affect the way we perceive ourselves and others.

We share a commonality with those who are most like us. For example, many North Americans appreciate a friendly, open health care professional. People from other cultures, however, may feel uncomfortable interacting with a professional on such terms and may even view this behavior as a sign of incompetence. Your food habits can also be an important component of your culture. For example, Hindus find eating beef to be

**Table 1.1** Worldview Assumptions

Category	Assumption
Supernatural Assumptions	Supernatural assumptions include beliefs regarding God, malevolent spirits, ancestors, fate, or luck being the cause of illness. The concept of soul loss causing depression or listlessness is prevalent in many societies. In order to alleviate supernatural problems, societies have devised ceremonies or rituals.
Individual and Nature	Not all societies make a clear distinction between human life and nature as in the United States. Some societies believe that we are subjugated by nature and need to show respect for natural forces and attempt to live in harmony with nature. The dominant culture in the United States sees human beings as having higher value than nature with a need to exploit or protect it.
Technology	The citizens of the United States put great faith in technology and the scientific method. Diseases are viewed as correctable mechanistic errors that can be fixed by manipulation. Americans tend to think science can help humanity—a view not as highly held in Europe. <sup>39</sup>
Materialism	Many people around the world believe that materialism dominates the worldview of Americans, that is, the need to acquire the latest and best possessions. This may have contributed to the popularity of “supersize food portions.”

Source: Jandt F. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*, 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.; 2009.

abhorrent—much the way many Westerners feel about Asians consuming dog meat.

Understanding the role of cultural values in your life as well as in lives of clients from cultures other than your own provides a foundation for developing cultural sensitivity. Our cultural values are the “principles or standards that members of a cultural group share in common.”<sup>40</sup> For example, in the United States, great value is placed on money, freedom, individualism, independence, privacy, biomedical medicine, and physical appearance. Cultural values are the grounding forces that provide meaning, structure, and organization in our lives. (See Table 1.2.) Individuals may hold onto to their values despite numerous obstacles or severe consequences. For example, Jung Chang describes in her family portrait, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, how her father actively supported Mao’s Communist takeover of China and rose to be a prominent

**Table 1.2** Functions of Cultural Values

- Provide a set of rules by which to govern lives.
- Serve as a basis for attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
- Guide actions and decisions.
- Give direction to lives and help solve common problems.
- Influence how to perceive and react to others.
- Help determine basic attitudes regarding personal, social, and philosophical issues.
- Reflect a person’s identity and provide a basis for self-evaluation.

Source: Adapted from Joan Luckmann, *Transcultural Communication in Nursing*. Belmont, CA: Delmar Cengage Learning, 1999.

official in the party. His devotion to the party never wavered, even during the Cultural Revolution when he was denounced, publicly humiliated with a dunce hat, and sent to a rehabilitation camp.<sup>41</sup>

**EXERCISE 1.7 What Is Your Worldview?**

Indicate on the continuum the degree to which you share the following white North American cultural values; 1 indicates not at all, and 5 represents very much.

<b>Not at All</b>					<b>Very Much</b>	
1	2	3	4	5		Personal responsibility and self-help for preventing illness.
1	2	3	4	5		Promptness, schedules, and rapid response-time dominates.
1	2	3	4	5		Future-oriented—willing to make sacrifices to obtain future goals.
1	2	3	4	5		Task-oriented—desire direct participation in your own health care.
1	2	3	4	5		Direct, honest, open dialogue is essential to effective communication.
1	2	3	4	5		Informal communication is a sign of friendliness.
1	2	3	4	5		Technology is of foremost importance in conquering illness.
1	2	3	4	5		Body and soul are separate entities.
1	2	3	4	5		Client confidentiality is of utmost importance; health care is for individuals, not families.
1	2	3	4	5		All patients deserve equal access to health care.
1	2	3	4	5		Desire to be youthful, thin, and fit.
1	2	3	4	5		Competition and independence.
1	2	3	4	5		Materialism.

Can you think of a time when your values and beliefs were in conflict with a person you were trying to associate with? What were the circumstances and results of that conflict? Write your response in your journal, and share your stories with your colleagues.

Source: Adapted from Kittler P and Sucher K, *Food and Culture in America*, 2d ed. (Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth; 1998); and Keenan, Debra P. In the face of diversity: Modifying nutrition education delivery to meet the needs of an increasingly multicultural consumer base, *J Nutr Ed.* 1996;28:86–91.