

**Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Counseling: A Culminating Integration of
Considerations**

Taryn Butcher

School Counseling, Liberty University Online

COSC 611: Counseling Children and Adolescents in Schools: Social Emotional Development
and Exceptionalities

Dr. Natasha Moon

October 8, 2023

Developmental Considerations in Counseling

As a counselor, it is important to think about how Larissa is in the developmental stage of desiring peer relationships more than maintaining relationships with her family members. She is getting to the age where she desires to spend time with them more than her family and she may even feel embarrassed being around her family as she is finding her place in the social context around her, and discovering what she wants her personal identity to be. This friction of her family feeling as though she is pulling away from them is a **very normal stage of development for children aged twelve to eighteen**. Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development, Identity Vs. Confusion, supports this behavior we are seeing from Larissa (Cherry, 2022). However, some important cultural factors to consider are that of her Mexican heritage. In the Mexican culture it is quite common for families to be very close and rely on each other for various things. This may be why Larissa is feeling conflicted and conflict is increasing. I would incorporate these two factors into my counseling approach with Larissa by coming from the perspective that it is normal and okay for her to feel as though she wants to grow apart from her immediate family. I would explain that this is a natural part of life and how we as humans develop our own sense of self in the world. I would also explain the perspective of how her family might be feeling surrounding this shift and encourage some conflict resolution within the family unit. I would encourage Larissa to be honest with her family members about how she is feeling and the insecurities she may be having.

When it comes to each stage of development, there are three major changes that happen for each one. For early childhood, this is the time when the child is growing the most physically, cognitively, and socially. This is the time when the brain is exposed to so many things and it develops rapidly to understand and adapt to the environment around it. Children in the early

childhood stage are creating vital neural pathways for lifelong learning and they are acquiring crucial functions. They are developing the understanding of cause and effect, they are understanding things around them spatially, they are understanding and recognizing both facial body language as well as verbal language. This is the time when children are exploding with knowledge acquisition and exploring their environment every day. During middle childhood, the three major changes are their need for developing outside of the family unit, getting a better understanding of their place in the world around them, and they are beginning to think about their future lives. This is a developmental period that is largely focused on the social aspect. In early adolescence, the major changes are related to physical development. This is the time when individuals develop sexually. Individuals in early adolescence are desiring to explore the world around them in a physical way and they desire to have intimate attachments to others. And in mid-adolescence they will continue to explore themselves and others physically, emotionally, and socially. There are four major areas of development: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive (Vernon & Schimmel, 2018). Each one of these areas play a part in every stage of a human's lifespan development.

When it comes to student learning and development, resiliency is a vital aspect of positive development. Individuals develop core competencies in their social/emotional learning, and these are directly impacted by a presence of resiliency traits. For example, if a child displays an understanding of knowing that circumstances are subject to change and that difficult things will pass, this is a predictor of a highly developed social/emotional competency. Having an acute sense of awareness when it comes to both themselves, and others is also a positive resiliency trait. When children can understand their sense of self amongst others, studies show this points to a higher level of self-esteem (Du et al., 2017). Problem solving skills also serve as positive

resiliency traits in individuals. Overall, as children develop, they need resiliency traits to protect them during their social/emotional development. Resiliency traits have been found to serve as great protective factors against mental illness (Stainton et al., 2018).

Individual Counseling Process

The stages of the individual counseling process include establishing a rapport, resistance and reluctance, assessment, and developing interventions. First, establishing rapport. Without a sense of trust in the relationship between the counselor and the individual being counseled, there will be no progress made. For the individual to share their personal feelings, struggles, and needs they must feel as though they are in a safe and positive environment and that begins with establishing a healthy rapport. So, when approaching the relationship with Nancy as the counselor I would begin by asking her about her hobbies and things she enjoys. Starting off the conversation with topics that are not too personal and that will not ask the individual to share too much emotion are a good starting point. I would ask Nancy about her peer relationships and the details of her friendships to get a better sense of how she likes to function in those kinds of relationships. I would discuss with her how she feels about her family dynamics and dig into a greater sense of herself, the way she views the world around her, and the values she has already began developing. This will create a safe space where she will feel as though she can share her thoughts and true feelings without judgement or worry. At first, there will be some natural resistance/reluctance to share with me the deeper issues that may be at play when she is interacting with her adoptive siblings. There may be some emotional traumas that are keeping her from establishing strong relationships with those around her. This will present itself in her reluctance to share her thoughts and feelings. As the counselor, it is important to balance her feeling safe to share while also encouraging her to share as this is a non-judgmental space. After

she begins sharing, assessing her immediate emotional needs is critical in maintaining rapport and trust. Making sure that Nancy is safe both physically and mentally is of the utmost importance. Advocating for Nancy's overall well-being will be something that is established from the start of the relationship, and it must be followed through with protecting throughout the counseling relationship. Lastly, I will work to develop specific interventions that will work to assist Nancy in the areas she may be struggling socially or emotionally. If she is having a hard time connecting with her siblings because she has a difficult time trusting those around her due to past traumas, a good intervention may be to do some restorative practices to establish trust. Some community opportunities or resources that would enhance her transition experience would be to join a support group for adopted teens. I think getting Nancy into a mentorship program where she can learn positive relationships would be greatly beneficial to her. In a study done on adopted teens that join support groups, the data shows that involvement directly increased mental health and overall well-being (Shalaby & Agyapong, 2020).

Counseling individuals requires an understanding of all developmental aspects that impact them. To counsel an individual through their life and the facets of it that alter who they are overtime is a great privilege. Meeting the needs of individuals is of the utmost importance. When counseling individuals we must consider the person holistically and give nurturing attention to their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Because everyone is different from the next, being flexible in their approach to helping them on their journey of self-discovery is crucial. There is a balance that must go into aiding others in their development, equaling out the level of pushing for growth as well as honoring the areas of a person that need a more nurturing approach. Some considerations that I would take when explaining what counseling is to an individual of another culture than me, would be to first understand what they believe to be

important for social and emotional development. Each culture is vastly different in their beliefs and norms of human development. Taking into consideration the culture's language, practices, and social values is important when thinking about how counseling (ASCA, 2016). It is important to explain counseling to my students so that they understand my role and motivation as a role model in their life. My role is to provide a safe and positive experience for them, to encourage them in their individual thoughts and feelings, as well as provide them with the supports they need to thrive.

When it comes to the termination of the counseling relationship, there can be some barriers with both children and adolescents. There are issues when it comes to ending the counseling relationship and this is a natural part of the counseling process. An example of a termination issue is that client feeling as though they are being abandoned or given up on. To lessen these feelings and help individuals cope with this big transition there are six strategies that counselors can employ. The first strategy is to begin the counseling relationship by explaining that there will be an end to it, eventually. This prepares the individual prior to beginning the counseling relationship and points to a sense of knowing what to expect, rather than allowing an individual to feel blindsided. The second strategy is to reach an agreement of targeted goals or desired outcomes during the counseling process. This allows for individuals to feel as though they have a sense of control during their progress. The third strategy is to express that there may come a time that outside interventions be necessary, depending on the needs that present throughout the process. This shows the individual that they have supports outside of this specific counseling relationship that can serve as a good transition in assisting them with their mental health. The fourth strategy is to be mindful of the client and any potential interruptions that can end the counseling relationship. This is important for counselors to have a sense of self-

awareness when it comes to knowing when it is appropriate to end the counseling relationship. The fifth strategy is to explain clearly what abandonment is and what it is not, so that individuals understand the difference when the counseling relationship is terminated. This helps individuals to interpret their feelings as they come and cope with the loss of the counseling relationship in a healthy way. The sixth strategy is to have ongoing discussions surrounding the termination of the relationship so that it is addressed appropriately and in a preparative way. This helps to prevent anxiety that can come with this transition for both the counselor and the client (Vernon & Schimmel (2018). Referring a client to outside services may be needed depending on the individuals' emotional state/needs. Attached is a copy of what an informed consent form would look like at an elementary school where children and adolescents receive counseling.

<https://www.ccsdut.org/cms/lib/UT02205719/Centricity/Domain/873/School%20Counseling%20Consent%20Form.pdf> (Cache County School District, 2018). It is crucial to include what the child and/or parent can expect from the counseling relationship and process, as well as informing the child and/or parent of the ramifications surrounding confidentiality. Confidentiality is something that must be maintained always, unless an individual is being harmed, wanting to harm others, or wanting to harm themselves. Ensuring that all parties involved understand the legal requirements surrounding the counseling relationship is also paramount to a healthy experience for both the counselor and the client. Respecting the client's boundaries and maintaining a sense of decorum is imperative. Disclosing all these aspects is mandatory.

Ethical Considerations and Theoretical Approaches

Some theoretical approaches I will primarily use when counseling students are solution-focused brief counseling, and rational-emotive behavioral therapy. These will be the two primary focuses because of the needs that usually surround children in the elementary age group, which

will be my age group of focus. Elementary aged children usually need specific counseling that focusses on how they can handle an emotional stress or trauma in their life. Often times, elementary aged children need counseling in how to make positive choices based on the emotions they experience. Solution-focused brief counseling works to help students achieve a specific emotional goal, such as building more positive peer relationships. Rational-emotive behavioral therapy works to help students make rational choices because of the emotions they feel. A technique I will use associated with solution-focused brief counseling is to work with the student on creating specific goals that can be achieved with problem solving skills we collaborate on together. A technique I will use associated with rational-emotive behavioral therapy is to work with the student on going through the emotional reaction process and dissecting how and why the choices that they made were made. I will collaborate with the student on what healthier choices can look like in the future and how we can be preventative in our emotional regulations. These two theoretical approaches take culture into consideration because they can be adaptable to any cultural context. Depending on the culture, solution-focused brief counseling can work with the cultural norms/values to come up with appropriate solutions to problematic emotional or behavioral choices. Rational-emotive behavioral therapy is mailable to a cultural context because that cultural context will help define what is considered rational and appropriate emotional behavior. I would approach issues of worldview and faith in secular settings by remaining objective. I cannot allow my own personal worldview and beliefs to influence those that I am working with because that would be unethical. Maintaining an acute awareness of personal biases and motivations behind statements is important to ensure impartiality. However, if a child expressed an interest in discussing spirituality and exploring that topic with me it would then be appropriate to dive into those things. Studies show that when a counselor is open to discussions

on spirituality with clients, the client feels a sense of overall well-being a deeper satisfaction in the counseling relationship (Matisse et al., 2017).

Some legal and ethical concerns when working with a minor student that is referred by their teacher are the considerations of when to break confidentiality. Legally and ethically, the child's confidentiality must be maintained unless there is concern of harm to self, others, or instances of any kind of abuse or neglect. When a teacher asks for an update on this student, it is important to be honest with the teacher about the child's progress while still maintaining confidentiality and not disclosing intimate details, unless the child has given you permission to do so. Confidentiality would need to be breached if there is a concern for the child's safety. The obligation I have to my young student regarding privacy, are to explain the extent of confidentiality and to make sure that the child understands when things must be shared. If the child shares anything of concern, the parent of the child may need to be contacted depending on the level of risk to the child. If a phone call to child protective services is necessary, then I would disclose that to the child so that they understand there are people that are going to be helping them. If there are any concerns that I would need to get the parents involvement with, like suicidal thoughts for example, then I would inform the child of this information being shared and involve the parents to best protect and support the student. A referral to outside resources is warranted when the child is in danger or hurting themselves or others. Outside resources are necessary when handling instances of abuse so that the child can be protected immediately. According to the Ethical Standards for School Counselors, in section A.1.f it states that as counselors we must keep all information confidential unless legal requirements demand otherwise. It also explains that if there is a serious threat of harm to self or others, that counselors are responsible for reaching out to child protective resources to ensure that child's safety.

Some creative approaches I will use with children in my school would be to incorporate play and expressive arts into the counseling experience. I think that depending on the child's age, certain creative approaches are more appropriate than others. For the kindergarten to second grade age level, I think that creative play is appropriate for their development. Providing a space for safe play has been shown to have positive effects on mental health (Yogman et al., 2018).

Multicultural Counseling and Transition Programming

I plan to develop my awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding counseling diverse youth by obtaining as much information possible. Being a culturally competent and responsive counselor is of the utmost importance. Developing a sense of cultural respect and honoring diversity is a large part of crafting a comprehensive school counseling program. Working with individuals that come from various backgrounds and exposing myself to all sorts of problem-solving techniques is necessary to become a well-rounded and equitable school counselor. Two multicultural competencies in relation to student learning and development that I will work to grow within myself are my own self-awareness as well as understanding the client's worldview. When approaching any child, it is important that they know you value them and their personal view of the world around them. Respecting that child's individuality looks like appreciating their differences from your own worldview and being aware of your own biases that can interfere with the counseling process. Being self-reflective is a cultural competency that must be developed to best serve those around you. The goal is not to change or bend others' views to your own, but to honor, appreciate, respect, and celebrate those differences.

Culturally appropriate counseling interventions are imperative in creating a safe and constructive counseling environment/experience (Day-Vines et al., 2018). When working with children and adolescents from diverse cultures you must first, learn about and respect their

cultural differences from you. You must work to understand their cultural values and views. And you must work within what is considered appropriate for whatever culture they belong to, in terms of interventions. When working with children and adolescents that are diverse it is important to consider all factors that make up that individuals' worldview and therefore how they deal with emotional issues, **how they choose to problem solve, and how they view themselves.**

Transition programming is a critical part in a comprehensive school counseling program. Some scenarios where transition programming can be beneficial for students are in situations of needing peer support, when moving on to a higher level of academic challenge, as well as helping in social transitions. When an individual experiences a transition period in their life, they are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety and isolation. Counselors must come alongside these individuals and support them throughout this process to lessen those anxious feelings and to prevent them from falling into unhealthy patterns of coping (Arango et al., 2018). Transitions are an inevitable part of human development, **preparing students for this is an important role that counselors play in their lives.** As school counselors we must follow through with preventative strategies to ensure children's well-being during these emotionally fragile times.

Counseling At-Risk Children/Adolescents

The 4-step framework for working with at-risk children and adolescents begins with assessment. Assessment of the child's risk factors and extenuating circumstances that may be contributing to their mental health and overall well-being is necessary to know. The next step is prevention. Preventing further traumas to the child by ensuring safety is a crucial step in working with at-risk children and adolescents. The next step is intervention. Intervening in children and adolescents' situations where they are in desperate need of support is imperative to establish a safe and progressive relationship. The last step is social advocacy. Advocating for individuals'

rights and equitable opportunity, regardless of circumstance, is one of the main values that a school counselor must uphold. There are two interventions that I would utilize when working with children or adolescents that have the following risk factors: substance abuse/addiction, and depressive or anxiety disorders. These interventions are cognitive behavioral therapy and multicomponent psychosocial therapy. In these kinds of scenarios, outside resources need to be contacted. When a child is struggling with substance abuse issues as well as depressive or anxious disorders, getting the necessary interventions involved is of the utmost importance. Planning for interventions that specifically work to help individuals with substance abuse problems as well as therapy for mental health conditions is necessary to ensure child safety.

Planning for a crisis and managing that crisis is well within the school counselor's responsibilities. The purpose of crisis management planning is to always ensure child safety. The importance of crisis management planning is to protect children and adolescents and to ensure the preservation of their life and privacy. Information found in a crisis management plan includes protocols that must be followed, services that can be contacted for help, as well as a specified plan to ensure physical safety of the individual at-risk. A crisis management team works to protect all threats to children and adolescents' safety, either mentally or physically. Individuals that typically comprise a crisis management team are school personnel that work directly with the student like the school counselor, teacher, and administrator. Other members can be outside crisis resources or even law enforcement agencies. The school counselor's role in the crisis management team is to advocate for the child or adolescents' well-being and safety. Some counseling methods or techniques that can be helpful for students who experience traumatic events would be rational-emotive behavioral therapy, thought exercises, and even outside therapy from a licensed mental health therapist. The three tiers of crisis postintervention are

universal crisis interventions, selected crisis interventions, and indicated crisis interventions. The first tier of crisis postintervention are universal crisis interventions. These are multitiered systems of support provided by the school, community, and families. These interventions consist of awareness and advocacy to protect individuals from experiencing further traumas. The second tier of crisis postintervention are selected crisis interventions. These are individualized interventions that work to alleviate specific mental and emotional needs. The third crisis postintervention are indicated crisis interventions. This includes contributions from a therapist.

Two evidence-based suicide prevention programs that professional school counselors can utilize in their work with students include peer support groups and cognitive behavioral practices. Prevention programs that work to reduce suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviors include both school-based practices as well as individualized skill building. There must be a set expectation for protecting mental health of student's school-wide, to work as a preventative system in place. When this system is not successful at preventing mental health crisis then we must implement further emotional supports. As a school counselor our duty is to protect students, advocate for students, and partner with necessary community entities to provide equitable supports. Suicide prevention is critical when working with any aged student as suicide is the leading cause of death in children and adolescents. Having a school-based framework for evidence-based practices that work to ensure child safety and studies show it reduces suicide risk (Singer et al., 2018). Considerations for all child and adolescent counseling approaches is of the utmost importance in crafting a comprehensive and culturally competent school counseling program. When evaluated, I believe that all these aspects directly impact those around us.

References

Kendra Cherry, (2022, August 3). *Understanding Erikson's stages of psychosocial development.*

Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/erik-eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development-2795740>

Vernon & Schimmel (2018). *Counseling Children and Adolescents* (5th ed.). Cognella,

Inc.. <https://mbsdirect.vitalsource.com/books/82282-1A>

Du, H., King, R. B., & Chi, P. (2017). Self-esteem and subjective well-being revisited: The roles of personal, relational, and collective self-esteem. *PloS one*, 12(8), e0183958.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0183958>

Stainton, A., Chisholm, K., Kaiser, N., Rosen, M., Upthegrove, R., Ruhrmann, S., & Wood, S. J.

(2018). Resilience as a multimodal dynamic process. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, 13(4), 725–732. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12726>

Shalaby, R. A., & Agyapong, V. I. (2020). Peer support in Mental Health: Literature

Review. *JMIR Mental Health*, 7(6). <https://doi.org/10.2196/15572>

Counseling consent form - cache county school district. (2018).

<https://www.ccsdut.org/cms/lib/UT02205719/Centricity/Domain/873/School%20Counseling%20Consent%20Form.pdf>

Matise, M., Ratcliff, J., & Mosci, F. (2017). A working model for the integration of spirituality in counseling. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 20(1), 27–50.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2017.1326091>

- Yogman, M., Garner, A., Hutchinson, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Baum, R., Gambon, T., Lavin, A., Mattson, G., Wissow, L., Hill, D. L., Ameenuddin, N., Chassiakos, Y. (Linda), Cross, C., Boyd, R., Mendelson, R., Moreno, M. A., Radesky, J., Swanson, W. S., ... Smith, J. (2018). The power of play: A pediatric role in enhancing development in young children. *Pediatrics*, 142(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2058>
- Day-Vines, N. L., Booker Ammah, B., Steen, S., & Arnold, K. M. (2018). Getting comfortable with discomfort: Preparing counselor trainees to broach racial, ethnic, and cultural factors with clients during counseling. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 40(2), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-017-9308-9>
- Arango, C., Díaz-Caneja, C. M., McGorry, P. D., Rapoport, J., Sommer, I. E., Vorstman, J. A., McDaid, D., Marín, O., Serrano-Drozdowskyj, E., Freedman, R., & Carpenter, W. (2018). Preventive Strategies for Mental Health. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 5(7), 591–604. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(18\)30057-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(18)30057-9)
- Singer, J. B., Erbacher, T. A., & Rosen, P. (2018). School-based suicide prevention: A framework for evidence-based practice. *School Mental Health*, 11(1), 54–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-018-9245-8>