

Ask Dr. Robertson 1— Counselling and Therapy

What are these two fields? How do these terms differ from one another?

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Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about the psychotherapy, and standard terms and definitions.

I started the conversation with an obvious acknowledgment of a large number of postsecondary qualifications acquired by Dr. Robertson. But this quickly shifted into the central content to begin to the educational series., which is setting the definitional tone and tenor with psychotherapy and counseling. What are they? How are they defined in a modern sense?

Robertson stated, “Psychotherapy is concerned with the process of change at the level of the individual. If the discomfort a client feels is due to external events, that individual must still choose to respond to those events in some way. An element of free will is thus built into the core practice of the discipline. There is much evidence to indicate that we are not born with free will and that it is never entirely unencumbered.”

He – Robertson – argued for the teaching of clients how to self-actualize based on a specified mental model. A model in which there is an explanation with defined premises as to which it is to be a human being.

This would incorporate a social and volitional self with objective beliefs having a form of internal self-consistency. Robertson makes the case that this is an idealized notion of self: with “uniqueness, constancy, and volitionality as a product of changes in culture. In this, the modern sense of self is cross-cultural, which links to the work in psychotherapy and counseling.

“The terms ‘counseling’ and ‘psychotherapy’ are often used interchangeably; however the former can be applied to anyone who gives advice or ‘counsel.’ ‘Psychotherapy’ is a narrower term that refers to applied psychology,” Robertson explained, “although it has also been appropriated by social workers and others who do not necessarily receive training specific to psychology. This term, at least within the field of psychology, does not generally refer to advice-giving but to self-change, that is, change to the self of the individual.”

Robertson views the Adlerians, or the school of thought emerging from Alfred Adler, as having the cleanest or clearest definition between the work of psychotherapy and counseling. Neither involves the giving of advice.

“Therapy is what is done when a change to the structure of the self is required. Counseling assumes an intact self but that circumstances, such environmental or societal constraints, require the development of problem-solving and perception checking skills. In both modes of intervention, counseling and psychotherapy, Adlerians would refrain from giving advice but would invite the client to select a plan from a variety of co-constructed possibilities,” Robertson described.

He also went into the definition of “theory.” Robertson described how psychology “misappropriated” the word from the harder sciences and then used them in the softer sciences. This transitioned into the work of Thomas Kuhn, who wrote a famous text entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The labels of the wide smattering of psychotherapy schools as simply different theories may be a misreading of Thomas Kuhn and, in fact, “retarded psychology’s evolution into a true science,” Robertson explained.

Robertson concluded, “As Korhonen brilliantly argued in her dissertation research, these schools, along with the counseling of Inuit elders, and the practice of multicultural psychotherapy share the same basic assumptions as to the structure of the self, and these assumptions include the

importance of individual choice, the understanding of client difference, and the importance of context. These assumptions constitute a unified theory of what it means to be human.”