The Basic Theory of Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process for freeing humans and society as a whole from rigid patterns of thinking and acting so that we may reclaim fully-intelligent functioning. Re-evaluation Counseling is practiced in pairs, by people listening to each other and assisting each other to release painful emotions. Because no money is exchanged between people who counsel one another in these pairs, Re-evaluation Counseling can be used by any individual, regardless of his or her economic circumstances.

Re-evaluation Counseling (also known as RC or Co-Counseling) views all human beings as inherently intelligent, cooperative, and good. We assume it is natural for a human to have good relations with all other humans, to think well, to act wisely and successfully, and to enjoy life.

In this view, every human being acts and cooperates well except where patterns of emotional distress interfere. When these "distress patterns" get in the way, irrational behavior, negative feelings, and failure to cooperate or communicate replace our inherent human behavior. "Distress patterns" are left over from physical or emotional hurts, many of them dating back to childhood. We re-enact these early distresses and hurts when something in our current life reminds us of the earlier times of distress. Re-evaluation Counseling is a way to recover from these past hurtful experiences.

The effects of past distressing experiences could have been thrown off quickly and permanently, at the time we were hurt, through a natural process of releasing emotional tension (for example, by crying, laughing, and trembling). We call this profound process of "getting our feelings out" the discharge process. Emotional discharge is our natural way of recovering from hurts. Tears are the outward sign of getting over grief. Tears indicate freeing one's self from grief. Crying never occurs unless a person needs to do it. In the same way, trembling and cold perspiration indicate the release of terror. Laughter accompanies becoming unafraid, un-irritated, or unembarrassed. Shouting and angry movement (without hurting anyone) can accompany becoming un-furious.



TRAVIS QUEZON

There is a fundamental mistake in our ordinary thinking about these emotional discharges. In our culture, tears are usually taken to mean grief. Trembling is taken to mean terror. Angry shouting is taken to mean anger. Therefore, it is thought that to shut off these discharges is to free a person from the emotion. "If you can stop them from crying, they won't feel bad . . . ." This is fundamentally backward. The discharge indicates that the natural healing process is in operation. After emotional discharge, a person's mind is able to think more clearly and re-evaluate what happened in the distressing incident.

Instead, some of the social conditioning against emotional discharge carried by our cultures and rigidly inflicted upon us when we were children ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," and so on) has interfered with, and prevented, recovery from our hurts, leading to an increasing accumulation of distresses and tensions. By the time we are adults, this has severely limited our original abilities to achieve good relationships with others, to succeed, and to enjoy life. It also interferes with our collective progress towards a society that supports all humans to thrive in cooperative, respectful relationships.

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In Re-evaluation Counseling we regain the natural ability to heal from hurt. The prime requirement for this is a listener and counselor who is sincerely interested, who will remain relaxed in the face of our tensions, and who understands how the process of emotional discharge operates.

Many of our accumulated distresses result from societally-imposed hurts that we call oppression (racism and sexism are examples). Every adult in every present society has been conditioned, through the imposition of distress patterns, into functioning in both oppressed and oppressor roles. (For example, the same person can both be oppressed by racism and be in the oppressor role with regard to sexism.)

Oppression is neither inevitable nor inherent in human beings. It arises and operates only on the basis of distress patterns. No human being would agree to submit to oppression unless a distress pattern had been previously installed while the human being was hurting. No human being would ever agree to, or participate in, oppressing another human being unless a distress pattern had been previously installed. Once these patterns are in place, we are susceptible to acting irrationally and oppressively toward others, including people in our own group, and even toward ourselves. (For example, when racism has hurt people to the point where they unknowingly internalize it, they may demean and mistreat themselves and their own people.) Individuals can be freed from the damage caused by oppression through the processes of emotional discharge.



LILIAN ONO

Re-evaluation Counseling is currently practiced in ninety-two countries. More information about Re-evaluation Counseling may be found on its web site at *www.rc.org*.

HOW TO START "RE-EVALUATION COUNSELING"

In its basic form, the practice of Co-Counseling simply consists of two people taking turns listening to each other. It's like a conversation in some ways, but it's different, too. It's a more careful, effective kind of listening. We are talking about listening and paying attention to what you hear. It is thinking about the person who is saying it, and thinking about what he or she is saying, without interrupting the listening by offering suggestions or comments, but simply listening wholeheartedly.

TAKE TURNS LISTENING

It's simple to get started. It just takes two people. Find a friend (or co-worker or spouse) who will try it with you. Agree that you will take turns listening to each other without interruption for an equal amount of time, and agree how long that time will be. Then decide who is going to listen first. The other person then talks about whatever he or she wants to talk about. The listener just pays attention and doesn't interrupt to give advice or comment or tell how he or she feels. After the agreed-upon time, the talker becomes the listener, and the one who listened first now talks about anything he or she wants to talk about.

It's a fair exchange. Neither person owes anything to the other. Afterwards, both people usually feel refreshed and think more easily. It's fun, too. This is good to do whenever you get a chance. As you listen this way more times, you get to know each other better and like each other more and more. You also get better at listening. The whole process becomes more effective the more times you use it. Co-Counseling "turns" or "sessions" can be as long or as short as you have time for. Even a few minutes shared with your Co-Counselor can make a big difference in how you are able to think and function. Having more shared time, perhaps a half hour or hour each, is-that much better.

GETTING ONE'S FEELINGS "OUT"

Sometimes the person talking (the "talker" or the "client") may begin to laugh or cry or speak loudly, or sometimes tremble or yawn. This is a fine thing to have happen. It simply means that the person is tense about something, perhaps feeling some embarrassment or grief or fear or physical discomfort, and she or he is releasing the tension this way. She or he is becoming "un-embarrassed," "un-sad," "un-afraid." We sometimes call any release of tension in these ways "discharge." The person listening (the "counselor") can feel pleased and relaxed if this happens, and just continue to pay attention to the client without trying to stop any discharge that is occurring. If the client (the talker) stops his or her own discharge, the listener can reassure him or her that it is fine to continue.

WHAT TO DO IN A SESSION

Below are some things that you can experiment with doing in your sessions.

News and Goods

You can start your session as client (the talker) by telling your counselor (the listener) about "good" things, big or small, that have happened lately. It could be the beautiful sunset you saw last night, or your new job, or a problem you figured out last week. The idea is to give yourself a chance to notice the things that are going well. (This is especially a good idea if you feel discouraged. It helps remind you that maybe things aren't as bad as they feel.) Sometimes people spend whole Co-Counseling sessions just telling "news and goods" and leave feeling much more positive and thinking more clearly.

Recent Upsets

If something has happened recently that you are upset about, a Co-Counseling session is a good place to talk about it. You can tell as much or as little about it as you would like, and you can tell it once or you can tell it over and over. You will probably find that lots of your problems seem to get much smaller if you just get a chance to talk about them without someone trying to give you advice or solve them for you. You will find, more often than not, that you can think of a good solution if you just have someone hear you out and show some confidence in you while you feel upset and talk about the problem.

Troubles from the Past

If you use your turn as client to talk about something that is bothering you, you can sometimes, after you have had a chance to talk about the upset for awhile, ask yourself (or your counselor can ask you), "What does this situation or this feeling remind you of? When have you felt like this before?" You will almost always think of some situation from the past that was hurtful or upsetting in a similar way. It will be plain that old feelings from that time are still lingering in your mind, adding more confusion and bad feelings to the present situation than there would otherwise be. If you can talk about the earlier situation, what happened then, how you felt, and how it affected you, some of those old bad feelings can then be "discharged", leaving you with a fresher look at the present difficulty.

Life Stories

If you come to your session as client and there seems to be nothing in your present life that you need to talk about, try telling your life story. Most people have never had a chance to tell the whole story of their life, and everyone needs a chance to do this. As you tell the story of your life, certain incidents will seem more important in their effect on you, good or bad, than others. These incidents are worth coming back to and talking about many times in Co-Counseling sessions. Getting a chance to review them over and over, with someone who is really listening, can make a surprising difference in your thinking. Bad feelings left over from old, hurtful experiences (including experiences that you thought were "behind you") can come to the surface and discharge, leaving you with a lighter step and freer thoughts. Remembering and talking about good experiences with the attention of a good listener, can also help bad feelings from old, difficult times to discharge, and this can help you regain a positive outlook.

Self-Appreciation

Most of us have been belittled or mistreated enough that it is now difficult for us to feel good

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about ourselves. We have been "blamed" for things when we were doing our best. We have been told many untrue things. We have been told that if we like ourselves, we are "conceited" and that we shouldn't feel good about ourselves. This isn't true. People need to feel good about themselves. When we do feel good about ourselves, we treat other people better, not worse.

In a Co-Counseling session when you are client, tell your counselor what you like about yourself. Tell this to him or her in a tone of voice that sounds like you are proud of yourself (not "superior," just pleased). Tell your counselor this over and over. You may find it difficult, but stick with it. Don't stop yourself from laughing or crying or any other type of discharge. Try to appreciate everything about yourself (*everything*). When you notice which things feel harder to appreciate (for example, how you look or how smart you are), focus on appreciating those things. You will probably remember incidents from your life of being criticized, blamed, or mistreated. These incidents will be good to look at and talk about in a counseling session when you are client.

Goals

It helps your life go better to set goals for yourself or review your progress towards goals that you have already set. This is a useful thing to do when you are client in a Co-Counseling session. Talk through the different periods of your life, and decide what you want to accomplish tomorrow, next week, this year, in the next five years, in the next twenty years, in your lifetime. As you talk about each future period, you can think through the steps that you will need to take to reach these goals. Occasionally reviewing your goals and any apparent obstacles, will help you in achieving your goals.

LETTING DISCHARGE CONTINUE

If you talk about something as client that results in lively talking, laughter, tears, shaking, sweating, or yawning (all forms of discharge), don't rush on to something else. Try repeating what you were saying or doing several times until you are no longer discharging. It's worth doing this over and over for as much time as you can take. The greatest benefits of Co-Counseling come after these releases of tension. They make it possible to think and act in ways that have been inhibited before.

ENDING A SESSION

At the end of a Co-Counseling session, especially if you've been talking about something difficult for you, take a few moments to re-direct your thoughts to something you are looking forward to, or to some simple subject you don't feel tense about, for example, the names of some friends or some favorite foods, or some scenery that you enjoy looking at. This helps make a relaxed change from being a client to becoming a counselor if it is your turn to do this, or to going on to other activities.

WHAT NOT TO DO IN A SESSION

Almost all of the things for you NOT to do as a counselor will come under the general heading of: DON'T let the Client's Troubles Bother You. This, of course, is much easier said than done. This is the problem that you will never completely solve but which will improve as you work at it through your own counseling. However, some particular things can be watched for.

Don't be Suggestive

- Refrain from telling your client what you think of his or her problem. Don't tell your client of similar problems you have or that you know about.
- Don't interpret for your client.
- Don't give your client "good advice" or point out answers. Answers are no good to your clients unless they have a chance to work out their problems for themselves. Your answers will only be a barrier to your client working out his or her own answers.

Try to spend your time listening . . . NOT talking.

Don't React Emotionally

The only correct attitude toward your client's problem is one of interest and relaxed caring. Indifference on your part will make you quite ineffective, but so will hostility or any other kind of emotional upset.

Equally as true, any kind of sympathetic response from you will constitute an obstacle to a person's handling his own problem. If you "sympathize" with a client's problem, you will be reacting out of your own stored problems and the client will feel this and be inhibited by it.

Don't Interrupt Discharge

When a client is releasing emotional tension or discharging by talking, laughing, crying, shaking, sweating, or even yawning, don't interfere. You will often feel moved to help him accelerate or deepen the discharge, and this is sometimes possible. Pay careful attention to the results of what you do. If there is any slackening of discharge, stop what you are doing and return to what you were doing.

BE COURTEOUS

It is important that we are friendly and courteous to each other as we practice Re-evaluation or Co-Counseling together. It is important to avoid any appearance of discourtesy in the keeping of appointments, in manners and attitudes, in tone of voice. A client—even an amateur client—is placing great trust and confidence in you as a counselor. It is important that we treat each other with full respect.

A FEW GUIDELINES

- For each person to feel safe to talk about whatever he or she needs to, it works best to agree that you won't discuss it with anyone later. We call this keeping confidentiality.
- Alcohol and drugs interfere with the listening process and the good effects of discharging.
- Co-Counseling students and Co-Counselors are requested and expected to refrain from establishing any relationship, except that of Co-Counselor, with the students and clients whom they meet in Re-evaluation Counseling.

SUPPORT GROUPS

It also works well to get a small group of people together to take turns listening to each other. (In Re-evaluation Counseling we call this a "support group.") Each person gets a roughly equal amount of time to talk while the rest of the group listens.

One person acts as the leader of the group to help the group decide how much time each person will get, who will go first, and so on. When each person has had his or her turn as client, you can end the group meeting with each person getting a chance to say what he or she liked best about being in the group meeting or something he or she is looking forward to.

Support groups can meet as often or as many times as the group members wish. The group can be a group of friends, co-workers, neighbors, or people with a similar background or interest. Sharing something in common with the group often helps people feel safer to talk about things they need to talk about. For example, there have been support groups of women, men, parents, young people, working-class people, people of a certain ethnic group or religion, disabled people, artists, and many others.

Inviting friends to the group is a good way to introduce more people to Co-Counseling. If the group becomes too large, it can be divided and a second group formed with a new leader chosen for the new group. About eight people seems to be the optimum size for a group, but they can function well both smaller and larger.

Support groups are a good structure for people from a similar background or similar situation to use to talk about what they like about being a part of that group and what they are proud of about the people from that group. Support groups are also good for talking about what has been hard, what they wish people understood about their group, what hopes and dreams they have for people from their group, and what they would like to do in relation to that group.

For example, in a women's support group, each woman would get a turn sharing what she likes about being a woman, what has been hard about being a woman, what she would like men to understand about women, how she would like to see women's lives improve, and what ways she would like to reach out to other women.



A Welcome Message to New Co-Counselors from Teresa Enrico*

If you are beginning to be interested in Re-evaluation Counseling, or as you begin to learn Re-evaluation Counseling, as you begin to learn to Co-Counsel, I extend a welcome to you from those of us who have been Co-Counseling (and developing and learning Re-evaluation Counseling) for a longer period of time. Welcome to what can well be an interesting part of your life.

Re-evaluation Counseling is not very "old." Now (in 2026) it is about seventy-six years old. It has been pursued continuously by some of us throughout that period and by more of us through a portion of that time. A great deal of information and experience has accumulated. I can't hope to summarize much of that experience in this short letter of welcome, but I can, perhaps, offer some perspectives on it that will be useful.

NATURAL, NOT SUPPRESSED

In beginning Co-Counseling you are beginning the systematic re-learning of a very important relationship and process. This process is natural to all human beings, but most of us were discouraged from pursuing it when we were very young and have had difficulty in using it ever since. This difficulty arises in part because we were trained not to use the process but also because the process requires at least one partner to make it work, and such partners have not, in general, been available in the worlds in which we have lived.

You will be learning how to take turns listening and paying attention to each other with another person. By doing this, you will be assisting yourself and one or more other people to recover certain abilities which you inherently possess but which you may not have had a chance to develop. Among these is the ability to deeply enjoy life, which seems to be the natural birth-right of every human being. You will also be acquiring certain tools for achieving and enjoying excellent relationships with other people.



SHIRA ROSEN

Most of this information will come to you in your class work, in your reading of the literature about Re-evaluation Counseling, and in your practice of Co-Counseling with your partner or partners.

NOT MAGIC

If you are fortunate, you are likely to be "enchanted" with the early results of your Co-Counseling. Even if you have some difficulty in the beginning, you're likely to be quite impressed by what other students in your class are able to achieve. It sometimes happens that a new student of Co-Counseling gets the impression that Re-evaluation Counseling is a "wonder process" that works of and by itself. This can lead the student to feel quite disappointed when hard work and difficulties appear. It is important, I think, to say to you at the very beginning that there's no "magic" involved. Re-evaluation Counseling is a workable process, but it requires thoughtful work to make it function. It will challenge you to use your most thoughtful determination and effort in order to achieve the best results.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Similarly, although your teachers and the experienced Co-Counselors and leaders of the Co-Counseling Communities are, in my opinion, very fine people, you should remember also that they are ordinary humans like yourself. They still may have many difficulties from which they have not yet freed themselves. They still are capable

* Teresa Enrico is currently the International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities and oversees the RC Communities globally. She can be contacted at the main address

of making mistakes. They still can have lapses of thoughtfulness. They are by no means perfect or likely to act perfectly in their relationships with new Co-Counselors, nor with each other. They are just people like you and me.

They are engaged in a workable and worthwhile process, but most of them (most of us) still have a long way to go. To expect perfection of them, or to think they will "solve all your problems," or even that "Re-evaluation Counseling works" would be to set yourself up for some future disappointments. Re-evaluation Counseling doesn't "work"—it can be made to work.

You, in general, will get just as much out of your counseling as you put into it. Your gains will go as far as you persist. Though much of what you have to learn and work through will be a great deal easier for you because other people have already persisted and worked through similar difficulties. They will share what they have learned with you in class and through the literature, your own progress will still require effort, thinking, and persistence on your own part.

YOUR CHOICE

In past years, many people have taken one or two series of classes in Co-Counseling and have Co-Counseled for a few months and then have not done any further study or further organized effort in Co-Counseling. They have simply taken what they have learned and have continued to apply it as far as possible in their lives. They were quite satisfied with what they had gotten from Co-Counseling. This can be your choice as well.

It's also possible that you will go farther than that and become a fairly skillful Co-Counselor, and then, as you begin to use your skills and reclaimed abilities more in non-counseling activities, will become so busy with your improved life and functioning that you will conclude that, for now at least, you don't have the time for Co-Counseling, that other things are more important than Re-evaluation Counseling, and you will simply not keep good contact with us more persistent Co-Counselors.

That, too, is just fine. You are under no obligation to other Co-Counselors to persist beyond the point where it seems profitable or possible for you to do so.

However, the progress in the living and functioning of Co-Counselors who have persisted in their use of Co-Counseling has become increasingly impressive in recent years. This is probably partly due to recent progress in developing the theory, a process that seems to be accelerating. A number of advanced techniques are now available which expedite the gains of counseling remarkably. So, although you are completely free to "taper off" on your Co-Counseling training and practice, I would not recommend you do so if you can avoid it.

THE RC COMMUNITY

There is a substantial group of Co-Counselors who have organized themselves into what we call the Re-evaluation Counseling "Community." We in this group have decided that the information, the fellowship, the goals, and the apparently unending possibilities involved in working together with other people to use Co-Counseling and to advance the theory and practice are worth a persisting effort.

To become a member of the Co-Counseling Communities it is necessary that you not only participate in activities but that you make a contribution, that you share in the many, many facets of work and activity that the Communities sponsor. There are several dozen publications, for example, with special readerships and constituencies. There are workshops and support groups and leadership roles and publications for people of different ethnic backgrounds, different national backgrounds. There are special workshops for people who seek liberation from particular oppressions, such as those of racism or sexism or classism.

There are special relationships in the Community, and competent leaders, for women and young people and men and college professors and Black people and many other groups. There are support groups for people who share similar interests and backgrounds. These come together and use Re-evaluation Counseling in special ways to solve

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problems connected with their backgrounds, their oppressions, their professions, or their interests.

These activities, workshops, publications, support groups, and leaders' meetings are situations in which the mastering of Re-Evaluation Counseling and the use of it for personal advancement and re-emergence can be pursued intensively. To participate in them it is simply necessary that one help support and carry out these activities to the extent possible in one's living situation.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

It is possible that, as you feel the workability of re-emergence and the innately human simplicity of the discharge process, and as you sense the implications of this for human beings in the present world situation, you will become interested in making this a major activity in your life. This will be parallel to and supportive of your other main interests, whether they be professional, family, cultural, religious, or artistic.

To those of you who decide to do this and wish to explore "going all the way" for total re-emergence for yourself, for preserving the world, and making the entire world situation rational--a very special welcome. There is a substantial number of people already committed and functioning in this way, and those of us who are in this position are eager for others to join us. We feel a great need for more people who are willing to grow into leadership, who are willing to make deep commitments and persistently address the development of Re-evaluation Counseling knowledge and application. It doesn't matter what your age or gender or background or education or ethnicity or profession is. We have need of you (if you are interested) just exactly as you are and exactly in the situation you are in.

If you find yourself this deeply interested in the implications of Re-evaluation Counseling at some point, remember also that I and others in RC leadership are interested in you and will be glad to hear from you. We will arrange whatever encouragement, contact, and assistance for you that it is possible to arrange.

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