

Becoming the Good Samaritan in Someone Else's Life

◇ **What is Peer Counseling?**

The “Peer Counseling” is a type of consultation implemented via interaction among peers. It consists of characteristics like natural, real-time, mutual-helping, and so on. A peer counselor is a non-specialized assistant, who under the guidance of specialized counselors assists their peers with similar values, experience, and living backgrounds in solving problems or getting with surrounding environments.

◇ **The Unique Function of Peer Counseling**

The role played by peer counselors is normally non-threatening, trustworthy, and supportive. Since students tend to share with their peers personal matters, communication among peers is better than that between students and teachers, students and university counselors, or students and other adults.

◇ **Who needs to be given attention by Peer Counselors?**

1. Feeling Blue: They feel to some extent unaccommodating, or had serious depressions in the past. Even though you find them bright and shine in appearance, you are told by them or others that they are rather heavyhearted and not good at expressing themselves to others.
2. Falling behind Schoolwork: Students with psychological crisis often fall behind their schoolwork. When you talk to them about the problem, you can sense that they feel guilty or keep silent. They would never ask for your help though, returning to their own world afterwards is what they do.
3. An Otaku: Instead of attending classes, they usually stay in their dorms, and they might tell you that they encounter problems at school or at class. These “recluse” otakus have become a “Community” in need of your assistance.
4. A Lone Wolf: They are always alone, and they seem to make no contact with others – they sit in the corner without saying a single word; they hardly initiate any interaction even when classes are dismissed. When you talk to them, they act restless and remain silent most of the time. As soon as you finish the conversation, they leave right away with no reply, a nod maybe.
5. Goalless and Directionless: University students are supposed to have somewhat thought about their interests and directions career-wise. However, there are always some seem to be wandering about. If these students also experience unsatisfying learning outcome, family issues, or emotional troubles, we may need to pay close attention to them in case any crisis occurs.
6. A Drifting Soul: There seems to be problems between them and their families. When

being asked about their family members or matters for instance, the answers are probably something like ‘I seldom contact them’, ‘I don’t know much about them’, or ‘Don’t ask me’, etc. They don’t go home very often; moreover, we might find them in their dorms even during the Chinese New Year holidays. This type of students, who estranges themselves from their families, is highly likely the ones requiring the most attention from us.

7. Long-Term Depressed even Self-Harming: You might find cuts on their wrists. You might see them (or hear them) poking themselves with pens, hurting themselves, drinking to excess, punching the wall, driving at high speed, or other dangerous even life-risking behaviors. This type of students, who doesn’t find their lives worth living, tends to abandon, even hurt themselves.
8. Crying A Lot or Not at All: To cry is to naturally display one’s feelings. This type of students, who cries easily, tends to be emotionally fragile, sensitive, and therefore requires more care from others. However, if we find them expressionless or unable to cry at all upon certain incidents normally making ordinary people frightened or sad, they might be excessively suppressing themselves, and that requires our close attention.
9. Unstable Relationship: This type of students, who has unstable relationship, changes their boyfriend/girlfriend frequently, has quarrels all the time, or makes a fuss about breaking up. They might build up immense pressure, threaten to kill themselves, or hold their boyfriend/girlfriend against their own wills during quarrels or break ups. That can be a sign of suffering from emotional disturbance.
10. Experiencing Significant Incidents: Having recently encountered significant incidents, such as losing family members or friends, suicide, sexual or physical harm, abortion, breaking up, etc., may result in huge disturbance both mentally and physically, and therefore needs our attention and care in time. Such prompt reaction often helps those in danger with a sudden change of mind.
11. Unusual Behaviors: Not only you but also other students feel that this student seems to become a totally different person without any reason. This might be an alarm.

◇ **Peer Counseling ABC!**

Arouse Aware: Watch out for students with difficulties in daily-life matters

Benefit: Offer care and support timely; ask whether or not your assistance is needed

Connect: Encourage students to seek their teachers for help, or to contact the Psychological Counseling Center (PCC) for necessary assistance

Source

Chou, Fu-Mei (2010) Using Peer Counseling to Improve the Learning Outcome of University Freshmen.

Chung Yuan Christian University Highly-Concerned Counseling Handbook (2007).