

The Importance of Acceptance in the Counseling Setting

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Abstract: Shame has its origins in interpersonal relationships and is intergenerational. Significant use of “shame language” is found in discussions with clients. Shame usually originates in the family of origin so the individual can only be comprehended in terms of the family, its outlook on life and goals, its history and the family sense of obligation and shame. The presence of shame in clients has implications for the type of therapy that will be helpful. From among the various schools of family therapy, Murray Bowen’s theory may be the most helpful in the Japanese context. The main thrust of clients’ conversations can be summarized with, “Where can I go to be accepted and understood?” If the therapist can create an accepting and supportive environment, then hope can be given to the client. The establishing of an interpersonal bridge lets the client know that human relationships are repairable. Shame cannot be healed in isolation. It must take place in a social or relational setting. Counseling can provide the initial experience of an accepting environment. I believe that Christianity can have an important influence on many clients, whether they are Christian or not. They can find encouragement, comfort and acceptance by members of the church and a faith in God. Hope is precisely what the client is looking for. Once the client knows he/she is unconditionally accepted by God then he/she can now be self-accepting and self-affirming.

Key Words : shame, counseling, relationship, acceptance

The intent of this article is to draw conclusions about shame and develop implications for ministry in Japan to clients.

Shame: A Critical Component in Counseling

Shame has its origins in interpersonal relationships and is intergenerational. In previous articles written for this periodical, generators of shame and some of the strategies employed against shame were considered. Twelve indicators of the presence of shame in the lives of clients were chosen from those most frequently appearing in studies conducted with clients. The indicators were: abandonment, anger/rage, humiliation,

performance expectation (comparison), withdrawal (isolation), failure, rejection, conformity (“should”), private/public self, overprotection/overinvolvement, exposure (self-consciousness), and ridicule (being laughed at).

Using the above indicators, significant use of “shame language” was found in discussions with clients. This terminology was often used by the clients. The findings suggest that shame does play an important role in the interpersonal difficulties of these clients and should consistently be a consideration when dealing with their difficulties.

When the precipitating events and symptoms of this phenomenon are reviewed, shame is present in

much of the vocabulary. The onset of depression, withdrawal, and anxiety can be related to shaming events. Precipitating events, such as movement from one setting to another, being teased or bullied, performance expectations from self or others, academic or social failure, and poor self-image, can all be tied to the experience of shame in clients. This does not prove that shame is the primary or sole source of relational problems. However, it is a significant indicator that shame is a factor with the majority of clients.

The presence of shame in clients has implications for therapy. The object of therapy with a shamed individual is to create an atmosphere where the shamed person feels safe enough to actually experience the shame that was once previously present. If this can occur, then it is possible for the client to understand that he/she will not be shamed again in the presence of the therapist. Later on, it is hoped that the shamed person will learn to express his or her true feelings in front of others and likewise not feel shamed for having those feelings. This process allows the shame feelings to be openly expressed and validated by another human. This reduces the fear of having shame feelings exposed to another.

The Importance of Relationships and Family Theory and Therapy

The predominant theme for clients is the importance of relationships. The peer group relationships, especially for youth, carries a great deal of weight, followed by relationships in the family, and finally those at school. The main thrust of their conversations can be summarized with, "Where can I go to be accepted and understood?" The majority of these clients recalled sad, frightening or shameful events from their childhood over against happy or positive experiences, and they mentioned their relationship to their mother as the most significant and intimate in the family. Exploration of significant relationships of clients should be standard procedure.

The presence or absence of shame in significant relationships should be noted. If one is not feeling acceptance by others, the likelihood of shame being present is great.

Since the importance of relationships is predominant in most cases, a systems perspective is attractive when considering a therapy for clients. Family system theory postulates that the context in which each person lives affects the inner processes of that person. The family is viewed as a dynamic, changing system that is in turn affected by the larger social context. Cultural conditions, ethnic beliefs, socio-economic factors, and religion all affect the family and thus individual members of the family. Individual problems are seen as a result of dysfunctional interactions of the family. These alter the context and therefore also the inner processes of each individual within that context.

From among the various schools of family therapy, I find Murray Bowen's theory the most helpful in the Japanese context. This does not mean that the other schools of family systems are ignored. Some other schools include the structural school (Minuchin), the strategic school (Haley), and the psychodynamic school (Ackerman, Boszormenyi-Nagy). Each of these schools have something to offer family systems theory and therapy as it relates to clients. However, the Bowenian school of family therapy as a whole is a good point of departure for the context of Japan.

The Bowen theory consists of eight working concepts that provide a description of processes in emotional systems. The eight concepts are: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, and emotional process in society. From Bowen's original "undifferentiated family ego mass," these eight concepts have been developed.

C. Margaret Hall, one of Bowen's co-workers, summarizes these concepts:

1) Differentiation of self. Self may be thought of as both solid self, which is nonnegotiable with others, and

pseudo-self, which is negotiable with others. A more differentiated person behaves from a basis of a more fully integrated solid self. . . .

2) Triangles. The smallest relationship system in families and other social settings has three members rather than two. A triangle is the basic unit of interdependence and interaction in a family emotional system. When anxiety in a two person relationship reaches a certain level, a third person is predictably drawn into the emotional field of the twosome. . . .

3) Nuclear Family Emotional System. The most intensely interdependent part of a family is the nuclear group. Three mechanisms are used in most families to deal with the overload of anxiety that frequently amasses in the nuclear system. The adaptive mechanisms are marital conflict, dysfunction of a spouse, and projection to a child. . . .

4) Family Projection Process. Parents stabilize their relationship with each other and lower the anxiety in their undifferentiated twosome by viewing a child as their shared "problem." . . .

5) Emotional Cut-Off. In an attempt to deal with the fusion or lack of differentiation in their intimate relationships, family members or segments of the extended system may distance themselves from each other and become emotionally divorced. . . .

6) Multigenerational Transmission Process. The strong tendency to repeat impairing patterns of emotional behavior in successive generations culminates in lowered levels of differentiation of self for certain members of the younger generations. . . .

7) Sibling position. Seniority and sex distribution among siblings in the same and related generations has a strong influence on behavior. . . .

8) Emotional Process in Society. The strength of the emotional forces in society may make differentiation difficult or impossible. When togetherness forces in society are strong, anxiety is high and problem behavior is pervasive.⁽¹⁾

Bowen believes that as a person becomes more differentiated he/she increases the amount of hard-core self. This is a primary goal of Bowen's therapy. In order to do this he suggests working with individual family members to help them become aware of the triangles and to assume new positions in regard to those triangles. Because of the influence each member has on the other members (nuclear emotional

system), the whole family is considered a "client" when dysfunction is reported by a member. In the Japanese context it is crucial to be aware of the importance of the family and the Japanese notions of dependency and interdependency. I believe that an important goal in Japan is to help individuals be able to individuate and then reintegrate back into their significant relationships.

In Japan, the family projection process is such that there is often close bonding between the mother and the child(ren) and the father ends up supporting the mother's over-involvement. This is accentuated by the physical/emotional absence of the father.

An emotional cut-off with family members is not something that happens quickly. It takes time for this to develop and may need more than one generation to be complete. Often these cut-offs indicate a great deal of anxiety and/or shame in one or more members of the family. That is why it is important to get information on prior generations. Concerning this issue Hall writes:

The concept of multigenerational transmission process describes broad patterns of behavior between members of different generations in the same family. . . . In most circumstances, a family tends to perpetuate its level of differentiation. . . .

An awareness of the consequences of this kind of error recommends three generations as a minimum base for meaningful family research and for representative generalizations about emotional processes in families.⁽²⁾

Behavioral expectations based on sex and birth order is an area that may be fruitfully explored since the Japanese place great emphasis on birth order and the way siblings relate to one another.

Likewise, the emotional process in society relates to the Japanese situation. Hall states, "When togetherness forces are strong, one tends to sacrifice self for others' needs and to act from pseudo-self. In such an emotional environment, individual thinking is so difficult that action integrated with self and personal convictions is almost impossible."⁽³⁾ When people act under the guise of their pseudo-self the influence of shame and the expectations of others

increase.

Bowen's theory is flexible enough to be very useful in cross-cultural situations. As his theory's emphasis on universals in human behavior, biological analogies, and an evolutionary context allows for many more cultural applications and international comparisons than family theories based on cultural differentials and normative descriptions.

In cross-cultural counseling, it is important to identify the need for an expatriate counselor to be aware of him/herself in relation to the other culture. Not only is it vital to learn the host country's language and culture, but it is equally important to be aware of one's own biases. By examining one's own assumptions and biases, a more effective therapeutic environment can be established. Some may question the effectiveness of a foreign counselor. However, the fact that one comes from a different point of reference may be more of a value than a hindrance. McGoldrick writes concerning this issue:

There are many who believe that cross-fertilization from one ethnic group to another is the best antidote to the "stuckness" families experience when their cultural adaptations fail. . . .

In our view the most important part of ethnicity training involves the therapist coming to understand his or her own ethnic identity in a differentiated way. . . .

This means, ideally, that therapists would no longer be "triggered" by ethnic characteristics they may have regarded negatively nor be caught in an ethnocentric view that their groups values are more "right" or "true" than others. No group has a corner on truth. Resolving the psychological issues of ethnic identity involves achieving a multiethnic perspective where we are open to understanding values that differ from our own and no longer need to convince others of our values or give in to theirs.⁽⁴⁾

My experience in counseling has led me to believe that the use of genograms (a map of the family structure over a number of generations showing family relationships with factual data about names, births, deaths, marriage, divorce, and physical or psychological dysfunctions) is a helpful method of visually getting an understanding of how a family functions together and individually. It indicates how

each member influences another and how previous generations impact subsequent generations. With the Japanese propensity for revering their ancestors and their use of koseki (a census register indicating one's birth, parentage and other information about one's family background) when arranging marriages, I believe that the use of genograms is a highly valuable tool in the Japanese context.

In Japan I believe there is a built-in affinity for family systems and also intergenerational thinking. The use of family therapy may very well eventually surpass its use in the United States because of the importance of family background.

Likewise I believe the use of genograms is most helpful. Since the Japanese language is made up of Chinese characters, each having its own meaning, getting the name of each member on the genogram is important. In this way you can not only see their position in the family, but also get a feel for what that person literally means to the family, by reading the characters in their given name. Where blank areas exist in a genogram, one can probably assume that some shameful secret is present until otherwise known. It may mean birth out of wedlock, a family member in jail, someone of burakumin (member of the outcast group) , alcoholism, or some other issue considered as problematic.

There are a number of major themes currently in Japan: Family violence is on the rise and pressure to get into a good university continues. The children are often alienated from family life, especially from the father. There is fear of shame on the part of many mothers who think they have raised failing children. I also believe there is a great opportunity for foreign counselors helping Japanese to receive a fresh and new perspective.

Bart Aoki, a psychologist at San Francisco's Richmond Maxi Center observed:

In many western therapies there is a lot of "letting go" of family. Resolving family issues involves separating from the family and becoming an individual. In my work with Japanese individuals, however, while

much of what I do seems to be to work at resolution of conflicts within the family, the ultimate goal is to reintegrate the person into the family.⁽⁵⁾

The individual can only be comprehended in terms of the family, its outlook on life and goals, its history and the family sense of obligation and shame. There is no doubt that the family has the most pervasive influence on a child's life. The behavior and socialization learned in the family is what the child takes with him/her into the larger society.

Importance of an Accepting Environment and the Interpersonal Bridge

A client may feel that there is no place to go where he/she can feel accepted. If the therapist can create an accepting and supportive environment, then hope can be given to the client. From this acceptance, trust can be established, and, over time the client may begin to feel comfortable enough to share the shame and pain he/she has suffered or is suffering. A trusting relationship may be the most important component in therapy. Once mutual trust has been established there is the possibility of rebuilding the "interpersonal bridge," to which Kaufman refers. He writes:

Through such restoring of the bridge, shame is transcended. The significant other who was involved in the original shame-inducing experiences need not be the one who must restore the bridge. Someone who later becomes significant, friend, colleague, or therapist, can become that person.⁽⁶⁾

This establishing of the interpersonal bridge lets the client know that human relationships are repairable. As time progresses, it is hoped the client will be able to explore shameful experiences from his/her past. Shame cannot be healed in isolation. It must take place in a social or relational setting. Counseling can provide the initial experience of an accepting environment.

Counseling: Resistance and New Potential

An important issue for Japanese revolves around the word "counseling." Use of the word "counseling" or "therapy" may scare people away from seeking help. Traditionally in Japan seeking help was an admission of failure and reflected negatively upon the family as a whole. Only "crazy" people need that kind of help. Therefore, seeking out a counselor was something shameful. For many people this has led to hiding troubles rather than seeking help.

One way around resistance to help, may be to use different terminology. Words like "personal growth", "self-help groups" or "discussion groups" can take away the stigma attached to professional help. Using the terminology found in the four pastoral functions of pastoral care in the work of Clebsch and Jaekle may also be helpful.⁽⁷⁾ Words like sustaining, reconciling, and guiding are not so intimidating. In recent years there has been a gradual warming to the use of Western therapy. Writing about Japan, Roland states:

The Western ideal of individualism in terms of increased personal autonomy, independence, and individualized choices in a variety of situations, together with an ideology of equality that has been partially but increasingly incorporated by the younger generation gap. Psychoanalysis is clearly congruent with this new thrust toward individualization.⁽⁸⁾

A further implication for therapy is the establishment of a group for clients. What often happens when a client is classified as such and such, he/she may think that he/she is the only one with the problem, not realizing that many others may be struggling with similar issues. People having common purpose or similar problems often bond together quickly. In a group there is a sense of belonging, as well as the opportunity to identify with something larger than oneself, an important value for Japanese. A group also removes the individual from isolation and places him or her back into relationship

where issues of shame can effectively be addressed. Hearing about the struggles of others with the same problem is helpful and the shame of having the same problem is reduced. For many clients, this provides a desire to speak honestly with those whom they trust and feel accepted. When these clients are with other clients their level of anxiety may decrease and they may feel more secure and accepted.

Struggles of Self in Society

The Japanese are at a crucial point in their history, actively wrestling with the issue of accepting Western ideas and concepts or continuing traditional Japanese thinking. This tension is inherent in the lives of adolescents in Japan today. They have the urge to be more individualistic and to enjoy personal pleasures to a greater degree than their parents. The West has given them many options in lifestyle. On the other hand, they have a long tradition of living in harmony and mutuality. The solidarity of group associations has traditionally been the hallmark of Japanese society.

I think the Japanese make use of a “we-self” that indicates a stronger sense of corporate identity than lets say, an American is used to having. Today’s youth in Japan are standing at the crossroads of these two different philosophies of living. This can lead to confusion and shame. Choosing one philosophy over another can result in scorn and ridicule, hence shame, from the proponents of the unchosen philosophy.

Some of the tension is visible in the issue of employment. Many of the youth in Japan have chosen to not secure full-time employment. The irregular employment and unstable employment has increased. The number of NEET, (not engaged in education, employment, or training) has reached 500,000 and reveals some serious social problems. Many are trying to find new career paths, some become ‘freeters’ (serial part-timers), and some want to become artisans or choose to do nothing. I believe this reflects the trend of de-emphasizing the hectic pace of work that has been so important in the

economic development of Japan and suggests a major shift in the opinions of younger people. Likewise, younger employees are much more willing to change jobs than their parents did. This allows them to fulfill some of their personal dreams.

Over the years more and more people in the nation’s work force change jobs rapidly. Young workers aged 15-24 accounted for the largest percentage of job hoppers. It also seems that the Japanese have longer commuting times in recent years. It is not unusually to hear about workers spending four hours or more commuting each day.

The above noted changes reflect a movement among younger Japanese from a position of subservience toward seniors and superiors to a more self-centered relating to the world. They are no longer willing to sacrifice their personal time and energy to maintain the lifestyle of their parents. They are making a statement about being what they want to be and not what society tells them to be. This age group is more concerned with individual pursuits than those of society at large. Many young Japanese put more weight on individual life-much more than the previous generations. We find more and more youth who strive to be different from everyone else, to do what they want to do, and not just go along with the group or what their elders say.

It is not difficult to observe the parallel movement in the work force and the schools. In both locations, the call for more freedom and flexibility is being heard. Differentiation is taking place in this movement toward expressing oneself more freely and individually. However, it will be interesting to see if the youth substitute their own values as the new order which must be adhered to by their contemporaries. That could be as shaming as the conformity demanded by the previous value system.

In Japan, where the community, schools and family work together in creating an all-embracing system, in order to bring about change in the educational system effectively there is also a need to address larger issues that affect the society as a whole. One issue is eliminating the fierce competition to enter only the

most prestigious educational institutions. In the past this occurred because major companies employed only qualified graduates from these institutions. Therefore, younger people felt the pressure to qualify for the most elite schools. However, in recent years some bigger companies like Sony Corporation are hiring university graduates as office workers, and no section on the application requires a university name. Neither will their school name be asked for during an interview. This will prevent the examiner from being prejudiced and also exclude clients who have a good university name but nothing else.

It is precisely the stand that Sony is taking that is needed to help break the ongoing cycle of having to get into the most prestigious schools. Part of their reason for this practice may be the severe labor shortage. The hiring practices of Japanese companies has perpetuated the pressures to excel on school entrance examinations. It is my contention that hiring practices is one of the major reasons for the continued educational pressures that exist in Japan today.

Christ Jesus and Pastoral Counseling: Origins of New Possibilities

Christianity can have an important influence on many clients, whether they are Christian or not. They can find encouragement, comfort and acceptance by members of the church and a faith in God.

Being a Christian and working out of a Christian understanding of self, others and God, gives a pastor or counselor additional tools to use in relating to people who feel shamed, as many clients do. The pastor or counselor is able to draw upon resources beyond his/her personal gifts and talents. The pastoral counselor believes God is present and active in counseling sessions. These beliefs have a direct effect on the relationship being established between client and counselor.

A pastoral counselor is able to view a client as a person who is of invaluable worth in the eyes of God. The counselor is able to affirm the value of this person's uniqueness. Because the client has been

created in the image of God, this value and worth is inherently part of the person, regardless of what he/she has done and regardless of that person's circumstances. If the counselor believes this, that belief will be transmitted in words and actions to the client who comes for help. The counselor's attitude and beliefs will be perceived.

If the counselor can honestly hold the attitude that the client's situation is not hopeless and that something can happen to change it, that attitude will be infectious. Through the act of the counselor's acceptance of the client, the possibility that the client will perceive God's unconditional acceptance is greatly enhanced.

When first meeting with someone, the main task of the counselor is to validate the person coming for help and to hear accurately their interpretation of what is happening. After rapport and trust have developed, the counselor is in a position to help "reframe" the client's circumstances. Psychologically, reframing is offering a new or expanded interpretation of a particular situation. As humans we tend to be storytellers and framers of reality as we perceive it. We frame our situation and also the solution(s) to that situation. A counselor helps the individual or family to expand or modify that interpretation, giving new possibilities of meaning and additional solutions.

Jesus provides a model of reframing that is powerful. He continually met people where they were emotionally and physically. He heard their version of their circumstances and then provided his own. An example: the man who was blind from birth in John 9. Jesus was asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." This is an example of reframing. Jesus knew of other possibilities that his questioners could not even conceive. Christ had an answer that was not even available to those who came to him. It is my contention that this same ability to reframe a situation differently is conferred on those who minister in the name of Christ.

What a pastoral counselor does is similar to Heb 11:1. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” In the case of a shame-based person, the counselor can already see a person of value and worth. The shame-based person looking at him/herself may only see failure and someone who is unworthy to be alive. In essence, the pastoral counselor sees the person through the eyes of Christ and not through human eyes. Therefore, the counselor is able to attribute value and meaning to this person even though it may not be felt by the person at the time. In effect the counselor lends his/her faith to the person until such time that the person can view him/herself in a new light.

It is important not to rush the person to this point. In fact, it is impossible to push a person to a point that he/she is not ready to be. Before someone is able to reframe his/her situation, that person may need many hours of empathic listening. There may also be the need for willingness on the part of the counselor to be with him/her through the ordeal. In this fashion the counselor becomes a concrete expression of Christ's willingness to be with a person in his/her pain and suffering. The pastoral counselor becomes a sign of hope.

Hope is precisely what the client is looking for. The shamed individual in particular may find it nearly impossible to find a relationship that he/she feels is trustworthy. The shamed person may have such a poor self-image that he/she cannot conceive of being acceptable as he/she is. Hoping against hope that maybe this counselor will be one to understand and not be rejecting, such a person enters into the therapeutic relationship with fear and anxiety.

The pastoral counselor is able to point to an ultimate being who accepts us unconditionally and is concerned with what happens to us, even when it feels like nobody else cares. The counselor may not be able to say “I know what you mean,” but he/she can say I know One who does know what you feel like and what it is like to suffer. That is a concrete word of hope in time of despair. Not only does Christ accept us as we are but also understands our situation and is

willing to be with us even when we are in deep despair.

In Christ we find a God who is for us. In the writings of Shusaku Endo we have a view of Christianity that he calls a “religion of a mother” and this Christ can speak to the Japanese situation. In him we find someone who is caring, accepting, one willing to suffer with us, a true companion. Christ offers the possibility of being reconciled with ourselves. Once that happens a person can also begin to feel reconciled with others. This experience cannot only be in words but needs the context of concrete experience.

The Role of the Christian Community

The gift of God's grace as found in our acceptance and its proclamation offers the promise of hope often not found in relationship with others. Hopefully the therapeutic environment will provide a place where acceptance can be felt. The church also comes into play here. My hope is that a client who comes for help will find help available not only in the counseling room but also in the larger Christian community. Therapeutic skill is necessary to break the cycle of continual low self-esteem. The counselor or pastor can be an expression of God's love and concern on a one-on-one basis. However, if a client only experiences acceptance in that setting, it is of marginal value. The next step is to help the person integrate into a larger community. The Christian congregation expresses the corporate dimension of acceptance.

The local congregation acts as the body of Christ and steps in to continue what the pastor or counselor began. The congregation, as a whole, continues to represent a concrete expression of God's concern and care by trying to understand the client in his/her situation. The community (or part of it) makes a conscious decision to stand by the person with prayer, support and encouragement. Through this action the client feels the acceptance of the larger body of Christ. Once a person feels accepted by someone, he/she can begin to take the initial steps at reintegrating him/herself into previous relationships.

The need for an accepting environment (or community) is particularly acute with adolescents. Young adults are especially in need of belonging to a group and having a sense of identity and self-worth. This is true in any culture, but is even more important in a country like Japan where conformity to the norm is often stressed.

Ritual and Reintegration

When clients have reached a stage where they have started to mend emotionally from their problems, ritual can assist them in their reintegration. Ritual is something we do all the time to give meaning to what has transpired and to make sense of our experience. However, ritual usually takes place during nodal moments like birth, marriage, or at death. At a stillbirth, a serious accident, or a loss of a job, we tend to have difficulty knowing what to do or say. The affected people are often left in embarrassment, silence or disgrace.

Ritual can be either private or with a group, such as a congregation or a support group. If done in a church setting, the ritual could include a blessing, prayers, and a time to reflect on and express both the negative and positive feelings of the experience. This ritual would validate the person as well as his/her experience, and empower that person to continue living his/her life. Ritual can help transform an issue from being a problem, to a time of learning and opportunity for new understanding and a springboard for new and deeper relationships.

Ritual could be effective for a client who has begun reintegrating into relationships. The acceptance of the congregation would be expressed in a concrete fashion. It would also symbolize and give assurance of God's continuing care and concern for the individual and witness to the fact that he/she has not been rejected or abandoned. Clients, who can be considered modern day lepers in Japanese society, may find incorporation into an accepting "family." The ritual and support of the congregation may also provide a model for the families of the clients.

Shame is not only a social and psychological issue, but a theological one as well. In particular, Christianity shows that human existence is relational. We relate to ourselves, to others and to God. God has established a covenant with humans and God continues to be concerned with what happens to us. As humans we are looking for someone who accepts our inadequacies and weaknesses, who understands our difficulties, and who is willing to stand by us no matter what.

Clients are looking for acceptance. Only God can unconditionally accept us as we are for we have been created in God's image. Clients desire someone to stand with them in their time of confusion, shame and pain. Christ comes as a "companion" and one who suffers with us. Clients are looking for new direction and hope. In Christ we can find hope in what otherwise may be hopelessness and despair. In Christ we are made a new creature and are offered a new life with new meaning. In Christ we find the answer to the question, "Where can I go to find acceptance and understanding?" As representatives of Christ, the church and its pastors, counselors, and lay people give concrete expression to God's covenant with humanity.

Weaving a Tapestry: The Art of Ministry with Clients

As I have thought about ministering to clients, an image has come to my mind. The image is one of weaving; with the counselor being the weaver, taking all the elements in a given situation and bringing them together in a tapestry. The counselor comes into the situation with many givens. These are like strands of wool used to make the tapestry. Some of the strands are frayed, frazzled or tangled. These strands might represent the client's feelings and reality of chaos, shame, confusion, fear, denial, and isolation. Other strands are well spun and tight. These strands could represent the support and care from selected family members and friends, recognition of one's talents and limitations, and trust and hope in God. In order to

bring all of these strands into one piece requires time, understanding, patience, acceptance, and some concept of what the finished piece will look like.

The counselor comes into the client's situation helping to set some boundaries and parameters. This is like setting the edge on the tapestry. There is a need to be an advocate for the individual, while maintaining an identity as a representative of the community. By setting these boundaries, the counselor is giving freedom to the individual client and families, teachers and other concerned people to express themselves freely within the boundaries. The parameters create the possibility of individual expression. In different terms, the counselor is taking the given structure of the society, family, and school or work situation and integrating that with the experience, symbols and emotions of a particular client in a meaningful way.

The weaving takes place at different times. There is the initial meeting with the client and the building of a supportive and accepting therapeutic environment. Once trust has been established, reframing (reinterpretation) can take place. Advocacy for the client is part of the ongoing process. Ideally, hope can spring from this new understanding. The movement towards reintegration into significant relationships and the establishment of new supportive

communities like a support groups and a congregation follows. The tapestry is completed when the individual knows he/she is unconditionally accepted by God and can now be self-accepting and self-affirming.

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抄録：恥は対人関係の中に起源を持っている。恥という概念はよくクライアントとの話し合いで見いだされている。だいたい恥はもともと家族の中で始まるので、クライアントを理解するため、家族の歴史、世界観、家族の恥や義務に対する感覚を知らなければならない。もしカウンセラーが受け入れることと支持する環境を作ることができるなら、希望をクライアントに与えることができる。キリスト教が多くのクライアントの上に重要な影響を持つと思っている。

キーワード : shame, counseling, relationship, acceptance