A Problem-Management And Opportunity Development Approach For Helping (8th ed.)

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Book’s Purpose

The skilled helper: A problem-management and opportunity development approach for helping (8th ed.) equips students with the ability and competence that enables them to integrate theory and practice to establish a relationship with clients, provide counseling intervention, and evaluate the outcome (Egan, 2007). The book focuses on imparting confidence and competence to the students. It emphasizes the application of a three-stage model to improve therapist-client relations and problem management to develop action.

Author’s Background and Credentials

Gerard Egan is an experienced management consultant with a considerable history in the management consulting industry. He has diverse skills in various fields, such as Performance Improvement, Executive Development, Mindfulness, Career Development, and Life Coaching. Egan is a professor emeritus at the Loyola University of Chicago. He served at the Center for Organizational Development as the director of Organizational Studies, Psychology, and Program. Besides, Gerard Egan, Ph.D., has written more than fifteen books in the field of counseling and communication, one of which is *The Skilled Helper*. Dr. Egan has given lectures, consultations, and workshops on these topics in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Further, he works with senior managers, chief executives, and their teams as a counselor, coach, and consultant. Among other areas, Dr. Egan has a solid reputation as a consultant in management development, strategy, business effectiveness, leadership, performance management, redesigning and challenging corporate culture, and design and change management.

Summary of Major Points

The primary focus of the text is on the culture of assisting, norms, and values and integrating the beliefs that lay the groundwork for the helping process (Rogers, 1957). The book shows that knowledge of diversity and awareness among humans of their nature and cultural biases and values

is critical for counselors to overcome the limitations they are likely to encounter while assisting their clients. Therefore, Dr. Egan has divided the book into six distinct parts, each focusing on addressing a particular area within the counseling model.

Dr. Egan recognizes the limitations that can adversely influence the abilities of counselors, identifies them as the shadow side, and prescribes appropriate measures that can be undertaken to address such issues. He advises that effective management of the downsides of the helping process requires adequate social intelligence, integrity, and competence. On the other hand, counseling also has a positive side, emphasizing positive psychology. Egan states that this positive side entails street smarts, wisdom, and the importance of common sense in counseling.

The final step of Egan's therapy focuses on seeking multiple ways of achieving counseling objectives and selecting a single, appropriate one that best suits the situation by utilizing the counselor's talent, ability, resources, temperament, timetable, style, and environment. He states that these are critical in the process of organizing the necessary actions for achieving the goals and objectives that have been laid down. However, a counselor needs to understand their client to empathize with them. For instance, they must understand a client's cultural background and the level of assistance they require to adapt to their situations.

Nonetheless, despite Dr. Egan stressing empathy and respect as the foundations of the counseling process, he encourages counselors to be genuine and always focus on empowering the client throughout the process. It is necessary for helpers to be open and spontaneous while not overemphasizing their role and, at the same time, not exaggerating their position and being defensive.

Evaluation of Text

The Skilled Helper is an excellent piece with a critical framework approach to counseling that can enable counselors to assist their clients. However, the book does not involve any substantive change in theory from the previous edition; it only shows new examples that are not present in the earlier version, which makes the copy more useful and relevant to the intended audience. Further, Dr. Egan offers a simple plan that provides multiple strategies for assisting people in different situations. Therefore, the text provides an essential starting point for a helper to start by examining their communication skills as well as professionalism. Egan's model is flexible and thus can be adapted to suit various individual needs and situations. Further, Egan demonstrates that the approach is more suitable when the counselors are genuine, respectful, and have empathy, as well as are ready to listen actively throughout the process.

Personal Reflection

I feel that The Skilled Helper offers excellent insight not only for helpers but also for clients. Any individual who reads this text will gain insights that can enable them to assist others as well as themselves when confronted with dire situations. Besides, it helps the helpers understand the importance of first impressions by alluding that they are lasting impressions. Therefore, as a future counselor, I am well aware that how I open will be a critical determinant of the course and effectiveness of the entire helping process, thus letting me know the importance of starting well. However, to me, this will not only be about creating impressions but also a vehicle for building a purposeful, non-threatening, and supportive relationship that will enhance and hasten the helping process.

References

Egan, G. (2007). *The skilled helper: A problem-management and opportunity-development approach to helping* (8th ed.). Thomson Brooks/Cole. https://books.google.com/books?id=HHZDAAAAIAAJ

Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21(2), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045357