



A definition of Co-counselling International

J. Heron, "[A definition of Co-counselling International](#)". 1996.

CCI is a planet-wide association of individuals and local networks committed to affirm a core discipline of co-counselling while encouraging, on an international and co-operative basis, the advancement of sound theory, effective practice, network development and planetary transformation.

Local networks of co-counsellors within CCI are independent, self-governing peer organizations, exploring ways of being effective social structures while avoiding all forms of authoritarian control.

Any person and network is a member of CCI if :

- they understand and apply the principles of co-counselling given below
- they have had at least 40 hours training from a member of CCI
- they grasp, in theory and practice, the ideas of pattern, discharge and re-evaluation

The principles of co-counselling

1. Co-counselling is usually practised in pairs with one person working, the client, one person facilitating, the counsellor, then they reverse these roles. In every session each person spends the same time in the role of both client and counsellor. A session is usually on the same occasion, although sometimes people may take turns as client and counsellor on different occasions.

2. When co-counsellors work in groups of three or more, members take an equal time as client, each client either choosing one other person as counsellor, or working in a self-directing way with the silent, supportive attention of the group. For certain purposes, the client may request co-operative interventions by two or more counsellors.

3. The client is in charge of their session in at least seven ways:

- trusting and following the living process of liberation emerging within
- choosing at the start of the session one of three contracts given below
- choosing within a free attention or normal contract what to work on and how
- being free to change the contract during their session
- having a right to accept or disregard interventions made by the counsellor
- being responsible for keeping a balance of attention
- being responsible for working in a way that does not harm themselves, the counsellor, other

people, or the environment.

4. The client's work is their own deep process. It may include, but is not restricted to:

- discharge and re-evaluation on personal distress and cultural oppression
- creative thinking at the frontiers of personal belief
- visualizing future personal and cultural states for goal-setting and action-planning
- extending consciousness into transpersonal states

CCI takes the view that the first of these is a secure foundation for the other three.

5. The role of the counsellor is to:

- give full, supportive attention to the client at all times
- intervene in accordance with the contract chosen by the client
- inform the client about time at the end of the session and whenever the client requests
- end the session immediately if the client becomes irresponsibly harmful to themselves, the counsellor, other people, or the environment

6. The counsellor's intervention is a behaviour that facilitates the client's work. It may be verbal, and/or nonverbal through eye contact, facial expression, gesture, posture or touch.

7. A verbal intervention is a practical suggestion about what the client may say or do as a way of enhancing their working process within the session. It is not a stated interpretation or analysis and does not give advice. It is not driven by counsellor distress and is not harmful or invasive. It liberates client autonomy and self-esteem.

8. The main use of nonverbal interventions is to give sustained, supportive and distress-free attention: being present for the client in a way that affirms and enables full emergence. This use is the foundation of all three contracts given below. Nonverbal interventions can also be used to elaborate verbal interventions; or to work on their own in conveying a practical suggestion; or, in the case of touch, to release discharge through appropriate kinds of pressure, applied movement or massage.

9. The contract which the client chooses at the start of the session is an agreement about time, and primarily about the range and type of intervention the counsellor will make. The three kinds of contract are:

- Free attention. The counsellor makes no verbal interventions and only uses nonverbal interventions to give sustained, supportive attention. The client is entirely self-directing in managing their own working process.
- Normal. The counsellor is alert to what the client misses and makes some interventions of

either kind to facilitate and enhance what the client is working on. There is a co-operative balance between client self-direction and counsellor suggestions.

- Intensive. The counsellor makes as many interventions as seem necessary to enable the client to deepen and sustain their process, hold a direction, interrupt a pattern and liberate discharge. This may include leading a client in working areas being omitted or avoided. The counsellor may take a sensitive, finely-tuned and sustained directive role.

10. Counsellors have a right to interrupt a client's session if they are too heavily restimulated by what the client is working on and so cannot sustain effective attention. If, when they explain this to the client, the client continues to work in the same way, then they have a right to withdraw completely from the session.

11. Whatever a client works on in a session is confidential. The counsellor, or others giving attention in a group, do not refer to it in any way in any context, unless the client has given them explicit, specific permission to do so. It is, however, to be taken into account, where relevant, by the counsellor in future sessions with the same client.

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