

# Counseling

## CAP Officer Basic Course

### Introduction

There are many types of counseling. When one thinks of counseling, one might think of say, Dr. Joyce Brothers, Dr. John Gray, even Dr. Phil. That's not the type of counseling we're talking about here.

The goal of this lesson is to introduce you to the types of counseling you will give and receive as a CAP member. We will focus on four types of counseling common to CAP situations; personal problems, disciplinary issues, career and performance. As a CAP member, situations may arise where counseling is appropriate. This lesson is only a brief introduction to what can be considered work-related counseling issues. While members may come to one another with personal problems on occasion, counseling, in the context of this lesson is NOT emotional or behavioral counseling. Those types of counseling must be left to professionals.

Counseling is a process whereby a qualified person purposefully assists another person to solve a problem, critique an event or performance; or plan for the future. Counseling is not just giving advice, it's mutual trust and understanding. Ideally, counseling is an opportunity for you to help your people intelligently adjust to different situations. Counseling is a skill gained through knowledge and practice of time-tested fundamentals or traits. Although most of us are not inclined to invest the time to become a professional counselor, all of us can and should work to attain the characteristics of a good counselor.

### **1. Explain the four types of counseling commonly used in Civil Air Patrol.**

In CAP, there are no specialty tracks specific to counseling. Counseling in CAP is a skill that leaders employ in the context of leading members and accomplishing the mission. There are a few roles where members will have had some special training and certification such as Chaplains. The CAP Critical Incident and Stress Management (CISM) Teams are also specially trained to counsel in traumatic situations. Some members may have professional training as part of their non-CAP responsibilities such as doctors, therapists, etc. However, unless you are a chaplain, or a CISM team member performing in specific situations covered by those roles, you need to be very careful of when and to what extent you counsel others. This caution is not only because of legal liability concerns for the corporation but also for concerns that the member being counseled is getting the most appropriate assistance for their situation. Never hesitate to elevate a situation to higher headquarters for advice on appropriate methods or referrals. Some examples will be provided later in this lesson.

The right approach depends on the situation or issue, your role and responsibility in the unit or activity, and the people involved, among other possible factors. CAP counseling is confined to four areas: personal counseling, disciplinary counseling, career counseling, and performance counseling.

### **PERSONAL COUNSELING**

Personal problems counseling is the area members need to exercise the most caution and probably refer the individuals to professionals in most cases. In this area, situations or issues arise where a member has either come to the individual seeking advice or the member has displayed some sign of "having a problem." The issues are generally non-CAP in nature and may be anything from marital problems to job-related issues. As CAP members, we should have concern, compassion, and respect for each other as human beings. As concerned teammates, we should acknowledge that a personal problem may exist, and even recognize that it may be affecting their participation in CAP activities. Offer sympathy, listen, but resist

giving advice. Be prepared to refer the individual to the appropriate professional for in-depth counseling.

### **DISCIPLINARY COUNSELING**

Disciplinary Counseling is another area in which the member doing the counseling must exercise caution. This area often deals with anger, control issues, infractions of the rules, etc. The timing, method, and who will be doing the counseling must all be carefully considered. These issues usually involve incorrect behaviors during CAP activities. Typically, the counseling for these situations should be done by the unit commander or other person delegated the responsibility for the activity.

### **CAREER COUNSELING**

Career counseling is a review of what training and experience you have had and what training and experience you need in order to achieve your CAP career goals. Related to this is mentoring and there are number of CAP publications on mentoring available under "Publications" on the national web page and through the Chaplain Corps. Career Counseling may be provided informally by just about any CAP member with the right knowledge of the areas of interest. Typically, however, career counseling is done by the unit Commander, Deputy Commander or the Professional Development Officer. These individuals have in-depth knowledge of the various opportunities and requirements for progression with the CAP programs.

### **PERFORMANCE COUNSELING**

Performance counseling is a review of the quality of work. You will give and receive performance counseling numerous times in your civilian and CAP careers. Doing this well is the topic of a number of lectures, articles and course available from numerous sources. All CAP members from Cadets to Officers may be involved in this type of counseling.

## **2. Discuss areas where counseling may arise among CAP members, and when it is appropriate to counsel or refer members to professionals.**

In this section, for the personal counseling and disciplinary counseling types, we will provide several examples of counseling situations, identify the type of counseling needed and who should provide the counseling. For the career counseling and performance counseling types, we will outline when situations would occur and their framework.

### **PERSONAL COUNSELING SITUATIONS**

In most personal counseling situations, members who confide in each other are also friends. These are delicate issues which are not spoken of publicly and require the upmost discretion by anyone who does know. Having said that, remind the member that you will be discrete but you do not offer privacy protection unless you are a professional counselor or chaplain.

- A member/friend comes to you with a personal problem in his/her marriage. If your unit has one, refer the member to the CAP Chaplain. You should let the individual know you care about them as a person and are willing to listen, but that you are not qualified to give them advice.
- You notice a member you are friendly with is missing a lot of meetings, arrives late, is not as engaged as in previous activities and, in general, doesn't seem to care about the activity. You know this is not the member's usual behavior. You should take the individual aside and acknowledge that something is amiss. "Are you okay?" is a nonthreatening start. The member confides he is having some critical financial

difficulties and is considering bankruptcy. First, assure the member of complete discretion and do not share this information with others.

- If the personal problem is between two CAP members and it is affecting their ability to effectively participate in unit activities, you should refer the situation to the unit commander. If you are the Commander, offer to mediate a discussion with both parties. Let the members know you are concerned for them as individuals and for the health of the organization. Your goal is to help clear the air so they can get back to being productive team members. You may want to have the Chaplain or Deputy Commander sit in for another set of ears. If the issue is too complex or large, refer them to outside counseling or to higher authorities within the organization if appropriate.

During a long CAP career someone will share a typical personal problem with you. As adults we have all had this experience before. Here are some ways to make the situation more comfortable for all involved.

- Do not judge, and do not give in to the temptation to take sides if there is a conflict.
- Listen with compassion (caring), with empathy (trying to see things from their point of view and how they feel), acceptance (an understanding that what they share is important to them and a problem for them) and respect (for them as a person). (Allaboutcounseling.com July 2009) Understand the problem as they see it, again, without being judgmental.
- Find out what the confider wants from you. Often it is just an ear to bend. Sometimes it's advice. Frequently they want sympathy. Sometimes they want something else. The way to find out what they want is to ask.
- Sometimes the problem is too personal or too big. When this is the case, do not be afraid to refer the confider to the chaplain, commander, or professional whenever appropriate.

**NOTE:** There are extremely rare instances when you must report a confider's personal issue, such as a Cadet Protection issue (see CAPR 52-10), report of criminal behavior, or safety issue. In these instances, if you are unsure, talk to the chaplain, commander, or legal officer.

## **DISCIPLINARY COUNSELING SITUATIONS**

At this point in your career you shouldn't be involved in a lot of disciplinary counseling, unless you are already a commander or in a position such as Deputy Commander for Cadets or Leadership Officer. However, you will be asked to participate later in your CAP career, particularly as you enter leadership roles. The situations below assume you are in a leadership role. When reading the scenarios always remember that public admonitions are to be avoided. Do not discipline in public.

- A member has repeatedly come to meetings or activities wearing the uniform incorrectly. As a unit commander, you should point out the discrepancies immediately and identify the required corrective actions. Repeated infractions should be followed with written counseling and further consequences. If you are not a commander, you may discreetly point out the discrepancies but, any actual disciplinary counseling should be done by the commanders.
- Two members are arguing loudly in front of other members. Call the members into a private room to address the behavior. The actual topic of the argument is secondary to the behavior. Arguing in front of team members or cadets undermines morale, unit cohesion, and leadership credibility. The members should be reminded that they are role models for cadets and that their behavior is unacceptable in this environment.
- You discover a flight crew member has knowingly accepted a flight assignment without having had the minimum amount of crew rest. Refer the matter to the

appropriate official, Incident commander, unit commander, etc. If you are the commander, discuss with the member what the infraction is, what guidance was violated (FARs, AFIs, CAPRs, etc.). Discuss the logic for the rule, the dangers of ignoring the rule, and the consequences of continued infractions.

## **CAREER COUNSELING**

Career counseling looks at the "big picture" of a CAP member's career. Look at where the member is now and where they would like to be in the future. Then develop a plan to get there. Career counseling should occur periodically and because CAP meetings tend to be full, these sessions need to be scheduled into a workable routine. Career counseling sessions are between the member, their mentor, their supervisor and the Professional Development Officer (PDO).

This is not an evaluation, it is a planning session. The purpose of the session is make sure the member getting/going to get the right training and experience for their duty assignment and long term plans. Having the member's mentor or flight leader/commander join the discussion will add the strengths and weakness discussion to the meeting and plan.

The session should start with making sure the member has had the right training for their duty assignment. If the training is incomplete arrangements should be made on the spot to correct any deficiencies. The next step is to develop a plan that will get the member the training and experience they need for their long term goal. Gaining the right experience may mean taking on an additional duty or doing an activity outside the squadron. The plan should also encourage the member to be involved in all three of CAP's missions in some way. The plan should be specific and written. There are plenty of good books and articles on goal setting so we won't go into it here.

As a member and as a CAP leader you should regularly be involved in career counseling - at this stage as the member being counseled. A career counseling meeting takes preparation by all those involved. The subject needs to know what they have done, what they want to do and draft out a plan. The PDO needs to review the subject's record and draft out a plan that is consistent with the member's goals, the unit's needs/goals, and the CAP Professional Development program. The supervisor and mentor need to be able to articulate the strengths and weakness of the member and how they will continue to contribute to the member's growth.

## **PERFORMANCE COUNSELING**

Performance counseling is often called feedback. A look at the dictionary definitions of feedback and criticism will show that it is a precise review of things done well and not so well. A good example in the corporate world would be an annual or biennial performance review.

Performance counseling done well improves morale, self-esteem and identifies appropriate behavior we want to continue. It should be scheduled regularly. This sort of counseling can be done by the person's mentor, supervisor or commander. The goal of this discussion is to improve the member and organization.

The best way to phrase feedback during performance counseling is to use descriptive phrases, like "Those directions were unclear.", or "You were very efficient in finding the target". You should avoid evaluative terms like "good" or "bad". The person knows whether "unclear" or "efficient" was good or bad. Furthermore, descriptive terms help the person to know exactly what to build on or work on, rather than trying to guess why something was good or bad.

Performance counseling should follow a schedule, or in the case of an event-related session follow the event as soon as possible. This is why there are debriefings at the end of missions

and major activities. When done promptly the event is clear in everyone's mind, it helps with goal setting, and it prevents people from wasting time and developing bad habits.

A good technique to use in performance counseling is to share good news and bad news, then end the session with goal planning. When using this technique, cover the good news first. It gets the session off to a positive beginning and allows the counselee to ease their defenses. Start this section with "What was done well?" This gives the member a chance to brag, you a chance to agree and they may point out things you missed. It also shifts the emphasis to the positive. In this way, they will receive any bad news more openly. Caution: earned praise does improve self-image, so beware of padding the good news section.

When broaching the bad news, you may start out with "What could have been done better?" It shows respect for the member's opinion, put the onus on the member, develops the self-evaluation skills and gives you material for the goal setting section. Then go on to the good news. Research suggests that false praise does not improve self-esteem and diminishes giver's integrity.

Finish with the goal setting section. This is where all present agree on what they are going to do to improve and what standards will be used to measure success. This focuses everyone on the future and gives them a sense of control. It also gets a commitment from everyone to be part of the growth of the member.

This sort of critique can be given to people at any level and applied to any situation. It works with a cadet, "Sergeant, your flanking movements are performed in unison and are constant. But, a little work is needed on the columns because during execution the flight's pace speeds up. We can work on the column movements next week." During a SAREX, the feedback may sound like, "Six of the tasks performed today we done quite well, professionally and expeditiously. But it seems that you didn't have the resources to complete the other 6 tasks. I'm also curious why you didn't call another wing for help. When we resume tomorrow let's see what other resources we can find."

Learning to give this type of critique takes practice. Most of us don't have a lot of practice, it can be hard to find the right words, you have to pay close attention and do logical thinking before hand. Even though it is hard to do, the rewards are greater. You leave with a plan for improvement, there are standards to measure by, and the subject feels that the evaluation was fairer and that their interests were vital to the conversation. Personal goals can be matched to unit goals and it is part of the planning process.

### **3. Identify counseling characteristics, methods or techniques CAP members may use for a positive effect.**

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD COUNSELOR**

A competent counselor should display sincerity, good listening skills, and integrity to successfully assist people in gaining a better understanding of themselves and their problems. A good counselor, above all, will be sincerely interested in the person and the problem. Insincerity is very easy for most people to detect, and it can seriously degrade the effectiveness of any counseling session. A sincere counselor will make time for the counselee and schedule the session so both parties have enough time to speak/listen.

Next, a good counselor will listen attentively to what is being said and perceptively hear what the individual really means. Most of us are very good at talking but need to consciously make an effort to actively listen.

Finally, integrity is a fundamental character trait for any successful counselor. As previously discussed under personal leadership qualities, integrity is the quality of being of sound moral

principal, upright, and honest. A counselee is more likely to confide in a counselor of obvious integrity.

## **PLANNING AND TIMING**

Prepare a plan to effectively use the time and location. Personal problems cannot be scheduled, and they should be dealt with quickly, but also in a deliberate manner. If you delay it is certainly stressful to the people involved, a distraction to the organization, and they often get worse. You can not rush a compassionate, empathetic, accepting, respectful conversation. You will also need to make time for follow-up with the person or time to get a professional involved.

Disciplinary counseling must be done as quickly as possible to prevent repeating the negative behavior. Be sure the location is appropriate as well. Most of these should be done behind closed doors. The person doing the counseling must be in the proper position of authority to discipline.

Career counseling can be scheduled ahead of time. But it should happen at least when the member completes a training requirement, or when the member is about to enter/leave a duty assignment. You will know when this is going to happen several weeks in advance and should plan for it. It may take place at a squadron meeting or require some time outside the meeting.

Another time to do career counseling is when a member has not progressed beyond a certain grade for quite some time. This may suggest that they may have wandered off their career path or need to be guided toward the next steps in the program.

Performance counseling can frequently be anticipated as well. There are several good times to hold a planned, performance counseling session: several months before being eligible for promotion, or when it is time to renew a membership. These can be scheduled months in advance. There are opportunities for performance counseling that arise during the course of duty. They include when the member attempts something new, makes noticeable deviation above or below the standard, or a deviation from past performances. Take advantage of this as a "teaching moment."

In the hectic pace of a squadron, and life in general, it is easy to forget to schedule counseling. But there are a couple of things you can do to help yourself. Put it in your appointment book/PDA/Blackberry and have it scheduled for every year at that time. You can put a reminder in a folder that you go into periodically such as the supply of forms used to evaluate cadets, or another form you use for periodic reports or a file you keep for planning some annual event. Tie it to some periodic event like your birthday or membership renewal or both. It could be something as simple as you participate in some counseling session on the first or fifth meeting of the month. The point is, as a CAP leader and as member you need to be giving and getting feedback.

## **METHODS**

The method a counselor chooses may be either direct approach (counselor-centered) or indirect approach (counselee-centered)-although a combination of both is often appropriate.

### **Direct approach**

When the counselor assumes the initiative and carries a major part of the responsibility for problem identification and resolution he or she is using the direct approach. This approach has a long and honored history. James Carroll, in his book *Face to Face* calls this approach, "I talk, you listen". Traditionally, people faced with problems and personal crisis turn for guidance to those they consider wiser and more experienced - this approach is useful in those cases. This direct approach to counseling might also be called the problem-solving approach. The counselor collects pertinent information with aims to determine the problem and cause.

This may happen to some degree before the counseling session begins. During the session, the counselor discusses the problem with the counselee and sparingly makes recommendations or suggestions. Carroll also warns that the counselor must not stifle counselee input even though the directive approach is being used. Disciplinary counseling is another example of when directive approach may be appropriate.

### **Non-directive**

The non-directive method (also called counselee-centered) was developed primarily by psychologist Dr. Carl B. Rogers. As the name would suggest, the counselor's participation is minimal, and the techniques of reflection and acceptance are used to encourage the counselee to freely express himself. The counselor pays particular attention to the emotion and attitudes associated with the problem. Additionally, the counselee is encouraged to choose the goals, make the decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions. The counselor should genuinely have faith in the counselee to work out the problem. This method is limited by the ability and intelligence of the counselee. It is also limited by the desire of the individual to change for the better. Despite these limitations, the non-directive method of counseling is most appropriate more often than the directive.

### **TECHNIQUES**

Counseling techniques are a series of questions, or the process, to help the counselor conduct an effective session. Just as the counselor must determine the best overall method for handling each situation, the counselor should also selectively employ effective counseling techniques (questioning, encouragement, and non-verbal behavior) to ensure a successful session. First, when questioning, the counselor should ask questions to encourage the counselee's participation. The questions should be few, but steer the counselee toward a solution. Avoid "why" questions because they can cause the counselee to become defensive. Also, avoid questions where the counselee could simply answer "yes" or "no." The counselor should strive to keep the counselee talking.

Next, practice encouragement by making simple statements of support that reassure the counselee that the counselor is genuinely there to help. This can include sympathizing, like the statement, "I see this is a difficult subject for you." This technique will help keep the session from stalling if the counselee becomes angry or withdraws. Finally, the counselor should be aware of the nonverbal behavior-body language (actions, gestures, or even tone of voice) can distract the counselee. Crossing your arms or frowning can cause the counselee to withdraw or become angry. Sitting behind a desk, a counselor can come across as domineering or adversarial. Instead, sit at two chairs on the same side of the table. A comfortable setting goes a long way toward an effective counseling session. Additionally, the counselor should be aware of the body language coming from the counselee. For example, clenched fists may indicate unwillingness to open up. These techniques are best employed as part of a counseling plan

### **COUNSELING PLANS**

A counseling plan should be developed for every session and should include a meeting objective, method of counseling, and an opening statement. First, according to Carroll, the objective needs to be focused-not to, "improve his performance" but perhaps to advise him on your expectations. If you cannot leave the session with your objective being met, it is not an appropriate objective. Next, your objective should lead you to a decision on the method of counseling to be used. If, again, your objective is to advise the counselee of your expectations, then at least a portion of your session must be directive. Finally, opening the session by defining the problem and letting the counselee know what observations you have made is key to setting the tone for the session. The tone you set is dependent on your objectives and the method you have selected based on that objective. The opening statement should clearly define the purpose of the session and describe the situation as you, the

counselor, see it. By doing these things you are off on a good step toward solving the problem. After your opening statement, however, you are on uncharted territory and must depend on the techniques discussed, your sincerity, and experience to guide both you and the counselee to an acceptable conclusion.

## **Lesson Summary and Closure**

Counseling does not have to be a negative event. It is simply one of many methods to communicate with your folks in order to accomplish an objective. This lesson is designed to give you a framework from which to learn, not to make you a professional counselor. Although no one can tell you when it will occur, it is important for you to realize your limitations and not try to fix problems you are not qualified to fix. Referring someone to a professional (i.e. a financial expert or other specialist) is one of the most appropriate actions you could take to assist someone in trouble. With time and practice counseling will become a skill that will serve you and those who serve with you for years to come.

## **Works Cited**

Counseling and Social Issues: <http://allaboutcounseling.com>

CAP Professional Development Modules Online:

[http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/Prof\\_Dev\\_Modules/cap\\_lesson\\_15/lesson15\\_html/lesson15.htm](http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/Prof_Dev_Modules/cap_lesson_15/lesson15_html/lesson15.htm)