

REEVALUATION COUNSELING

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Introduction to Reevaluation Counseling (RC)

Reevaluation Counseling, often referred to simply as **RC** or **Co-Counseling**, is a unique and comprehensive system of peer support and personal liberation developed to help individuals recover their innate intelligence and ability to handle life effectively. At its core, RC operates on the fundamental premise that all human beings are born with vast intellectual potential, natural zest, and inherent goodness, but this potential becomes obscured or blocked by the accumulation of painful past experiences, which are collectively termed **distress**. Unlike traditional forms of psychotherapy where a professional clinician directs the process, RC utilizes a structured co-counseling method, allowing two participants to alternate roles as counselor and subject (or client), thus empowering individuals within a reciprocal and egalitarian relationship. The ultimate purpose of this methodology is to facilitate the complete emotional discharge of accumulated hurts, thereby enabling the subject to reevaluate past situations accurately and restore their natural intellectual functioning, leading to lasting behavioral change and increased self-awareness.

The structure of Reevaluation Counseling is defined by its rigorous adherence to specific guidelines that ensure safety, confidentiality, and effectiveness in the counseling session, known as a "session." Crucially, the entire practice revolves around the concept of mutual empowerment, where both individuals are trained in the basic techniques and theoretical underpinnings necessary to facilitate genuine healing. This approach decentralizes the traditional authority structure of therapy, promoting the view that individuals, given the right supportive environment and understanding of how distress operates, are perfectly capable of helping both themselves and others. The success of RC hinges on the subject's ability to engage in **discharge**--the natural, biological process of releasing painful emotions through mechanisms such as crying, laughing, trembling, shouting, or yawning--while the counselor provides focused, non-judgmental attention, known as **client attention**.

While the term Co-Counseling is sometimes used broadly to describe any mutual peer support arrangement, within the context of Reevaluation Counseling, it denotes a highly specific practice governed by the theoretical framework established by its founder. This framework mandates strict adherence to time limits, ensuring equity in the exchange of attention, and emphasizes the subject's autonomy in choosing what topics to work on. The methodology asserts that psychological distress is not a permanent flaw in character but rather a temporary impediment--an accumulation of undigested experience that, once fully processed and discharged, leaves the individual free to think clearly and creatively once more. The widespread training and community structure associated with RC distinguish it significantly from casual peer support groups, emphasizing rigorous theoretical understanding alongside practical application.

Historical Context and Development

The origins of Reevaluation Counseling trace back directly to the work of **Harvey Jackins**, an influential and often controversial figure who developed the core theory and methodology primarily during the 1950s and early 1960s in Seattle, Washington. Jackins, initially trained in mathematics and interested in social change and human potential, began experimenting with various forms of group dynamics and supportive listening techniques. He sought a reliable, universally applicable method for overcoming psychological barriers that did not require dependency on expensive or scarce professional resources. His observations led him to theorize about the mechanisms of emotional pain and recovery, particularly focusing on the observable physical manifestations of emotional release, which he termed discharge.

Jackins synthesized these observations into a coherent theory of human nature and distress, positing that all humans are inherently intelligent and cooperative, but that traumatic experiences cause a temporary paralysis of this intelligence. This paralysis results in the storage of painful emotions and inaccurate conclusions, which then form chronic, damaging behavioral patterns known as **distress recordings** or **patterns**. By the mid-1960s, Jackins had formalized the theory and established the first structured training groups. He recognized that for the system to be scalable and accessible, it needed to be built upon a foundation of mutual aid, where every participant could function effectively in both the role of receiver and giver of attention, formalizing the concept of alternating roles.

The growth of Reevaluation Counseling led to the formation of the organization now known internationally as the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities (often referred to as the RC Community or Rational Island Publishers). Jackins served as the International Reference Person until his death, guiding the theory's evolution and overseeing the training structure. The development of RC was marked by an emphasis on spreading the knowledge widely through accessible, low-cost workshops and publications, ensuring that the techniques were not monopolized by a professional elite. This commitment to accessibility has allowed RC to establish networks globally, maintaining a strong organizational structure dedicated to teaching the core theory and ensuring the fidelity of the co-counseling practice across diverse cultures and socio-economic groups.

Core Principles of RC Theory

The theoretical foundation of Reevaluation Counseling rests upon several core principles regarding human nature and the nature of distress. The most crucial principle is the inherent worth and **innate potential** of every individual. RC theory posits that intelligence--defined not just as cognitive ability but as the capacity to interact creatively and flexibly with the environment--is the natural state of humanity. This innate state includes characteristics such as boundless energy,

inherent self-esteem, deep connection to others, and a natural inclination toward cooperation and joy. Distress is viewed as an unnatural overlay that temporarily blocks this inherent functioning, not a permanent defect in the person.

A second fundamental principle concerns the mechanism of psychological injury: the **distress recording**. When a person experiences pain, fear, loss, or trauma, their innate intelligence attempts to process the event. If the trauma is overwhelming, or if the person is prevented from engaging in natural emotional discharge (e.g., being told not to cry), the experience is recorded in the brain like a literal recording--complete with the inaccurate conclusions, sensations, and emotional charge of the moment. These recordings, or patterns, are rigid, illogical, and compulsive. They dictate subsequent behavior, causing the person to react to new situations based on old, unresolved pain, rather than current reality. This mechanism explains why people engage in irrational or self-defeating behaviors.

The third key principle is the concept of **restimulation**. Distress recordings remain latent until they encounter a situation in the present that bears some similarity to the original traumatic event. When this similarity is detected, the recording is "restimulated" and begins to play, causing the individual to feel the old emotions and behave according to the old, painful pattern, often without realizing they are reacting to the past, not the present. RC theory holds that the goal of counseling is to interrupt this restimulation cycle by creating a safe environment where the individual can intentionally activate the distress pattern, allowing the associated emotional charge (the "recording") to be fully discharged through biological means, thereby freeing the underlying intelligence to operate.

The Methodology of Co-Counseling

The practical application of Reevaluation Counseling is centered entirely on the structured **co-counseling session**. This methodology requires two participants, who are peers and have been trained in RC techniques, to strictly alternate roles. One person acts as the **Client** (or subject), receiving focused attention and working on their distress, while the other acts as the **Counselor**, providing attention, support, and specific interventions designed to encourage discharge. The most defining characteristic of the session is the strict equality of time: typically, a session is split precisely in half (e.g., 45 minutes as Client, 45 minutes as Counselor), ensuring that the relationship remains non-hierarchical and mutually beneficial.

The role of the Counselor is highly specific and different from that of a conventional therapist. The Counselor's primary responsibility is to provide **client attention**--a focused, optimistic, and non-judgmental presence that conveys the belief in the Client's inherent capacity for healing. The Counselor does not offer advice, interpretation, or analysis of the Client's problems, as RC theory asserts that the Client's own intelligence, once freed by discharge, is the best guide. Instead, the

Counselor uses specific techniques, such as asking open-ended questions, encouraging emotional expression, or simply repeating statements, all designed to encourage the Client to stay present with the painful emotion and facilitate the discharge process.

When acting as the Client, the individual is encouraged to choose a topic or experience that causes current distress or re-stimulation. The Client is expected to actively engage with the material, allowing themselves to feel the associated pain, anger, fear, or grief, and allowing the natural discharge mechanisms to take over. Essential to the methodology is the use of **Grown-up Thinking**, where the Client, while discharging painful emotions, is encouraged to maintain awareness of their current reality and safety. This dual awareness--feeling the old pain while knowing they are safe in the present--is what allows the reevaluation process to occur, leading to new, accurate conclusions about the past event once the emotional charge has been released.

The Role of Discharge and Reevaluation

Central to the entire RC framework is the concept of **discharge**, which is viewed as the biological mechanism of psychological healing. Discharge is the body's natural means of externalizing and releasing the energy contained within distress recordings. RC identifies several forms of effective discharge, each corresponding to different types of stored pain.

Crying: Associated with grief, sadness, and loss. Deep, convulsive crying is viewed as highly effective for releasing these painful emotions, thereby clearing the way for thinking about the loss accurately.

Laughter: Associated with fear, embarrassment, or mild trauma, provided the laughter is genuine and robust, not nervous giggling. Laughter is crucial for releasing chronic tension and mild irrationality.

Trembling: Associated primarily with terror, shock, or deep fear. Allowing the body to shake uncontrollably is seen as the necessary process for dispelling the frozen energy of fear.

Yawning and Stretching: Often associated with mental fatigue or the release of chronic tension related to suppression of feelings.

Shouting and Angry Sounds: Associated with rage and frustration, allowing the release of suppressed anger without causing harm.

The effectiveness of a co-counseling session is primarily measured by the quality and quantity of discharge achieved. RC theory holds that meaningful reevaluation--the cognitive process of forming new, accurate conclusions about a past event--cannot happen reliably until the emotional charge is fully released. Discharge acts like cleaning the slate; once the emotional recording is wiped clean, the person's inherent intelligence immediately steps in and reorganizes the

information logically, leading to a permanent shift in perspective and behavior. This **reevaluation** is the critical, self-directed outcome that gives the methodology its name.

It is important to note that RC differentiates between constructive discharge and simply "talking about problems." If a person recounts their painful experiences without accessing the underlying emotional charge (for instance, talking intellectually or defensively), they are merely restimulating the pattern without releasing it. The Counselor's role, therefore, is to gently but firmly guide the Client away from storytelling and toward the actual emotional experience, ensuring that the session time is used for genuine, cathartic release that facilitates the subsequent intellectual clarity.

Key Concepts: Distress Patterns and Restimulation

The concept of **distress patterns** is vital for understanding why RC interventions are designed the way they are. A distress pattern is a complex, rigid structure composed of the original painful event, the resulting inaccurate conclusions ("I am bad," "I am helpless"), and the compulsive behaviors adopted to cope with the pain. These patterns often manifest as chronic psychological afflictions, such as debilitating shyness, excessive anger, perfectionism, or persistent self-doubt. RC emphasizes that these behaviors are not character flaws but logical (though painful) attempts by the young or traumatized self to survive an overwhelming situation.

When a pattern is **restimulated** in the present, the person momentarily loses access to their adult intelligence and reacts as if they were back in the original traumatic situation. For example, a person who experienced abandonment as a child may react with intense, irrational panic whenever a modern relationship experiences minor distance. The RC framework teaches participants to recognize when they are operating "in pattern" versus when they are operating from their clear, inherent intelligence. Recognizing the restimulation is the first step toward effective discharge.

RC theory also addresses the concept of **chronic distress**, which refers to deeply ingrained, pervasive patterns that form the foundation of an individual's personality structure. These chronic patterns require sustained, consistent counseling over time to fully resolve. Furthermore, RC posits that distress is often cumulative and systemic. It acknowledges the role of societal oppression (racism, sexism, classism) in generating large-scale, chronic distress patterns that affect entire groups of people. RC sessions are often dedicated to discharging the distress resulting from these oppressive experiences, utilizing the fundamental principle that systematic injustice is a major source of widespread psychological injury that requires collective effort for reevaluation.

The Goal of RC: Recovery of Intelligence

The overarching goal of Reevaluation Counseling is not merely symptom reduction or coping mechanisms, but the complete **recovery of inherent intelligence and potential**. RC maintains an extremely high view of human potential, arguing that true mental health is characterized by flexible

thinking, emotional resilience, deep satisfaction, and an unwavering commitment to improving the world. A successful RC process leads to the permanent dismantling of distress patterns, allowing the individual to approach life's challenges from a position of strength and clarity, rather than reacting defensively out of old pain.

The recovered intelligence manifests in several concrete ways. First, there is a marked increase in **clarity and rationality**. The individual is able to distinguish easily between past pain and present reality, leading to better decision-making and problem-solving skills. Second, there is a restoration of **emotional responsiveness**. Rather than being emotionally numb or overreactive, the individual can feel and process emotions appropriately in the moment without falling into compulsive patterns. This leads to authentic relationships and genuine connection with others.

Finally, the recovered intelligence inherently drives the individual towards **social engagement and liberation**. RC theory posits that distress makes people isolated and competitive, while recovered intelligence naturally leads to cooperation and a desire to dismantle oppressive structures. Therefore, participation in the RC Community often involves combining personal healing work with active efforts to address societal issues, viewing individual recovery and collective liberation as deeply interconnected processes. The goal is always to move beyond mere adjustment to the world as it is, toward actively shaping a world where human potential is fully realized for everyone.

The RC Community and Organizational Structure

The practice of Reevaluation Counseling is inextricably linked to the global organization known as the **Re-evaluation Counseling Communities**. Unlike methodologies often practiced by independent professionals, RC emphasizes that the most effective context for sustained healing and growth is within a supportive, trained peer community. This community provides the necessary infrastructure for ongoing learning, access to co-counseling partners, and the dissemination of new developments in the theory.

The organizational structure is highly formalized, ensuring consistency in training and practice worldwide. Access to co-counseling typically begins with an introductory class taught by a certified RC Teacher, where participants learn the basic theory, the guidelines for safe sessions, and the technical skills required for both the Client and Counselor roles. This initial training is crucial because the effectiveness of co-counseling relies entirely on the participants' shared, detailed understanding of the RC theoretical framework.

The community structure facilitates the vital ongoing practice needed for deep healing. Members are encouraged to maintain regular co-counseling exchanges with various partners, participate in workshops (called "classes" or "workshops"), and engage in the organization's political and social liberation projects. The RC Community is managed globally by the International Reference Person and various Area and Regional Reference Persons, whose role is to maintain the integrity of the

theory and ensure adherence to the guidelines established by Harvey Jackins. This commitment to a structured, trained community differentiates RC significantly from informal peer support, providing a robust, long-term resource for individuals seeking profound psychological change through mutual aid.

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