

Methods but not shared ones

Philosophical counselors have methods such as questioning background assumptions, examining concepts, clarifying the counselee's thoughts, trying to see familiar situations in a new light, opening up novel ways to understand the counselee's wishes and fears, interpreting dreams, eliciting and fostering the counselee's character strengths, encouraging the counselee in her decisions, urging the counselee to look at things from a detached, objective perspective, and so on. Here 'method' means a way of doing things, or a way of proceeding.

For most of us there is no *single* method of counseling, at least not in the sense that Haas refers to: a series of preconceived steps towards a predetermined goal. This sounds too rigid to characterize what the majority of counselors do. There are many methods, not just one, and the methods are always flexible. Of course, if we define the goal and the steps in very broad, abstract terms, and if we add that these steps can in some cases be skipped, and that the aim itself is not absolutely fixed, then it becomes plausible to think that there can be a single method for counseling - if not for all counselors, then at least for some.

In any case philosophical counselors inescapably have their own variable styles and approaches, their characteristic ideas and points of emphasis. There is no set of methods that is applied across the field, and perhaps we do not need such a shared set.