

COUNSELING or CONSULTATION

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All of us have our personal stories of how we came to astrology, what motivated us and how it changed our view of life and of ourselves. This experience, plus our professional, educational and philosophical background are the things that we bring to our practice of astrology when we begin to read for other people/clients.

Some practitioners come to astrology from the field of psychology and therapy, which primarily deals with people's inner life, their emotional issues, and how it helps or hinders them in their response to situations. The discussions, therefore, tend to focus on helping the client resolve emotional issues and achieve awareness, self-growth and a better attitude and balance in life.

Yet, many, if not most astrologers, practice astrology from a different angle. Some call it spiritual, while others practice good old-fashioned event-oriented predictive astrology, and some even practice financial and business-related astrology.

The psychological approach is represented in Bernard Rosenblum book *The Astrologer's Guide to Counseling*, where he discusses the role of the professional astrologer as a counselor, addressing some of the situations that are specific to astrology, and resorting to the long-studied field of patient-therapist relationship, its methods and its potential pitfalls.

Rosenblum makes a useful distinction between providing *education, counseling or therapy* for the client. **Education** is mostly imparting information to the client where the astrologer does most of the talking with minimum client's participation. **Counseling** is working with the client to resolve specific issues in a dialogue mode, which allows the client to take more responsibility in the process. The purpose of **therapy** is to engender lasting behavioral changes.

Yet, another term must be considered here and that is the astrologer as a '**consultant**', as many of us prefer to call ourselves. This word implies some level of professional objectivity and personal detachment. At the risk of over-simplification, I will summarize it as: "Here are the facts and your alternatives. You decide what you want to do about them".

The practice styles described above are based on the ideas of the Conscious vs, the Subconscious Mind, yet personally, I believe in the model of the Soul and its Agenda as it shown in the chart. In my philosophical view, what is usually referred to as the Subconscious is actually the Soul, and the Mind is the conscious experience of it. The Soul comes into the world with an 'agenda' – a plan for life, and this agenda is shown in all its details in the astrological chart.

Therefore, above all, we are **Metaphysicians**, and our role as astrologers is to nurture and guide the Soul in its journey, as it is fulfilling its *Agenda* in this life on earth. **It's not about dysfunction but about destiny and purpose !**

When we begin our journey into professional astrology, at first it seems that what we need most is technical skills, in order to achieve and recreate the 'wow' experience that we first had. Very quickly we discover that there is a whole layer of people's skills that is needed, such as observation and good listening and compassion, as well as awareness of a whole range of situations we may encounter when dealing with people who come to us for advice, whether we are astrological 'educators', 'counselors', 'therapists', 'metaphysicians' or simply 'consultants'.

Regardless of the style of astrology practiced, we must always remember that the person sitting in front of us in the consultation room is at a vulnerable or low point in their life. That's why they come to us for a reading. At such a moment we are dealing with their raw emotions, their crisis situation, their dilemmas and their expectations from us.

As in any situation, where one person is the advisor, the helper and the all-knowing "savior" while the other is in the more vulnerable and weaker position, certain dynamics may arise which can be productive on the one hand, or counter-productive, and even destructive on the other, if the astrologer is not aware of these things. Astrology is akin to psychology in that they both deal with people's lives on many levels, so it is possible to compare these two fields both from the point of view of similarity or differences. Dr. Rosenblum aptly points out the similarities in terms of the counseling process, its techniques and its pitfalls in the specific context of astrology.

In my experience, not all astrological clients seek "hand holding" and emotional help. Some are looking for business advice or how to approach a current circumstantial crisis, or even simply don't wish to share their innermost world with a stranger. The astrologer must be aware of all these possibilities and honor it. The chart on the one hand, and the immediate encounter with the client on the other, can tell the astute astrologer what the person is seeking and which role to cast oneself in. As professionals, we provide a service, and we need to "read the map" (pun intended) correctly.

Many situations can arise between two people when one appears to have the key to the other's innermost world, as well as the future. The counseling astrologer must be prepared to handle client's exaggerated or unrealistic expectation, anger management, depression, a sense of hopelessness, dependency, emotional transference, and even trying to get close on a personal basis. The astrologer must also know oneself, one's own motivation, ego needs and interaction patterns. All these may come up as issues even in a short-term relationship between astrologer and client.

In addition, the practicing astrologer must be clear on a number of other issues, which are unique to astrology:

- Be clear on the purpose of the astrological reading in general, and one's own philosophy regarding the issues of 'Fate vs. Free Will'.
- Why the client is currently seeking help.
- How to establish trust and openness, and make the most out of the session, even if it is a one-time consultation.
- Be aware of what the client expects to hear, or is ready to hear, even when they say they "want to know everything".
- Which sensitive topics to avoid (if any) or work around.
- Thorough study of the chart in order to identify the client's current issues and the best way to present and approach them.
- Also note the astrological period the client has recently experienced, as well as period they are about to face in the near future.
- How to present "bad news" and show how it ushers a new phase in life.
- Prepare your answer when the client inevitably asks "Can I change it?"
- Find the points in the chart that empower and help them find their own strength and sense of purposefulness. What the client does best, and becomes fulfilled.

These questions and issues will come to haunt us and take us by surprise, right there at the reading, if we don't prepare for them ahead of time, whatever the type of astrology that is being practiced.

A topic that is not sufficiently addressed in general, is the role of astrological techniques and how this knowledge can help the astrologer help the client. Obviously, technical skills are at the foundation of every profession, but in the case of astrology, I believe this can be taken one step further. The more-complete your tool-kit is, and the more-integrated your techniques are, so will the astrological session be. The goal is to make the consultation meaningful, informative and not a fragmented message.

The need for identifying the client's potentials or determine whether something desirable will come to pass (i.e. forecast), requires the astrologer to resort to and integrate a number of reliable skills and techniques. By striving to acquire such knowledge and use it, the astrologer is better able to uncover this information, even when far into the future, thus giving the client hope, assurance, empowering them

on their journey towards their own personal destiny and thus setting up a foundation for healing.

The astrological consultation must always end on a High Note !

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