
PERSONAL GROWTH ASPECTS OF PEER COUNSELOR TRAINING FOR OLDER ADULTS

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Although there has been an increase in the use of older adults as peer counselors, little is known about the effects of such training on the peer counselor students. In order to be an effective counselor, the older adults must not only examine their own lives, but they must also disclose their life experiences as well as their personal feelings to their clients. It was thought that these processes of self-examination and self-disclosure would result in a reappraisal of the older adults' attitudes and feelings about themselves. The present study sought to examine the degree of personal growth experienced by older adult participants of a peer counselor training course. It was found that the training course attracted individuals who were self-assured in their ability to deal with the problems of their lives and who wanted to assist others gain the same degree of self-confidence. Furthermore, it was found that the training course served to increase the participants' levels of self-confidence and self-reliance while at the same time training the students to use these qualities to help others.

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of peer counselors to meet the needs of various groups that have not been adequately served by mental health professionals. Because of a distrust of mental health counseling in general and of younger counselors in particular (Gaitz, 1974), a peer counseling approach has proved quite successful in dealing with older adult populations (Silverman, 1970; Waters, Fink, & White, 1976). Although the beneficial effects to the clients of older adult peer counselors are well known, the benefits that accrue to the peer counselors themselves have been largely overlooked. When learning how to help others deal with the problems of senescence, the peer counselor students must also examine their own lives in order to determine how they have dealt with similar situations while at the same time learning how to share their experiences with their clients. It is thought that these processes of self-examination and self-disclosure, which are necessary components of peer counselor training, would lead to an increase in levels of self-confidence and life satisfaction in the students. The purpose of this paper is to examine some aspects of the personal

growth and development that peer counselor students experience during the duration of a training program, and to show that this kind of development can be of great personal benefit to the older adult counselors as well as aiding in the development of their counseling skills.

The concept behind peer counselor training is to give brief, intensive instruction in basic counseling skills, which, when coupled with the student's life experiences, will produce a person who can effectively help others to deal with problems common to their peer group. It is important to note that the use of the peer counselor's life experiences are indispensable in the development of a counselor who can relate to the problems of their clients. It is hoped that the peer counselor will be able to present a unique, subjective insight into the problems of their clients by having experienced many of the same difficulties themselves. Additionally, the peer counselors will also possess a source of information about possible alternative solutions to these problems, again gained from having experienced many of the same difficulties. Indeed, the purpose of the peer counselor training course may be characterized as an attempt to develop a nonjudgmental and sympathetic technique that the counselors may use to deliver their insights and understanding to their clients. It is thought that the intensive nature of the peer counselor training course, which requires the students to examine past sources of stress in their lives, results in the students gaining both a new appreciation of how these stressful events have affected their lives as well as a new sense of self-confidence in their abilities to overcome these difficulties. These qualities of self-examination and self-awareness that the older adults experience during the course of peer counselor training have been noted by others (Bratter & Tuvman, 1980; Priddy & Knisely, 1982), indeed Bratter and Tuvman consider personal development to be an integral part of the curriculum of a peer counselor training program that must be fully utilized in order to produce an effective peer counselor.

Furthermore, Havighurst (1976) has suggested that the educational process itself has a beneficial effect on the elderly. Havighurst views continuing education as providing older adults with a safe environment in which to master those developmental tasks unique to the elderly. Additionally, Havighurst also suggests that continuing education provides the opportunity to master new social roles and social skills. Thus, Havighurst concluded that the process of continuing education could help older adults plan effective coping strategies for the stresses associated with the later stages of

life while at the same time helping to maintain desired patterns of emotional interaction and preventing disengagement. Hiemstra (1976) has shown that older adults who participate in continuing education programs prefer classes designed to promote mastery of developmental tasks associated with senescence, such as health issues, legal affairs, psychological issues, etc. It can be seen that these beneficial qualities of continuing education noted by Havighurst, as well as the qualities of self-examination and self-awareness inherent in the peer counselor training program, serve to provide the older adult peer counselor student with a unique opportunity for learning how to assist others to cope with their problems, while at the same time allowing the student to gain a better sense of perspective as to how these same problems have affected their own lives.

The present study was conducted to examine various aspects of personal growth and development that are experienced during the course of a peer counselor training program. Pilot data collected from graduates of a prior peer counselor training program suggested that the students themselves rate the personal growth and development aspect of the course as being of great value in helping them effectively aid their clients, yet the specific nature of their personal growth remains unknown. It was thought that by precisely identifying those personal growth aspects of peer counselor training, it might be possible to utilize these aspects of the course to a greater extent in the training of older adult peer counselors.

METHOD

Participants

Thirty-eight older adult peer counselor students participated in this study. These individuals were the members of three separate peer counselor training classes that were conducted at a local senior citizens center. In addition, two other groups of older adults were utilized as control groups. One group of 26 individuals, termed "volunteer controls," consisted of older adults who had inquired about adult education classes at the senior center and, upon being informed about the peer counselor training program, expressed an interest in taking the course. A second control group, which consisted of 33 older adults, was composed of older adults who had similarly inquired about adult education courses but were not interested in peer counselor training. These individuals comprised the nonvolunteer control group. Descriptive statistics for

TABLE 1 Means (and Standard Deviations) for the Experimental Groups on the Descriptive Measures

	Experimental groups		
	Peer counseling students	Volunteer controls	Nonvolunteer controls
<i>N</i>	38	26	33
Age	73.2 (5.83)	71.1 (4.34)	74.6 (3.72)
Educational level (years)	13.1 (2.12)	12.3 (5.02)	13.9 (3.47)
Activity level	71.3 (6.93)	68.4 (8.42)	62.8 (7.93)
Health status	34.7 (3.41)	32.1 (2.98)	39.8 (5.07)

these three groups are presented in Table 1. In addition to the demographic data on age and educational level, the older adults from each group were also assessed with measures designed to determine activity level and state of physical health. The activity measure was derived from Schonfield (1973) and represents the percentage of the individual's waking hours that is spent in physically active pursuits. The health status questionnaire, derived from Pfeiffer (1982), ranged from 15 to 50 points with lower numbers indicating better levels of physical health. No significant differences were found between the three groups of older adults on any of the descriptive measures.

Materials and Procedures

The participants in this study were tested with three different types of measures in order to determine the amount of change or personal growth experienced over the duration of the peer counselor course. The participants were first tested with three standardized instruments designed to measure various aspects of psychological functioning in old age. Palmore's (1977) *Facts on Aging Test* was employed to assess the older adults' amount of objective knowledge about the aging process. This instrument was also used to determine the degree of change in knowledge about

the aging process that was experienced by the peer counselor students. Additionally, Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin's (1961) *Life Satisfaction Index* and Lawton's (1975) *Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale* were used to assess the older adults' attitudes towards and degree of satisfaction with their own lives. Pilot testing of a previous peer counselor class showed that although these tests could measure some degree of change in the peer counselor students, they were not of sufficient precision to specify the exact nature of the growth and development aspect of the training course. Therefore, Wessman and Ricks' (1965) sixteen-item *Personal Feeling Scale* was used to examine the degree of change in the older adults' moods and attitudes over the training course. These sixteen scales were each composed of 10 statements that encompassed the range of a single dimension of feeling or mood with higher numbers representing a higher degree of positive feeling or mood concerning each of the affective domains. Although the scales have not been utilized on older adults, they have been shown to be an effective means of measuring daily mood and attitude change in younger adults.

Many sessions of the peer counselor training course were conducted in a group counseling format in which the older adults were asked to discuss openly their experiences with the various problems associated with senescence. Additionally, the peer counselor students were asked to examine and deal with any residual emotional reactions to these problems that were still affecting their lives. In order to assess this aspect of the course, two scales were adapted from measures developed by Liberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) to assess the effectiveness of encounter groups. The first scale, which was adapted to reflect the dynamics of the peer counselor training course, measured the degree of safety or security felt by the group members, the degree of genuineness or honest expression of feelings displayed by the group members, and the perceived degree of social benefit derived from interaction with members of the group. These scales ranged from 8 to 40 points with higher numbers indicating a more positive attitude towards each of these aspects of the peer counselor training group experience.

The second measure derived from Liberman, Yalom, and Miles was used to assess the methods the older adults typically utilize to solve their personal problems. It was thought that if the peer counselor training course did induce personal growth in the participants, then this might be reflected in the way the participants choose to deal with their own personal difficulties. The measure consisted of a number of different methods of dealing with personal problems

with the participants being asked to select those methods that they typically employ. These various problem solving methods were classified as belonging to one of four different categories. These four categories, along with sample items from the measure, were:

1. *Help oneself*—"Take some positive, concerted action."
2. *Seek help from others*—"Talk it over with other persons in the same situation."
3. *Acceptance of the situation*—"Don't worry about the situation, everything will work out fine."
4. *Escape*—"Get out of the situation."

Thus it was thought that the personal growth effects of peer counselor training might be reflected by a shift in the type of responses selected by the participants as methods that they would utilize to deal with their personal dilemmas.

The test battery was administered to the peer counselor students at the beginning and end of the nine-week training course. The individuals that comprised the two control groups were administered the test battery as part of an effort to assess the needs of older adults who were interested in continuing education courses. At the time the older adult participants in the control groups inquired about adult education opportunities at the senior center, the peer counselor course was described in detail and the participants were asked if they would fill out the test battery as part of an effort to determine the attitudes of older adults to psychologically oriented courses. After the test battery had been completed, the individuals were asked if they would be interested in taking the peer counselor course. The individuals in both control groups were also retested after a nine-week interval.

RESULTS

The pre- and posttest mean scores (and standard deviations) for each of the three experimental groups on the standardized gerontological tests are presented in Table 2. The results of each test were analyzed with one between-subjects factor (group) and a one within-subjects factor (time of testing) analysis of variance. The *F*-ratios and associated probability levels are also presented in Table 2. Post-hoc analyses of the *F*-ratios revealed that although there were no significant differences manifested in the results of the *Life Satisfaction Index*, both the *Facts on Aging Test* and the *Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale* revealed significant

TABLE 2 Pre- and Posttest Means (and Standard Deviations) for the Experimental Groups on the Standardized Gerontological Measures

Instrument	Experimental groups								F-ratios	Time of testing ^b	Interaction ^a
	Peer counseling students		Volunteer controls		Nonvolunteer controls		Group ^a	Posttest			
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest					
Facts of aging test	12.5 (3.15)	23.7 (2.94)	13.8 (2.12)	15.2 (3.01)	14.7 (3.44)	14.9 (2.42)	2.73	4.31*	7.20		
Life satisfaction index	15.3 (1.41)	17.2 (1.73)	14.8 (0.98)	14.0 (1.08)	15.8 (1.87)	16.4 (2.11)	1.86	2.01	.74		
Geriatric morale scale	18.4 (0.83)	19.1 (1.02)	17.3 (1.34)	18.1 (1.19)	13.2 (0.96)	14.2 (0.89)	5.32**	1.94	2.49		

^adf = 2,94.
^bdf = 1,94.
 *p < .05.
 **p < .01.

TABLE 3 Pre- and Posttest Means (and Standard Deviations) for the Experimental Groups on the Personal Feeling Scales of Wessman and Ricks

Affective domain	Experimental groups										F-ratios	Time of testing ^b	Interaction ^a
	Peer counseling students			Volunteer controls			Nonvolunteer controls			Group ^a			
	Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest					
Fullness of life	8.4 (0.87)	8.7 (1.52)	7.8 (0.73)	8.2 (0.75)	8.6 (0.91)	8.0 (0.85)	2.53	1.97	2.03				
Enthusiasm for life	6.4 (1.17)	8.9 (0.75)	6.7 (1.25)	7.0 (1.01)	4.3 (0.83)	5.0 (0.79)	3.19*	2.78	4.25*				
Respect of others	7.5 (0.93)	8.4 (1.12)	6.9 (1.32)	7.8 (0.98)	8.1 (1.07)	7.6 (1.03)	2.39	1.11	1.51				
Personal freedom	5.5 (0.96)	7.1 (1.09)	4.9 (1.52)	5.3 (1.47)	5.7 (1.31)	5.1 (1.43)	3.10*	3.57	5.76**				
Goodwill to others	4.6 (1.13)	6.7 (1.06)	5.0 (1.40)	5.4 (1.23)	5.1 (1.34)	4.8 (1.77)	4.21*	4.79*	6.83**				
Extraversion	6.4 (1.96)	5.8 (2.11)	5.9 (1.71)	6.6 (2.20)	6.8 (1.87)	6.8 (1.79)	.78	1.32	1.05				
Social interactions	5.7 (0.77)	8.3 (0.92)	5.4 (1.21)	5.9 (0.99)	6.2 (1.07)	5.8 (1.13)	2.78	4.12*	7.19**				

Present work	(1.21)	(1.33)	(1.09)	(1.14)	(1.10)	(1.22)	3.22*	4.34*	4.93**
	5.3	8.8	4.9	5.6	5.4	5.2			
	(0.83)	(0.91)	(0.76)	(0.74)	(0.93)	(1.04)			
Thought processes	7.9	8.1	7.5	7.7	7.0	7.4	.92	1.63	1.43
	(2.41)	(1.98)	(1.88)	(2.13)	(2.07)	(1.81)			
Tranquility	7.8	7.4	7.0	7.3	5.4	5.4	8.73**	2.26	1.92
	(1.01)	(0.97)	(0.81)	(0.94)	(0.79)	(0.84)			
Impulsiveness	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.6	5.1	5.8	1.74	1.08	2.13
	(1.57)	(1.59)	(1.43)	(1.50)	(1.74)	(1.62)			
Moral judgement	6.7	6.5	6.3	6.9	7.0	6.6	2.38	1.71	.79
	(1.09)	(1.11)	(1.24)	(1.17)	(1.28)	(1.06)			
Self-confidence	6.5	8.9	6.6	6.4	4.9	5.3	5.68**	4.04*	3.21*
	(0.79)	(0.93)	(0.87)	(0.83)	(.99)	(0.84)			
Energy	8.3	8.0	7.9	8.4	7.8	8.1	.39	1.82	1.43
	(1.44)	(1.73)	(1.58)	(1.52)	(1.63)	(1.68)			
Happiness	6.7	6.8	7.2	7.1	4.4	5.1	7.14**	2.38	2.01
	(0.91)	(0.83)	(0.85)	(0.96)	(0.99)	(1.07)			

^adf = 2,94.

^bdf = 1,94.

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

differences between the groups. Specifically, it was found that while the peer counselor students did not significantly differ from the other groups on their pretest scores on the *Facts on Aging Test*, they did show an increase in the amount of objective knowledge about the aging process as indicated by an increase in the posttest scores. Additionally, it was found that while there was no change manifested in morale levels in any of the groups over the course of the study, it was shown that both the peer counselor students and the volunteer controls displayed significantly higher scores on the *Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale*, specifically in the "Attitude Towards Own Aging" and the "Lonely Dissatisfaction" subscales of the measure.

The pre- and posttest mean scores (and standard deviations) for the three groups on each of the sixteen measures from Wessman and Ricks' *Personal Feeling Scales* are presented in Table 3. The data from each of the sixteen measures were also analyzed with a one between-subjects factor (group) and a one within-subjects factor (time of testing) analysis of variance. *F*-ratios and probability levels are also presented in Table 3. The series of analyses revealed non-significant differences between the three groups on seven of the personal feeling measures: fullness of life, respect of others, extraversion, thought processes, impulsiveness, moral judgement, and energy level.

However, the analyses and subsequent post-hoc test using Scheffé's method ($p < .05$) showed that the peer counselor students and the volunteer controls differed significantly from their nonvolunteer counterparts on the enthusiasm for life, love, tranquility, self-confidence, and happiness measures of the *Personal Feeling Scales*. The results of this series of analyses clearly demonstrate that the peer counselor training program attracted a group of older adults distinct from the general population of older individuals who are interested in continuing education classes.

Furthermore, the same series of analyses also revealed significant differences between the pre- and posttest mean scores of the peer counselor students on the enthusiasm for life, personal freedom, goodwill to others, social interactions, present work, and self-confidence measures of the *Personal Feeling Scales*. However, the same series of analyses failed to detect similar changes in the pre- and posttest mean scores of either the volunteer or nonvolunteer control groups, thus indicating that the change manifested by the peer counselor students in the above measures may be attributed to the dynamics of the training course.

In Table 4 the pre- and posttest mean scores (and standard

TABLE 4 Pre- and Posttest Means (and Standard Deviations) for the Experimental Groups on the Group Attitudes Scale of Liberman, Yalom, and Miles

Attitude towards class	Experimental groups										F-ratios	Time of testing ^b	Interaction ^a
	Peer counseling students		Volunteer controls		Nonvolunteer controls		Group ^a	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest			
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest							
Safety	17.6 (4.76)	23.7 (5.43)	20.3 (4.93)	18.3 (4.54)	20.6 (6.72)	11.3 (6.11)	9.52**	2.31	1.17				
Genuineness	14.3 (3.21)	24.5 (2.18)	16.2 (3.65)	17.9 (3.34)	12.7 (3.71)	13.5 (3.27)	3.24*	4.72*	5.44**				
Social benefit	19.3 (5.67)	21.4 (6.24)	22.6 (5.98)	18.9 (5.43)	23.4 (6.01)	20.2 (5.74)	2.46	1.28	1.08				

^adf = 2,94.

^bdf = 1,94.

*p < 0.5.

**p < .01.

TABLE 5 Pre- and Posttest Total Number of Responses of the Experimental Groups for Each of the Methods of Solving Personal Problems

Type of response	Experimental groups					
	Peer counseling students		Volunteer controls		Nonvolunteer controls	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Help oneself	58	109	43	56	34	29
Seek help from others	37	79	32	29	19	23
Acceptance of situation	63	32	57	54	83	79
Escape	21	15	12	9	31	29
	$\chi^2(3) = 34.99, p < .01$		$\chi^2(3) = 2.34, p > .05$		$\chi^2(3) = .85, p > .05$	

deviations) on the scale designed to measure the older adults' attitudes towards the dynamics of the group counseling aspect of the training course are presented. As above, the data were analyzed with a one between-subjects factor (group) and a one within-subjects factor (time of testing) analysis of variance, with *F*-ratios and associated probability levels also presented in Table 4. The analysis revealed no significant differences between the mean scores of the three groups of older adults in their attitudes regarding the perceived social benefit of the group. However, the series of analyses, coupled with Scheffé's post-hoc tests ($p < .05$), showed the peer counselor students and their volunteer counterparts had higher perceived degrees of safety and security regarding the group experience than did the nonvolunteer controls. Moreover, the same analyses also showed that over the course of the study the peer counselor students displayed a significant increase in their attitudes towards the perceived degree of genuineness of honest expression of feelings in the group situation.

Lastly, the results of the survey of the methods that the older adult participants typically utilize to solve their personal problems are presented in Table 5. These data represent the number of different methods selected in each category by the three groups of participants. The data for each experimental group were examined with a Chi-square analysis, all of which are also presented in Table 5, that revealed only the peer counselor students displayed a shift in the number of responses selected in the four categories. Specifically, the peer counselor students displayed a greater tendency to select responses classified as "Helping oneself" or "Seek help from others." Additionally, a Chi-square analysis was performed on the pretest responses of the individuals from each of the three groups in order to determine if there were initial differences between the groups. It was found that both the peer counselor students and the volunteer controls typically utilize methods such as "Helping oneself" or "Seek help from others," whereas the nonvolunteer control group of participants displayed a greater tendency to utilize problem-solving methods classified as "Acceptance of the situation," $\chi^2(3) = 22.41, p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

The pattern of results described above clearly demonstrates the effects of the peer counselor training course on the personal growth of the participants. Not only did the peer counselor students gain a better objective appreciation of various aspects of the aging

process, they also manifested significant changes in their feelings towards themselves as well as their attitudes regarding the training group experience. In order to interpret properly the results of the present study, however, it is first necessary to determine the nature of the differences between those older adults who displayed an interest in peer counselor training and those who did not. Then a comparison between the individuals who actually participated in the training course and those who indicated a desire to take the course at a later date will allow for a precise determination of what qualities the peer counselor students brought with them to the course and how these values were changed as a result of the course of instruction.

As the pattern of results of the participants on the *Personal Feeling Scales* indicated, the peer counselor students and their counterparts in the volunteer control condition differed from the members of the nonvolunteer control group on several measures, such as self-confidence and enthusiasm for life. Although the number of participants in the present study was not large enough to permit analysis through multivariate methods, it can be seen that a common factor does seem to differentiate those older adults who were interested in the peer counselor training course from those individuals who showed no interest in the course. The peer counselor students and the individuals in the volunteer control group seemed more self-assured and secure in the ability to deal with the psychological issues of senescence that formed the basis for the course. These same individuals also seemed more confident in their ability to deal with these issues within the group format of the training course. Moreover, these same individuals also demonstrated a higher degree of preference for self-reliance as a method of solving their own personal problems, again being indicative of a greater sense of self-assurance in their ability to confront the problems encountered in senescence. In addition, it should also be noted that the individuals in these two groups were partially motivated to participate in the peer counselor training course through a desire to share their experiences with their contemporaries, again indicating a degree of self-assurance not only in their ability to cope with the problems facing older adults, but also in their ability to aid others in achieving the same type of coping skills. Thus, it was concluded that the older adults who were interested in peer counselor training were those individuals who not only seemed more comfortable in their ability to deal with the psychological issues confronting older adults, but who also wished to make use of their experiences to assist their contemporaries to deal with the same issues.

An examination of the patterns of change found in the results of the peer counselor students shows how their self-assured sense of security, coupled with their interest in helping others, was affected by the peer counselor training course. It can be seen that not only were the peer counselor students' high levels of self-confidence and enthusiasm for life increased, but there was also an increase in levels of social interaction and goodwill to others. Additionally, the peer counselor students also displayed an increase in their levels of genuineness or open and honest levels of communication regarding the group aspect of the course. Moreover, the students also displayed more positive attitudes towards their work and the degree of personal freedom in their lives. It was therefore concluded that the effects of the training course were to assist the participants to be more open and outgoing with their personal feelings while at the same time instilling positive attitudes about peer counselor work and the students' ability to perform it effectively. Thus, the peer counselor course seemed to provide a forum in which the participants could develop the skills necessary to share their knowledge and caring attitudes with their contemporaries.

Havighurst (1972) suggested that continued participation in educational opportunities is necessary throughout the course of one's life in order to assure continued high levels of mental functioning. At every stage of the life cycle, education serves to aid in the mastery of those developmental tasks necessary to achieve feelings of self-confidence and self-assurance. Although the nature of these developmental tasks changes over the course of one's life, it is no less important for older adults to master their set of developmental tasks than it is for children to master theirs. Moreover, Havighurst and Orr (1956) suggested that education also serves to allow students of all ages to practice these developmental tasks by providing a secure, nonthreatening arena in which to develop appropriate social roles and skills. Thus, Havighurst (1976) concluded that continuing education was important not only in planning strategies to cope with the stresses associated with old age, but also is important in helping older adults maintain their abilities to implement these strategies.

Although Havighurst's conclusions were drawn about the general value of lifelong learning for older adults, it can be seen that the topics covered by the peer counselor training course were uniquely suited to the developmental tasks and social role needs of the older adults. Certainly all of the peer counselor students have had to cope with the problems of old age, such as diminished physical capacities, loss of social support systems, life-threatening illnesses, etc. These

sources of stress in the lives of the students served as the topics of discussion in many of the class sessions and, in addition, were also discussed during the client-counselor role playing sessions. Additionally, during the client-counselor role playing sessions solutions to these problems could be developed by both parties. Thus, in preparing for their duties as peer counselors, the students were forced to examine their own lives in order to determine how the problems of senescence had affected them and what methods they had developed to cope with these problems. Furthermore, the students were also forced to examine how future potential sources of stress, such as the process of dying, might affect them. Additionally, the training course also provided an opportunity for employing the role of counselor so that the participants could learn how to share their insights in the most efficient manner. Therefore it can be seen that the structure of the peer counselor training course allows the participants to address directly, and in a positive fashion, those developmental tasks that most often affect older adults, confirming Havighurst's (1972, 1976) position on the value of life-span participation in education. In conclusion, the peer counselor training course was seen as benefiting the participants in two ways. First, the dynamics of the course forced the participants to examine their own lives in order to determine not only how the problems associated with old age had affected them, but also how they had managed to use their qualities of self-assurance and self-confidence to overcome these problems. Then the nature of the training course utilized the participants' self-confidence to develop an effective method of delivering the services of a peer counselor. However, this same process also insured that the participants had to master the developmental tasks of old age in order to be able to function effectively as a peer counselor. Thus, while learning how to aid others, the peer counselor students learned how to help themselves deal with the problems of old age.

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