

Counsel Subordinates

TSG 158-100-1260

4 August 2003

Task(s) TASK NUMBER TASK TITLE

Taught or 158-100-1180 Develop Subordinate Leaders in a Squad

Supported 158-100-1271 Develop Subordinate Leaders in a Platoon

158-100-1361 Develop A Unit Counseling Program

158-100-1373 Develop Subordinate Leaders in a Company

Reinforced TASK NUMBER TASK TITLE

Task(s) 158-100-1140 Communicate Effectively in a Given Situation

Student Students should read the *Required Student Reading* (App D). (The *Required Student Reading* is an extract from FM 22-100.)

Professional counselors receive years of schooling to learn how to effectively counsel. In the military, all leaders are expected to be able to counsel. In this short period of training on counseling, you will be introduced to the fundamentals of counseling and have the opportunity to apply these fundamentals in some very realistic counseling situations. This training will provide you with a base of counseling skills which you will continue to develop as you grow as a leader.

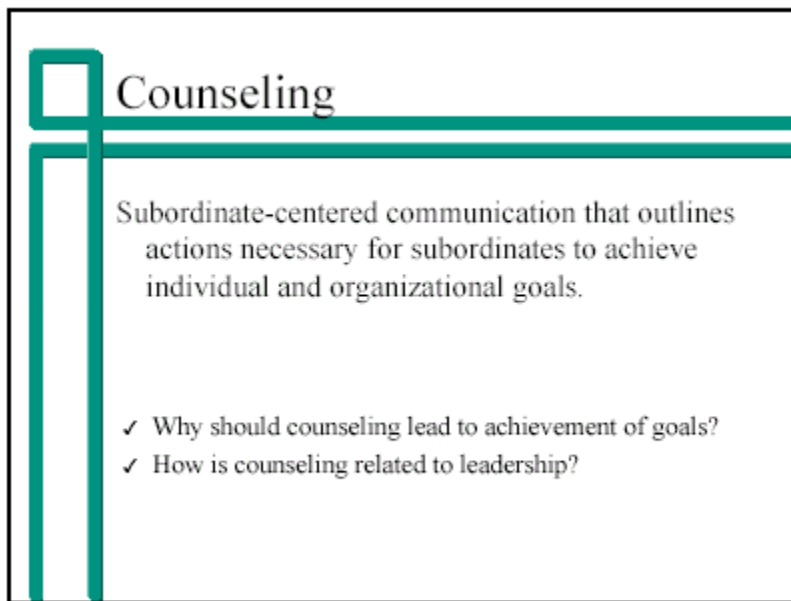
Counseling is an important responsibility of all leaders. Each of you have been counseled at some time in your military careers and/or personal lives and many of you have already or soon will counsel. Unfortunately many leaders reserve counseling for circumstances involving poor performance and problems. This has led to a wide spread perception that counseling is negative. In this training you will learn how to counsel your subordinates in a manner that focuses on subordinate-centered communication and subordinate development.

Think of reasons for counseling and then relate how the reason cited offers an opportunity for subordinate development.

Example: Counseling associated with poor performance: This counseling should not serve to inform a subordinate that his/her performance is below standard and he/she will receive an unfavorable evaluation. The intent of the counseling is to identify performance standards, obstacles in achieving these standards, and a plan of action to overcome these obstacles. The results of the counseling will be subordinate development through improved performance, not an unfavorable evaluation.

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE A

Developmental counseling as outlined in FM 22-100, Appendix C. (1999 version)
Including the four phases of a counseling session, leader's responsibilities, and
the different types of counseling situations.



Question: Why should counseling lead to achievement of goals?

Response: Counseling is a type of communication which leaders use to empower subordinates to **achieve goals**. It is much more than providing feedback or direction.

Question: How is counseling related to leadership?

Response: It is communication aimed at **developing** a subordinate's ability to achieve individual and unit goals. Without a goal in mind, or a clear understanding of the goal, the communication may lack focus; the counseling may simply be "conversation."

Subordinate-Centered (Two-Way) Communication

Subordinates assume an active role in the counseling session and maintain responsibility for their actions. The following skills assist leaders in subordinate-centered counseling:

- Active Listening
- Responding
- Questioning

✓ Why should the subordinate be active in the session?

Question: Why should the subordinate be active in the counseling session?

Response: Subordinate-centered communication is simply a style of communicating where the subordinate is not a passive listener, but a vital contributor in the communication process. The purpose of subordinate-centered communication is to allow the subordinate to maintain control and responsibility for the issue. This type of communication, where the subordinate plays an active role, takes longer than directive or leader-centered communication. However, subordinate participation is necessary when leaders are attempting to help the subordinates to develop and not simply impart directions or advice.

The following skills are helpful in maintaining a subordinate-centered session:

- **Active Listening:** Your subordinate needs to know that you are actively listening. You can demonstrate your attentiveness by assuming an attention posture and maintaining eye contact. Give full attention to subordinates; listening to their words and the way they are spoken. In order to listen you have to be QUIET and let the other person talk. Active listening involves listening to what they have to say and the way in which they say it. Listen to the words not spoken and the silence. Notice voice tone, eye contact, facial expression and appearance. Transmit an understanding of the message through responding.

Listen more than you speak: Most communication breakdowns occur during the receiving process. Why? Oftentimes, people become so preoccupied with their own thoughts and reactions that they don't really hear what the other person is trying to say.

Responding: The leader should check to make sure he understood subordinate without talking too much; summarizing and interpreting comments that demonstrate that the message has been heard and understood. Leaders respond by telling the subordinate, as exactly as they can, what they heard them say and the feelings and attitudes involved. Try not to use words different from what the subordinate said without changing the meaning. Do not respond to the subordinate's message by sending a message of your own, such as evaluating or drawing quick conclusions. Use appropriate eye contact and gestures.

Responses that are empathic, supportive, and exploratory are useful; where as those that alienate, criticize, or deliver orders are likely to be dysfunctional.

Questioning:

If used correctly, questioning serves as a way to obtain valuable information, establish rapport, clarify, and most importantly, facilitate and focus the subordinate's thinking. The questions asked and the manner in which they are asked can either facilitate or hinder the process of communication. The intent of questioning is to allow the subordinate to reach their own conclusions about their developmental success and/ or needs. Questions should be open-ended requiring more than a yes/no answer.

The Leader as a Counselor

Leaders have a responsibility to develop their subordinates.

During counseling, the leader acts primarily as a helper, not a judge.

- ✓ When should a leader counsel to develop subordinates?
- ✓ How can a leader be both an evaluator/judge and a helper/counselor?

Question: When should a leader counsel to develop subordinates?

Response: Leaders sometimes contort the meaning of “counseling” and consider routine feedback and communication “counseling”. Counseling is much more than telling a subordinate how they are doing. Performed correctly, it can be a time consuming endeavor and for that reason leaders need to plan for and schedule counseling. Minimum counseling requirements are outlined in both the officer and non-commissioned officer evaluations systems. Additionally, command policies typically require quarterly or monthly counseling for all soldiers within the command.

Several programs have counseling requirements associated with them (e.g., reenlistment, family care plan). Under these circumstances the decision to counsel is made for the leader and the leader simply executes. However, there are also times when a leader is not required to counsel, but should choose to counsel. Whenever there is a need for focused two-way communication aimed at subordinate development, a leader should counsel. Counseling should not be reserved for circumstances involving poor performance or problems. Noting and reinforcing good performance is a very effective way to ensure this behavior continues.

Question: How can a leader be both an evaluator/judge and a helper/counselor?

Response: It is challenging for a leader to act as both the evaluator and counselor for the subordinate. The best way to assume the role of helper versus evaluator during the counseling session is to be open and honest with the subordinate. There are several leader qualities that can assist the leader in assuming the role of helper.

The Leader as a Counselor(Cont.)

The following qualities help the leader to assume an effective role during counseling:

- Respect for subordinates
- Self and Cultural Awareness
- Credibility
- Empathy

✓ How do these qualities assist leaders in counseling?

Question: How do the qualities we listed above assist leaders in counseling?

Responses: It is difficult to achieve meaningful communication without first exhibiting the following qualities.

• **Respect for subordinates:** Fosters two-way respect in the relationship, which improves the chances of achieving the goals of counseling.

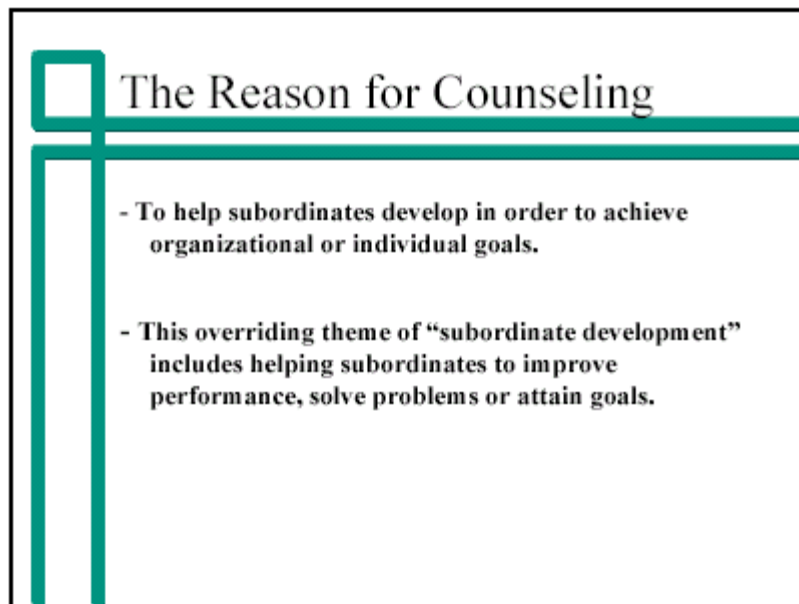
- **Self and Cultural awareness:**

Self-awareness is a leader's understanding of himself. An awareness of our own values, needs and biases makes us less likely to project our feelings on to the subordinate.

Cultural awareness, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of FM 22-100, is a mental attribute and a part of self-awareness. Leaders must be aware of the similarities and differences between individuals of different cultural backgrounds and how these factors may influence values and actions. Cultural awareness enhances a leader's ability to display empathy.

- **Empathy:** A real understanding of how the subordinate "sees" the situation increases a leader's ability to help. The subordinate is able to quickly tell if the leader "knows where I'm coming from."

- **Credibility:** Honesty, consistency, and straightforward statements and actions make it easier to achieve meaningful communication.



Leaders counsel to develop subordinates. Often counseling is directed by regulation or local policy.

While the reason for counseling is to develop subordinates, leaders often categorize counseling based on the topic of the session.

Approaches to Counseling

- Directive
- Nondirective
- Combined

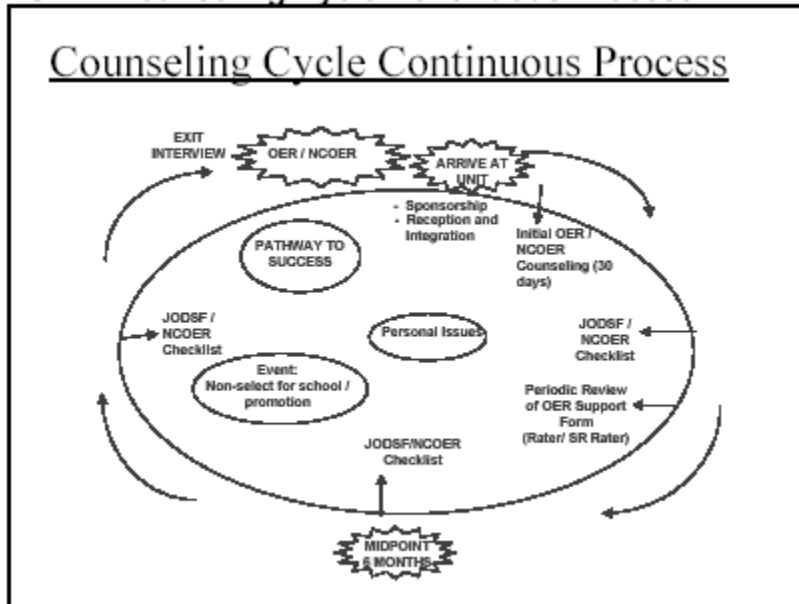
There are as many approaches to counseling as there are counselors. An effective leader approaches each subordinate as an individual and probably never uses exactly the same approach with all subordinates. There are three main approaches to counseling - the directive approach at one extreme, the nondirective approach at the other, and the combined approach in the middle. These approaches all differ in the techniques being used, but they are similar in keeping with the overall purpose and definition of counseling. The major difference between these three approaches to counseling is the degree to which the subordinate participates and “interacts” within the counseling session.

The **directive** approach is more counselor-centered versus subordinate-centered. In this approach, the leader does most of the talking and tells the subordinate what needs to be done.

The **nondirective** approach to counseling is subordinate-centered. This is the preferred approach in most situations.

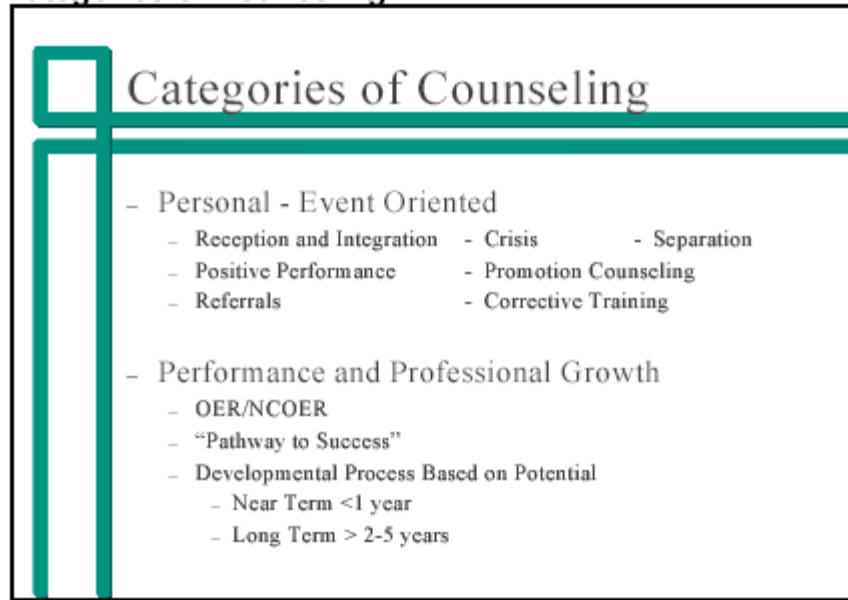
In the **combined** approach, the leader uses part of the directive and nondirective approaches; the combined approach emphasizes that the subordinate must be responsible for the planning and decision-making

Counseling Cycle Continuous Process



Counseling is a continuous process that starts when the soldier arrives at the unit and continues throughout the soldier's time within the unit. The final counseling a soldier receives is during his/her exit brief.

The first counseling a soldier receives is the sponsorship and reception and integration counseling. This is followed up by the initial JODSF/NCOER/OER counseling (30 days). On a quarterly basis, soldiers receive JODSF, OER or NCOER counseling. NOTE: Counseling for enlisted soldiers PVT -SPC is usually mandated by local policy. Usually, leaders have a responsibility to counsel PVT-SPC on a monthly basis.



Leaders often categorize developmental counseling based on the topic of the session.

There are two major categories of counseling: Event-oriented and Performance/Professional Growth counseling.

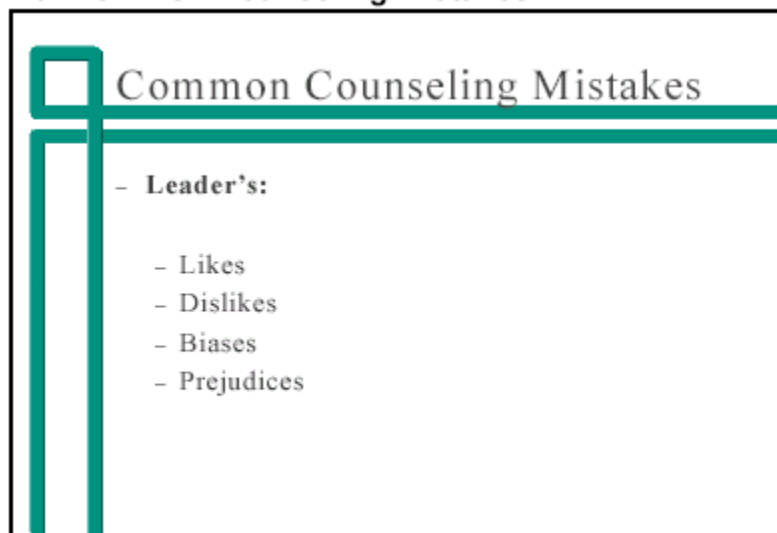
Event-oriented counseling involves counseling a subordinate concerning an event-oriented situation. Counseling under this category includes, but is not limited to: specific instances of excellent performance, reception and integration, crisis, referral, promotion (not recommended for promotion without waiver), corrective training, and separation counseling.

Professional growth counseling includes planning for the accomplishment of individual and professional short and long term goals based on an established time line.

The purpose of performance counseling is for the leader to communicate an assessment of the subordinate's duty performance during the past rating period. If the subordinate has a specific problem, event counseling should be used to resolve those problems prior to the performance counseling.

“Pathway to Success” counseling is future oriented counseling that establishes near and long term goals and objectives. Near term is defined as less than 1 year while long term is defined as greater than 2 years but less than 5 years. Discussion may focus around additional schooling, future duty assignments, special programs, and reenlistment options.

While these categories help leaders organize and focus counseling sessions, they should not be viewed as separate and distinct types of counseling. For example, a counseling session that focuses on resolving a problem may also have a great impact on improving duty performance.



Effective leaders also avoid common counseling mistakes. A leader's likes, dislikes, biases, and prejudices are potential pitfalls that can interfere with the counseling relationship. Leaders should also avoid common mistakes such as: personal biases, rash judgments, stereotyping, loss of emotional control, inflexible methods of counseling, and improper follow-up.

The Counseling Session

1. Open the session
2. Discuss the issue
3. Develop a plan of action
4. Close the session

The phases of a counseling session guide the counselor. They are not a series of steps, which one must follow, in a rigid sequence. The following slides provide an overview for each of the different phases of the counseling session.

(1) Open the Session

- **State the purpose of the session.**
- **Establish a subordinate-centered tone.**

- ✓ How does a counselor establish a subordinate centered tone?
- ✓ Why is it important to state the purpose of the session?

Question: How does a counselor establish a subordinate-centered tone?

Response: One technique to establish a subordinate-centered tone early in the session is to invite the subordinate to speak. Not all counselors or subordinates feel comfortable with phony icebreakers such as bringing up the weather or the local sports teams. There is no need to put on airs in a counseling session. Simply let the subordinate know that you want to help the subordinate develop a plan to achieve goals.

Question: Why is it important to state the purpose of the session?

Response: A clearly stated purpose of the counseling session will focus the communication. Counseling sessions are not fact-finding investigations, solutions to problems or a forum to give one-sided performance feedback. A clearly stated purpose of the session can set a comfortable tone and lead to an open and productive session. When applicable, the leader and subordinate start the counseling session by reviewing the status of the previous plan of action from their last counseling session.

<input type="checkbox"/>	(2) Discuss the Issue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jointly develop an understanding of the situation.- Support points with facts or observations.- Establish relevance between the issue and individual or unit goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ How does a counselor “jointly develop” an understanding of the situation?✓ Why is it important to support points with fact or observations?

Question: How does a counselor and subordinate “jointly develop” an understanding of the situation?

Response: A joint understanding of the situation is a critical step in the counseling process. This joint understanding allows the leader to examine the situation from the subordinate’s perspective and the subordinate examine the situation from the leader’s perspective. The leader does not have to “agree” with the subordinate’s perspective, but it is important that the subordinate feels that the leader has made a genuine attempt to understand his/her perspective. If the leader and the subordinate do not agree upon the issue, the subordinate may resist involvement in the development of the plan of action.

The best way to develop a joint understanding is to let the subordinate do most of the talking. The counselor should bring the issue to light using the skills of listening, responding, and questioning. Leaders do not need to dominate the conversation, but help the subordinate come to an understanding of the issue.

Question: Why is it important for both the leader and subordinate to support points with facts and observations?

Response: Both the leader and subordinate should provide examples or cite specific observations to reduce the perception that either one is unnecessarily biased or judgmental. If specific examples are provided, the subordinate and the leader will be less likely to become argumentative during the session. It is important to initially specify the behavior only, without passing judgment. Ask the subordinate if your description of the behavior is accurate.

(3) Develop a Plan of Action

- Actions should facilitate the attainment of goals.
- Actions should be specific enough to drive behavior.
- Plan may entail contacting a referral agency.
 - ✓ Why must the plan be a “plan of action”?
 - ✓ When should the plan include a referral?

Question: Why must the plan be a “plan of action”?

Response: A plan of action is simply a plan, which addresses the intended actions to achieve the desired result. The plan is what the subordinate must do to achieve the agreed upon goal, whether it be to improve performance, solve a problem or attain a career goal. Counseling is just “talk” unless there is a plan to energize “good intentions” into action. It is a good idea to document the plan of action to help the leader and the subordinate stay focused on the plan and to facilitate follow-ups to the counseling. A specific and achievable plan of action sets the stage for successful development.

Many times the leader does not have the expertise or the resources to achieve the goal of the counseling. In these situations, the leader should recognize his limitations and include a referral as part of the plan of action.

(4) Close the Session

- Summarize the counseling session.
- Discuss implementation of the plan; check for understanding and acceptance.
- Identify leader's responsibilities.

- ✓ What happens when a soldier does not accept the plan of action?
- ✓ What is follow-up and why is it necessary?
- ✓ What is the leader's role in implementing the plan?

Question: What happens when a soldier does not accept the plan of action?

Response: Leaders should try everything possible throughout the counseling session to ensure that the subordinate accepts the plan of action. It is unrealistic though to think that subordinates are going to accept every plan. If the subordinate does not accept the plan, the leader should review the plan to ensure that it is realistic, valid, and adheres to the standards within the unit, and then the approach to counseling takes a more directive mode.

Question: What is follow-up and why is it necessary?

Response: The leader's responsibilities after the counseling session are a very important part of the counseling process. It includes the leader's support through implementation of the plan and observation and assessment of the plan. Leaders can support the subordinate in many ways: teaching, coaching, providing resources, such as time, equipment, training aids, etc. During observation and assessment of the plan, the leader may choose to modify the plan or take other actions that include additional counseling, referrals, informing the chain of command or corrective measures.

It is important that leaders do not “wash their hands of the issue once the counseling session is over.”

Question: What is the leader’s role in implementing the plan?

Response: Just as it is a leader’s responsibility to counsel, a leader must also observe the implementation of the plan and take appropriate actions after counseling.

Preparation for Counseling

1. **Select a suitable place**
2. **Schedule the time**
3. **Notify the subordinate well in advance**
4. **Organize the information**
5. Outline the components of the counseling session
6. Plan a counseling strategy
7. Establish the right atmosphere

- ✓ Can counseling occur spontaneously without formal preparation?
- ✓ What is an appropriate time?
- ✓ What should a leader tell the subordinate?

Question: Can counseling occur spontaneously without formal preparation?

Response: Counseling can occur spontaneously, taking advantage of mutually occurring events, however this spontaneous “counseling” is more appropriately termed “feedback” when it does not conform to the basic tenets of counseling (subordinate centered and results in a plan of action outlining actions necessary for subordinates to achieve individual and unit goals). Leaders should counsel in an environment free from distractions where the leader and the subordinate can communicate freely.

Question: What is an appropriate time to counsel?

Response: Leaders should counsel subordinates during the duty day. After duty counseling may be rushed or perceived as unfavorable. The length of counseling depends on the complexity of the issue. As a general rule counseling should not last more than one hour. A leader should notify the subordinate of why, where, and when counseling is to take place and what the subordinate should do to prepare for the session. The subordinate should provide the leader required products to review two or three days before the scheduled session to allow for presentation. The leader should review all pertinent information and should focus on specific and objective behaviors that the subordinate must maintain or improve on as well as a plan of action with clear and obtainable goals.

Preparation for Counseling

1. Select a suitable place
2. Schedule the time
3. Notify the subordinate well in advance
4. Organize the information
- 5. Outline the components of the counseling session**
- 6. Plan a counseling strategy**
- 7. Establish the right atmosphere**

- ✓ Why should a leader prepare an outline?
- ✓ What is a counseling strategy?

Question: Why should a leader prepare an outline?

Response: An outline forces you to think about the counseling. The outline should not be thought of as an additional requirement to make the process even more time consuming, but as an instrument to ensure that the counseling will be effective. In the process of outlining the counseling session, the leader should devote time to thinking about and making notes on the purpose of the session, points relevant to the issue, possible questions, possible actions, etc. With an outline, leaders will not forget to bring up key points, ask important questions or relate the issue to a goal. An outline is a way for you to ensure you are well prepared for counseling.

Question: What is a counseling strategy?

Response: A counseling strategy is how the leader plans on developing the counseling session to achieve the intended results. Some subordinates readily participate in the counseling, while others resist involvement. Some subordinates will want to dispute every statement while others will readily agree to anything. Some will understand hints and the leader's intent, while others will need things explicitly stated. It is difficult to know how subordinates will react to each counseling session. Base your strategy on the personality of the subordinate and the nature of the issue. Although you should prepare a counseling strategy, you must be prepared to adjust that strategy as the counseling session develops and you are provided additional information.

Establishing the right atmosphere promotes two-way communication between the leader and the subordinate. Some situations may require a relaxed atmosphere and some may require a more formal atmosphere.

Recording Counseling

- ✓ Why should a leader document a counseling session?
- ✓ What type of counseling sessions require written records of counseling?

Although requirements to record counseling sessions vary, it is always a good idea to document the key points of a counseling session so that, at a later date, the leader can refer to the agreed upon plan of action. Documentation serves as a ready reference of a subordinate's accomplishments, improvements, personal preferences, or problems. Certain Army regulations require written records of counseling, i.e.; Bar to Reenlistment, administrative separation chapters, and overweight counseling are examples. In those cases where separation is likely, the leader must maintain accurate counseling records.

DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING FORM		
NAME (Last, First, MI)	Field/Grade	Date of Counseling
Organization	Name and Title of Counselor	
PART II - BACKGROUND INFORMATION		
Purpose of Counseling:		
PART III - Summary of Counseling		
Key Points of Discussion:		

Student Notes: A copy of the Developmental Counseling Form (App D-74) and instructions on how to complete the form is provided in the Student Handout and/or Appendix C, FM 22-100 (1999 version).

The Developmental Counseling Form aids and guides the leader in conducting and recording a counseling session. The figure shows the main parts of the front side of the form.

During the **Purpose of Counseling** portion of the counseling session, the leader states the reason for the counseling, e.g. Performance/Professional or Event-oriented counseling and includes the leader's facts and observations prior to the counseling. If applicable, the leader and subordinate start the counseling session by reviewing the status of the previous plan of action.

The **Key Points of Discussion** portion of this form was discussed previously. Discuss the Issue.

Plan of Action:	
<hr/>	
Session Closing:	
Individual counseled: I agree / disagree with the information above	
Individual counseled remarks:	
Signature of Individual Counseled	Date
Leader Responsibilities:	
Signature of Counselor	Date
PART IV - ASSESSMENT OF THE PLAN OF ACTION	
Assessment:	

The **plan of action** outlines actions that the subordinate will do after the counseling session to reach the agreed upon goal(s). The actions must be specific enough to modify or maintain the subordinate's behavior and include a specific time line for implementation and assessment (Part IV of the form).

During the **session closing**, the leader summarizes the key points of the session and checks to see if the subordinate understands the plan of action. The subordinate circles either "agree or disagree", provides remarks if appropriate, and signs/dates the form.

In the **leader's responsibilities** block, the leader annotates his/her responsibilities in supporting/assisting the subordinate implement the plan of action. Support may include teaching, coaching, or providing time and resources. Appropriate measures following counseling include follow-up counseling, making referrals, informing the chain of command, and taking corrective actions.

During the **assessment** portion of the plan of action, the leader and subordinate review the plan of action to determine if the desired results were achieved. The date for this assessment should be determined by the leader and subordinate during the actual counseling session (i.e. next week, next month, next quarter, etc). As counseling sessions progress, the assessment of the plan of action becomes the starting point for future counseling sessions.

