



ASIAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COUNSELING SERVICE, INC.  
2550 W. Main Street, Suite 202 Alhambra, CA 91801  
626.457.2900 800.970.1112  
fax 626.457.2904  
www.aaccs.org

Satellite offices in Torrance, Newport Beach, Los Alamitos and West Los Angeles

## **CO-THERAPY WITH THE “WONDERFUL COUNSELOR”**

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People often ask what the difference between Christian counseling and regular counseling is. What is it about our counseling service that makes it Christian? Certainly, our roots are Christian, as we started out as part of Evergreen Baptist Church, and we continue to get much of our financial support, as well as our referrals through churches. Many of our clients are Christian, or are in some way connected with Christian churches, but some of our clients have no Christian background, and come to us because they have been referred by a friend, have found our number in the Yellow Pages, or because they are looking for counseling that is sensitive to Asian issues. The way we approach counseling may at times appear Christian, as we may explore spiritual issues, use scriptural references, or pray with our clients. At other times there may be no reference at all to God, and the counseling may appear no different from what goes on in any non-Christian counselor's office. But I believe that what makes us distinctly Christian, are the people who run and staff the counseling service. All of our board members, administrative staff, and therapists are committed to Christ, and to serving God through the work of AACCS.

In the past I have thought that the major ways that being a Christian therapist impacted the therapy process was in the values and beliefs that the therapist brought to the process. Even though the therapist may not overtly attempt to influence the client in their beliefs or values, they are still there. But recently I have begun to realize that there is a much bigger difference in having a Christian therapist, and that is in the fact that you never have just one therapist, but that each session is a co-therapy situation.

Going through graduate school I had the opportunity to view video tapes on some of the master therapists doing therapy. The videos would show a therapist working with a client, then at some point they would consult with a master in the field, who would be brought in for a consultation session to work together with the regular therapist. Doing co-therapy, the master would shed new insight into the problems the client was having, as well as model new techniques for the regular therapist. I thought how wonderful it must be to be able to learn from a master. Later on in my training, I had the opportunity to do co-therapy in group settings with an experienced intern, as well as with our supervisor. In both cases, there was the security of knowing that I was not working alone, but that I was working together with someone who could help me

out, and who had more experience and expertise than myself. The co-therapist provided support, insight, and guidance as we worked together to help our clients. More recently I have had the opportunity to be the “expert” in doing co-therapy as a supervisor, and I hope that this experience was helpful to both the clients and the other therapist.

As Christian counselors, in whom the Holy Spirit abides, our clients always get two counselors for the price of one. And the second counselor, although invisible, is a true master of the trade.

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”  
Isaiah 9:6*

Counseling and psychotherapy are mysterious, complicated processes. They are not exact sciences where the application of a formula or the execution of a procedure brings about a predictable result. Instead, as we grapple with the many facets of human experience, particularly pain and suffering, we as therapists often find ourselves at a loss, confused and helpless and unable to draw from our experience, skills, or knowledge to find a way to help our clients. But as Christian therapists, we can rely on our expert Co-therapist to give us guidance and to work in the lives of our clients in ways that at times can only be described as miraculous. Our clients may not always want us to pray with them, but we can certainly pray for them, and for ourselves to receive guidance, sensitivity, and skill, even in the midst of the session.

So the next time someone tells you that what makes the counseling we do Christian is that Christian therapists are doing it, don’t write it off as a small difference. What it truly means is that at AACCS, every session involves co-therapy with the Wonderful Counselor.

*Rie Honda Mizuki, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist seeing clients in the Alhambra, Torrance, and Los Alamitos offices. She was also former Clinical Director of AACCS.*