

## 身近な森林環境を利用したカウンセリングの特徴

## - 「傾聴散策カウンセリング」の事例から -

The essential elements of a counseling method utilizing familiar forest environment  
-Case studies of forest walking counseling and attentive listening-竹内啓恵\*<sup>1</sup>・長井聡里\*<sup>2</sup>・川畑真理子\*<sup>2</sup>・上原 巖\*<sup>1</sup>Hiroe TAKEUCHI\*<sup>1</sup>, Satori NAGAI\*<sup>2</sup>, Mariko KAWABATA\*<sup>2</sup> and Iwao UEHARA\*<sup>1</sup>

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**要旨**：筆者らは、森林療法を基礎とし、メンタルヘルス対策を目標とする「傾聴散策カウンセリング」の事例研究を行い、森林環境もカウンセリングの場となり得ることを示してきた。本研究では、これまでの調査事例から得られた結果と上原の「自然散策とカウンセリング」の特徴を融合し、「傾聴散策カウンセリング」の特徴を明らかにした。その結果、森林環境の意義は、クライアントにとって①保健休養効果、②非日常空間、③気分転換が得られ、④カウンセラーとしての役割、⑤心の拠り所、⑥考える場所となることが示された。またカウンセラーは、カウンセリングを行う森林環境を選定し、適切な散策ルートを決定できる必要があり、毎回の面談においては、常にクライアントの体力、自然に対する認識や興味を察知し、クライアントの安全を心掛けなければならないこと、その上で限られた時間内でのカウンセリングを組み立てることが必要とされた。

**キーワード**：森林療法・メンタルヘルス・気分転換・森林環境・保健休養機能

**Abstract**: We have been investigating case studies of forest walking counseling and attentive listening (called “Forest Walking Counseling”, FWC). The FWC method was based on *Shinrin-Ryoho* (Forest Therapy) and aims to promote mental health of the people involved. It has been indicated that the forest environments were able to become a counseling place. This paper aims to show FWC’s elements clearly after we combined the obtained results from our research and those from “Nature Walking and Counseling (Uehara, 1996, 1997).” It was revealed that forest environments have the ability to offer restoration of forest health, extraordinary spaces, and chances for changing the client’s mood. Moreover, wood circumstances could play a role as their counselor and become their home and place to think. On the other hand, it is necessary for the counselor to be able to select an appropriate forest environment and walking route for FWC. The counselor must observe how the clients are acting, perceive their interest in nature, and keep the clients safe during FWC for every session. Besides this, the counselor needs to provide the counseling with the clients in a limited amount of counseling time.

**Key-word**: forest therapy, mental health, refreshment, forest environment, forest health restoration function

## I Introduction

In recent times, Japan has been called a stressful society. “Health promotion” and “mental health measures” have become important issues in Japan (1). Therefore, methods to cope with these strategies have been investigated in various fields. In recent years, healthy plan with positive effects on forest restoration are attracting more attention. Therefore studies pertaining to the effect of forest recreation have increased (2,6,7). There are many investigations whose

participants were male or students and of which were a short term studies. However, there are still too few clinical studies about forest amenity. So far we have reported case studies on “Forest Walking Counseling and attentive listening (FWC)” which specializes on mental health measures while the client enjoys forest amenities.

This paper aims to reveal the essential elements of FWC after we integrate results obtained from our FWC case studies (3) and those from “Nature walking and counseling” which UEHARA

reported in 1996 and 1997 (4,5).

## II Study Method

**1. Clients and Green Fields** The study of FWC was done from February of 2012 to May of 2016. A counselor had a FWC session with each client once a month for approximately one year in each of the field. Each client walked with a counselor for an hour on the same route every time. The requirements to be a research clients are (i) a person who likes nature, (ii) a female who does not have serious mental illness but is in a healthy range, and (iii) she ranges in age from 20 to 60 years old. Volunteer applications to be a client were opened to the graduate school of the University of Agriculture and JUMOKU Ltd.. There were 12 clients in total, 5 in their fifties, 4 in their forties, and 3 in their thirties. The counselor recorded all clients' stories, face expressions, posture and behavior after every session.

The study fields for FWC were urban forest parks; Yoyogi Park (Shibuya-ku, Tokyo), Bajikoen (Setagaya-ku, Tokyo), Hattori Ryokuti Park (Toyonaka-city, Osaka), and a satoyama which is a broad-leaved secondary forest; Ome-no-mori (Ome-city, Tokyo). There are several reasons to select these fields. Firstly, these fields are easily accessible fields from urban neighborhoods. Secondly, the people in these environments can experience the four seasons of Japan. Lastly these fields have a large variety of different forests which consist of many kinds of tree species.

**2. Forest Walking Counseling and attentive listening (FWC)** FWC is a counseling method which is based on *Shinrin-ryoho* (6) utilizing the forest environment. This goal is that clients will feel refreshed and change their moods and behaviors. Firstly, a counselor listens to a client attentively and empathetically while the counselor and the client walk in the natural environment. Secondly, if the client does not wish to speak about anything during FWC, the counselor accepts the client's condition and spends the time walking in silence with the client. Thirdly, if the client has his/her problems, the counselor does not provide the client with advice, but the counselor aims to get the client to become aware of his/her feelings, emotions, and mental afflictions. The counselor watches the client sort out his/her those things through the nature. Lastly, the counselor always needs to observe the client and perceive his/her condition. The counselor asks the client some questions and introduces the client to trees and plants when the counselor believes it is an appropriate time. For this

study, the counselor is a woman and has acquired wide scope of knowledge pertaining to forests, attentive listening skills and counseling skills. She has experienced with FWC sessions as a counselor 190 times. This research received permission from the university's ethical committee and all clients.

## III Results

**1. The changes of the clients' behavior** Table 1 shows changes of all clients' face expression, posture and behavior at the beginning and the end of their FWC. Below is a brief outline of the changes of the clients' behavior.

Client A showed tension on her face without making eye contact with the counselor. She discussed her workplace issue in a small voice. As she told the counselor about herself repeatedly, she began to look back on herself objectively and deal with her issues on her own. She began to face the counselor directly and speak in larger voice toward the end of session. Client B was not unfamiliar with the nature. She looked nervous at the beginning of FWC. She, however, began to look for the changes in nature during FWC as she gained knowledge of nature from the counselor. She started to gain a positive view of herself by speaking about herself. Client C seemed refreshed by walking in the green area because she liked the natural environment. However, she sometimes spoke of her workplace and her life issues in small voice. She had been suffering from chaotic of feelings due to a hectic life style. The counselor helped the client clear her train of thought and mindset by listening to her repeatedly. She gradually began to understand her own mind and also began to speak in a sensible voice with great awareness. Client D had been a peaceful mind since the start. In order to obtain a feeling a relaxation and experience the effects of FWC, she joined this study. She spent most of time in FWC walking in silence, but she began to look upwards and was willing to look for changes in nature as she began to learn more about nature. Moreover, she began to speak her mind to the counselor freely and appeared to feel relaxed during FWC. At the last session she expressed that FWC was her precious time without thinking of her job and family. Client E seemed to be strained at the first FWC, but she actively spoke to the counselor all the time. However six months later, she appeared to walk in silence and increased her time enjoying nature. She used to speak of her work negatively, but she began to speak about it positively toward the end of the study. Client F always had a poor complexion and looked tired. She spoke her workplace issues and actively complained, this was due to the

fact that she had filled with a feeling of quitting her job since the first session. However she came to reflect on herself step by step, found a way of dealing with her work. She avoided her retirement because she repeatedly released her daily stress and walking in the forest changed her mood. Client G joined this research to enjoy walking in the forest because she loved it. Getting married during FWC, she mostly talked about her husband and she began to appear irritated when she spoke of him. She started to understand her feelings more clearly and realized her emotional ups and downs through the counselor's attentive listening while viewing the forest landscape. At the last session, she looked refreshed and said that she began to take care of her feelings and manage them. Client H looked very gloomy and timid with a bent head. Although she said a lot of negative things at first, she finally began to talk about positive things. She began to look forward to searching for the changes in nature and the fields. At the last session she expressed that FWC was her occupational rehabilitation time and looked cheerful and held herself with more confidence. Client I was cheerful and active. She seemed to be constantly fighting all of the time because she had many things on her mind in addition to her part-time job and housework. However, she told the counselor that by walking in the green park the forest seemed to become her place to feel refreshed as she was able to look back and reflect on herself and experiences. She revealed that she started to think about herself more deeply during the last session. Client J looked strained at first and not very expressive. She seemed to be carrying the burden of nursing

to force herself to do everything. Client K often appeared to be tensed and irritated with a stone like her face. However, she seemed to talk actively with a smile nature. As she spent time looking in silence at the green fields and was reminded of her infant experiences. She was able to examine herself slowly within forest amenity. She gradually appeared to become more peaceful as the sessions progressed. At the final session she claimed that she had stopped worrying about what others thought of her. Client L spent most of the walking time in silence and she looked disgusted and seemed to feel agitated and frustrated with her work as well as the counselor. However, as she began to feel more relaxed, she began to talk to the counselor and deal with her work positively because she felt refreshed after walking in the field and the counselor accepted her situation.

As mentioned above, it was revealed that the 12 clients had experienced their changes with a greater or lesser extent between before and after FWC. It was supposed that forest restoration and the counselor's attentive listening had great influence in the clients' psychological process and their behavioral changes and it also facilitated changes in facial expressions and posture.

**2. The role of a counselor** It was the first time for most of the clients to visit their forest environment during FWC. They looked tense and seemed to display a feeling of fear in regards to walking in fields, even though they like nature. The counselor tried to give the clients a comfortable space in the forest in order for them to feel relief and refresh through

表1 クライエントの表情, 姿勢, 行動の変化

Table 1. Changes of Clients' face expression, posture, and behavior

Client	Age	Occupation	Face Expression		Posture		Behavior	
			First	Last	First	Last	First	Last
A	52	a home care helper for elderly	strained	cheerful	said in a small voice did not maintain eye contact	said in a large voice maintained eye contact a little bit	suffered from her workplace issue	tried to work on the issue
B	41	outsourcing service	nervous	cheerful	restless didn't know where to look at	peaceful walk with looking around the nature	work-centered life	began to think of herself to live with a good feeling
C	33	office work	confused	refreshed	said in a small voice	said in a sensible voice	held a hazy feeling	found what she wanted to do
D	42	a health nurse	peaceful	refreshed	walked with her face forward much of silent time	walked with her look upward talked naturally	spent peaceful	enjoyed the time for herself only and felt relaxed
E	52	office work	strained	relaxed	nervous talked a lot actively	increased silent time enjoyed the nature	nervous defensive	got a little bit working motivation
F	31	office work	tired looked pale	relaxed	talked a lot actively	peaceful walk with looking around the nature	felt like quitting her job	got through her work
G	44	a counseling staff	strained	refreshed	confused irritated	peaceful refreshed	suffered from her home-related problem	became to take care of herself
H	42	office work	gloomy timid	bright	walked with her head down	walked with her look upward	act timidly talked in a negative tone	dependable talked in a positive tone
I	53	clerk	bright	relaxed	restless	enjoyed the nature peaceful	had a chronic sense of time urgently	began to think of herself
J	57	office work	strained less-expressive	relaxed expressive a little	said in a small voice	said in large voice	irritated thought something seriously	tried not to strain to do anything
K	54	office work	strained irritated	relaxed	nervous talk a lot actively	peaceful increased silent time	had much guilt feeling	had a little of guilt feeling
L	36	office work	disgusted	relaxed	much of silent time unwilling to talk	talk a lot naturally	lost her working motivation	got her working motivation

her elderly parents. She began to express her honest feelings step by step because she was able to release her stress by talking with the counselor. She finally expressed that she had better not

walking. The counselor actively took care of the clients while utilizing forest landscapes, observing the clients' facial expressions, perceiving the direction they were looking at and

explaining the trees they were interested in. This took the role of bridging the gap between the clients and their forest. The clients began to express their feelings once they realized that their fields were safe to walk in and felt relieved to spend with the counselor there. On the other hand, the counselor accepted the clients' mood and emphasized with them in order to get the clients to consciously realize their problems and emotions. This aided in establishing a relationship between the clients and the counselor. As the clients appeared to spend a lot of time in silence, the forest environment for them became spaces that the clients can look back on and be able to refresh their mind by viewing the forest scenery. The clients also told the counselor what they felt during the moment. The clients began to take the initiative while spending time in forest environments during FWC. The counselor made an effort to follow the clients as if the counselor had become a part of the forest environment. This situation signaled the end of the clients' involvement in FWC and the end of FWC for that client.

**3. Elements of FWC** UEHARA's "Nature Walking and Counseling (5,6)" has merits (i ~ vii) and demerits (viii ~ xiv) :

- (i) It is open. (ii) A client and a counselor move from one place to another. (iii) They can partake in physical exercise. (iv) They can view the scenery. (v) A client come to know her/himself. (vi) The nature can accept and appeal to a client. (vii) The forest can become an indicator of a client's mind. (viii) The counseling is easily controlled by the weather. (ix) A client and a counselor feel uncomfortable. (x) The newcomers to nature have feelings of resistance toward the field. (xi) There is individual variation in client's favorite places. (xii) There is a vague relation between walking and counseling. (xiii) It could be strange relationship between them if the client was the opposite sex of the counselor. (xiv) It is difficult to find the appropriate field in urban areas. These elements applied to those of FWC. However, it is inferred that a counselor is able to control the weak points from No. (viii) to No. (xi) Moreover, it was considered that there were not the unusual relations between the clients and the counselor, because they are the same sex.

In those elements mentioned above, it was revealed that forest environments could offer the clients health restoration, special spaces, and chances to change their moods and feelings. In addition, woody surroundings may play a role with their counselor and gradually become their home and their places to think. On the other hand, it is necessary for the counselor to have a skill to be able to select an appropriate forest

environment and walking route there for FWC. The counselor needs to observe how the clients are, perceive their interest in nature, and keep the clients' safety during FWC in every session. The counselor has to be able to provide counseling and be accepted by the clients in a limited amount of time.

#### IV Conclusion

From this study, it was shown that FWC had a combined effect of forest environments, walking, and attentive listening and could be a counseling method utilizing forest environments and their elements to change the moods and behaviors of the clients. The role of the counselor had been a major part to play in bridging the differences between the clients and forest environments. We will continuously accumulate case studies and make an effort to reveal the effects of FWC.

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