



Why I Want to Become a Counselling Psychologist

by Nivritee Khandelwal

Since childhood, I have been a very sensitive person. Simple comments used to affect me a lot. Something that another person might forget in a few minutes could stay in my mind for days. I have also gone through some mental and emotional difficulties while growing up, and there was a time when I needed therapy and regularly went to my school counsellor. It has taken me years to reach where I am today, and I would not say that I am completely out of everything even now. There are still things from my past that affect me and things that I am learning to deal with. But when I look at the person I was a few years ago and the person I am today, I can see how much has changed.

For a long time, school itself was difficult for me. I had some past experiences related to studying, teachers and answering questions in class. I do not want to go into exactly what happened because that is something I want to keep personal, but those experiences affected the way I looked at studying. There was a time when simply opening a book could bring back thoughts that I did not want. I wanted to study, but my own mind would stop me. This is something I really want people to understand. Sometimes when somebody is not doing something, it does not always mean that they are lazy or that they do not care. Sometimes they are fighting something inside themselves that nobody else can see. I would study one day before an exam or sometimes one week before it, because studying one month before an exam felt almost impossible. The same thing happened inside the classroom. If I was scared of a particular subject, teacher or class, my first thought was to escape from it. I would go to my counsellor because sitting in class felt too difficult. I was also extremely scared of being asked questions in front of everyone. Even if I knew something, sometimes the fear itself was enough to stop me from answering.

Slowly, things started changing. By Grade 8, I actually started enjoying school more. It was still difficult, but I started thinking differently. I realised that I only had a few years of school left, and after that, I would enter a much bigger world where I would have to face so many things on my own. I could not spend my whole life running away whenever something scared me.

One of my most difficult subjects at that time was History and Civics. I was so scared of being questioned in class that I once wrote a note to my teacher asking her not to ask me questions. I promised her that I would improve, and I did. I went from barely passing and getting marks in the 40s to getting marks in the 70s. For somebody else, those marks might not seem like something huge, but for me, they were. They showed me that when I was given the space to learn without constantly being scared, I could actually improve.

Today, I am in Grade 9 and preparing for my half-yearly examinations. I still have fears, and Physics is one of them. There are basic things that I sometimes do not know, and earlier I might have genuinely believed that meant I was dumb. Sometimes I still jokingly tell myself, "Wow, you are so dumb," but somewhere inside, I know that I am not. There were years when I could not study properly because of different things happening in my life, so my basics are not always clear. That does not mean I cannot learn them now.

The biggest difference is that today, even when I am scared of Physics, I sit in the class. Sometimes that old thought still comes into my mind. I feel like leaving the class, going somewhere else or simply sitting with my counsellor instead of facing what scares me. But I do not do that anymore. This might sound like a very small achievement to somebody else, but for me, it is one of the



biggest signs of how far I have come. Therapy did not magically remove every fear or make every problem disappear. It slowly helped me learn how to face things I used to run away from.

Sports also became a huge part of this journey. I am a student athlete, and when I am on the track, I feel free. There is pressure, of course. People might tell me, “Tu toh jeet jayegi,” and sometimes that creates expectations in my head. But even if I do not win, I know I can still be proud of myself because at least I was there and I participated. Athletics has taught me that being mentally strong does not mean never being nervous or scared. For me, it means still showing up when those feelings are there.

That is one of the biggest reasons I want to become a counselling psychologist. I know what it feels like when your own thoughts stop you from doing something you actually want to do. I know what it feels like to need somebody who will simply listen without immediately deciding who you are. I also know how much can slowly change when you finally get that space. Today, people are becoming more aware of their mental and emotional health, and one of the best things is that they are talking about it. There is still a long way to go, but at least these conversations are happening, and I want to be a part of them.

I do not want to become a counselling psychologist because I think I can fix people’s lives. A counsellor cannot live somebody else’s life or fight every battle for them. I see it in a different way. Sometimes there might be a door in front of someone that they are too scared, confused or tired to open. I want to help them see that door and realise that they have the strength to open it themselves. I want to help people discover who they really are from within, instead of spending their whole lives seeing themselves only through their marks, achievements, failures, other people’s comments or other people’s opinions.

I think I have slowly started discovering that person within myself too. I am still not completely there. I still have things to work through, fears to face and difficult days to deal with. I am still growing. But the biggest change is that earlier, when I was scared, I would run away. Today, I might still be scared, but I choose to participate. There is a quote that says, “Bhag lo (run away), or bhaag lo (participate). The choice is yours.” I have made my choice to participate, and I want people to make their choices too. And one day, as a counselling psychologist, I hope I can help someone else find the courage to choose that too.

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