

COUNSELLING FOR TOADS

A Psychological Adventure

Robert de Board

**OVER
3 MILLION
COPIES SOLD
WORLDWIDE**

'Counselling for Toads is a joy. Not just because it is an extremely clever Kenneth Grahame pastiche, but because it actually explains counselling as a method of dealing with psychological distress with admirable clarity. You'll want to read *The Wind in the Willows* yet again after this version of the story – and you will read it with new eyes.'

Claire Rayner

COUNSELLING FOR TOADS

Over 3 million copies sold worldwide and translated into seven languages!

Counselling for Toads provides readers with a warm and engaging introduction to counselling, brought to life by Toad and his friends from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.

Over the course of ten sessions, which correspond to chapters of the book, a very depressed Toad learns how to analyse his own feelings and develop his emotional intelligence using the language and ideas of transactional analysis. He meets his 'rebellious child' and his 'adult' along the way and by the end of the book, Toad is setting out on a completely new adventure – as debonair as he ever was.

Readers will learn about the counselling process and themselves as they join Toad on his journey from psychological distress to psychological growth and development. A must-read for anyone approaching counselling for the first time, whether as a student or as a client, or for the professional counsellor looking for something to recommend to the hesitant.

Robert de Board, author of a best-selling textbook on counselling, says:

'Toad's experiences are based on my own work of counselling people over a period of twenty years. *Counselling for Toads* is really an amalgamation of the many counselling sessions I have held and contains a distillation of the truths I have learned from practice.'

Appropriate for anyone approaching counselling, whether as a student, client or counsellor, *Counselling for Toads* will appeal to both children and adults of all ages.

Robert de Board is an organisational consultant based in Henley-on-Thames, and visiting Professor at Henley Management College. He is the author of two best-selling textbooks – *Counselling Skills* and *The Psychoanalysis of Organizations*.

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A Psychological Adventure

ROBERT de BOARD

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“Brilliantly uses one of the world’s favourite stories for all ages to engagingly and revealingly take us through the psychotherapeutic process and transactional analysis. Am I a better Toad for reading it? Of course I am!!!”

William Horwood, *English novelist, author of the Wind in the Willows sequel series, Tales of the Willows*

“Drawing on the figure of Toad, who is a rather pompous yet affectionate character who has fallen into depression, de Board takes us on a journey through the theory of Eric Berne’s classical transactional analysis. Toad goes to see Heron, the local counsellor, who is a gentle, kind, thoughtful, serious yet confrontational person, the type of person one would hope to meet in a counsellor. The theory is described clearly yet convincingly through the client/counsellor relationship with plentiful uses of metaphor, good humour, and irony that make us smile indulgently, not only at Toad but also at ourselves at times as we recognise some of our own frailties.”

Helena Hargaden, *psychotherapist, counsellor, and transactional analyst, author of Transactional Analysis: A Relational Perspective*

“Through this anthropomorphic parable, de Board takes readers into a realistic, humorous, and humane account of being in psychotherapy. I suspect that Toad would find great pleasure to know that this story of his life, struggles, and recovering is still being read 25 years since its original publication. *Counselling for Toads* offers an overview of the basics of transactional analysis in practice. In the 25 years since the book was written, transactional analysis has continued to evolve and is now a model of human relations work applied in psychotherapy, counselling, education, and organizational development.”

William F. Cornell, MA, TSTA, *editor of the Routledge book series, Innovations in Transactional Analysis, and editor of Into TA: A Comprehensive Textbook on Transactional Analysis.*

Mole finds Toad in a poorly state

The weather was changing on the river bank. There was something ominous in the air that had not been there before. Black thunder-clouds hung menacingly over the fields. A few birds flitted pointlessly among the hedgerows singing a song, the notes of which they seemed scarcely able to remember. Even the ducks, who had as usual been quarrelling and quacking about supposed snubs and alleged insults, nestled into the reeds and chose to ignore all but the most outrageous attacks. Only the river moved on, black and sinuous, always changing yet always the same, creating a boundary for some animals, a highway for others, and with a suppressed energy and power that was only dangerous when ignored.

In this oppressive weather, Mole decided to go out. If he were to be honest, he was getting a bit restless, if not fed up, living with Rat. Yet even as he thought this, he felt guilty. For had not Ratty befriended Mole, taken him from his dull old house and introduced him to all his jolly friends? And what friends they were too; and what adventures they had had! Boating on the river, meeting Badger, caravanning with Toad and finally playing an

heroic part in the rescue of Toad Hall from the Wildwooders.

And yet, and yet. . . Mole found it hard to describe exactly how he was feeling but it was something to do with his very self. In fact, that was it. He felt that he was rarely able to *be* himself because he was always standing in Rat's shadow. If they went boating, Rat would usually tell him that he was not doing it right, like not feathering his oars properly. When they moored, Rat would check the painter to see that Mole had secured it properly and invariably give it another turn around the post.

If they got lost, Rat always knew the way, just as he had done when he rescued Mole in a snowstorm in the Wild Wood. Or that time when, on a long walk, they chanced upon Mole's old house and, not unnaturally, Mole was overcome with emotion. Not so the ever-capable Rat, who took over, got the field mice to buy food and drink and organised a splendid evening.

The trouble was that the Rat *did* seem to be more capable than he was. He could scull better, he knew more knots and bends (he could even do a square lashing) and he really did take care of Mole. But in spite of this friendship and kindness, Mole felt dissatisfied. He wished that Rat wasn't *quite* so capable and that he would let Mole try out things in his own way, even if that meant getting it wrong. Of course, this had happened, like the first time he was in Rat's boat and grabbed the oars – and inevitably tipped the boat over. Rat had rescued him with great good humour and yet Mole thought, 'If I hear Rat tell that story at dinner ever again, I shall scream!'

Mole was thinking these thoughts as he put on his raincoat and sou'wester. He said to the Rat, 'I think I'll

just pop over for a chat with Toad. We haven't seen him for ages and the walk will do me good.' The Rat, who was murmuring poetry things to himself and was trying to find a rhyme for 'effervescent', scarcely looked up but as Mole was going out of the door suddenly shouted, 'Be careful, Moley. Think of what happened last time you went out on your own!' He was of course referring to the time when Mole got lost in the Wild Wood and Rat had saved him. Mole was furious and called Rat several unflattering words under his breath. Out loud he said, 'Thank you Ratty. I'll take care,' adding *sotto voce*, 'you stupid, squint-eyed rodent', which Rat did not hear and which he was not meant to. But it made Mole feel better.

It was in this frame of mind that Mole walked over to Toad Hall, scarcely responding to the polite greetings of the rabbits he met on the way. He knew that he had gained their respect since arriving at the river bank and no one would demand any toll from him, as they once had done. Let them dare! And yet, did he only imagine that he heard one say in a rather horrid way, 'That's strange. You don't often see Mole on his own'?

In this rather miserable frame of mind, he found himself walking up the drive to Toad Hall. Toad Hall was impressive, there were no two ways about it. It had recently been described in a glossy county magazine as 'A gentleman's residence, benefiting from a secluded position on the bank of the river, enjoying expansive views across the Wild Wood and beyond. All this is surrounded by extensive and mature gardens with outlying paddocks and other buildings.' No wonder Toad was so proud of it.

But as Mole walked up the long drive, he was shocked to see how everything seemed run down. The hedges were untrimmed and the rose-beds were full of weeds.

The lawns were covered in leaves and the whole place looked unkempt and uncared for. Even the Hall itself looked grim and forbidding. The white paint, which used to sparkle in the sun, was dull and flaking. The creepers and climbing roses, which brought such colour and vibrancy to the walls, were dying and hanging down like black ropes. The windows, always clear and shiny, seemed only to reflect the dark and brooding weather and added to the atmosphere of grim foreboding. Mole shivered.

Pressing the buzzer he heard the bell ringing deep within the house. There was no answer and so he pressed a second time. Again the bell rang loudly, but to no avail. 'Oh well' thought Mole, 'I might have guessed that Toad would be out enjoying himself. He's probably at his club playing billiards.' This was a game at which Toad was particularly adept. Reluctant to leave, Mole walked around the house past the walled kitchen garden and came to the back door. He looked through the kitchen window to see what might be there. The room was empty, although there was some evidence that the stove was alight. He knew this room well, for it was furnished with comfortable old chairs in which he and Toad had sat and enjoyed many a hot mug of coffee on a winter's day. And then he saw, on a chair, a large heap of old clothes. Suddenly, the clothes started to move! Mole, being a timid creature, was about to run off into the garden when the clothes fell away to reveal... Toad! Mole tugged at the back door and was surprised to find that it opened. Inside was the saddest Toad he had ever seen. Toad's eyes, always large, were now hooded and dull. His cricket sweater, which he invariably wore around the house, was covered in food stains. And his plus-fours, usually immaculate and worn at just the right length, had

MOLE FINDS TOAD IN A POORLY STATE

the appearance of a couple of potato sacks hanging from his waist.

'Hello', said Toad. 'Sorry about the mess, but I'm not feeling too bright at the moment.' And with that, he burst into tears.