

CHAPTER TWO

2. Principles and Skills of Counseling

ATTENDING

The counsellor at any given time must have his/her full attention on the subject. Daydreaming, fatigue, anxiety, or restiveness will turn out to be ineffective to the counsellor. The counsellor should have his/her posture straight. They should always look in the person's eye without any indication that they are staring, but the look in their eyes should mean that they are concerned and that they understand what the subject is going through at that very moment. The body language that the counsellor portrays should be calm; they should never show that they are tensed or nervous about anything. Having these qualities helps in keeping the patient calm and at ease. These signs should not be distracting to the subject.

Empathy

Every subject that has to be counseled has to be treated with love. When any counsellor shows his/her feelings that the subject experiences they show signs of empathy. Empathy unlike sympathy is much deeper. This emotion means that the counsellor is in the person shoes and knows what s/he is feeling; they begin to see the problem from the perspective from the client and feel the emotions of anger, frustrations, disappointments etc.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Listening is an active process that requires no verbal or non-verbal interruptions in between. One should not be judgmental in either word or action (body language). All counsellors should take in what is being said such as the tone of voice, posture, gestures, facial expressions and other nonverbal clues, hearing not only what the subject says, but noticing what gets left out, waiting patiently through periods of silence or tears as the subject summons enough courage to share something painful or pauses to recollect his or her thoughts and regain composure. According to books that have been written by various authors there are ten characteristics that tell if a person is listening.

- 1) The person being spoken to will always look at the person speaking.
- 2) They would question the subject to clarify what is being said.
- 3) They will show they are concerned about them, by asking questions about the others feelings.
- 4) At some point of the discussion will also repeats or paraphrases, which the subject said.
- 5) Will not at anytime during the conversation rush.

- 6) Remains poised and emotionally controlled.
- 7) Responds with a nod of the head, a smile, or a frown.
- 8) Pays close attention.
- 9) Doesn't interrupt.
- 10) Keeps on the subject until the subject has finished his thoughts.

In most counselling, feelings and not issues are central. When the counsellor interprets the situation merely in terms of "problem" and "solution" they miss the feelings that the subject is expressing. Effective counsellors should identify what feeling the person has expressed and check with them whether that is what they are feeling, they should avoid premature solutions to the person's problem and deal with their feelings and thoughts and absorb accusations without becoming defensive against the person.

- In order to get the information you need to help a client, you must listen actively. This technique involves communicating, without words, your interest in the needs the client expresses. You can open up communication by using silence. You can let the client know that you are listening by maintaining eye contact, leaning forward, occasionally saying words like "yes," and "please continue"—these are signs of respect and generate a feeling of well-being in the person who is being heard.

PROBING/Questioning

The best questions to ask anyone are the ones that require two or more sentences to answer. In this process there are a number of questions that can be used. Ask open-ended questions - questions which cannot be answered with a "Yes" or "No". For example ask, "What are some of the ways in which your parents have influenced you?" rather than, "Do you feel your parents are part of your problem?" Counsellors should avoid using questions that have two or more alternatives to them. In doing so the subject gives their preference as the answer and the discussion stops there. They should also avoid using a string of questions. It would be more appropriate to ask one question at a time. As in asking a string of them together would tend to be rather threatening. The question why should be used more sparingly. These "why" questions usually sounds judgmental and stops them from confessing their true feelings.

RESPONDING

Goal of the counsellor in responding to the subject is to help them gain insight. The extent to which counselling is effective depends on the balance that a counsellor shows in the responses that are

made to subjects. The two broad aspects of effectiveness are directive and nondirective. In nondirective counselling, it is believed that people should not be told what to do. If they understand why things have gone wrong, they will change; insights supposedly lead to changed behaviour. Directive counselling attempts to teach people better ways to fulfill their needs. The counsellor recognizes the subject's problem and then guides him or her in solving it. Subjects are provided with provision to ventilate and talk out their feelings to help them cope with internalized anger which causes depressions. However, it is important to move beyond feelings and deal with the behaviour of a subject. To change behaviour, people may need to develop new interests and activities. There are several techniques that counsellors employ to respond to people, such as: supporting, confronting, informing, interpreting, teaching, self-disclosing, evaluating and silence. Right at the beginning of the session, support and encouragement helps people burdened by needs and conflicts to gain courage and strength to proceed with counselling. Support involves guiding subjects to take stock of their resources, encouraging action and helping them with problems and failures that may result from such action. Confrontation involves presenting an idea to the subject that they might not see otherwise.

■ **Paraphrasing, Summarizing, and Clarifying**

This technique involves repeating, synthesizing, or summarizing in other words what the client has told you. This helps the provider clarify what the client is saying, and helps the client to feel that he or she has been heard.

■ **Reflecting and Validating Feelings**

This technique involves clarifying the feelings the client expresses in order to help understand his or her emotions. For example, “It seems to me that you are worried because you suspect that your husband had sex with other women, and you are afraid that you will get AIDS.” It is helpful to clients to let them know that their reactions to a situation are normal, and that those feelings are common to other people in similar situations. You can communicate that the feelings are valid.

■ **Arriving at Agreement**

This technique involves clarifying and summarizing the decisions that a client has made during the counseling session.

Terminating

Ending up a counselling relationship is as important as any of the other basic skills. There are several aspects that effective counsellors apply at terminating counselling relationships. They do

not end the relationship suddenly, but as satisfactorily as possible. People come for counselling because of relationship problems - often those that have ended badly. From the beginning, the counsellors look to the end by making it clear to the subject that they have a contract for several sessions. They periodically, evaluate where they have got what was to be achieved. If there is a pattern of broken relationships, they talk about the pattern and spend time ending. They leave the door open for follow up, i.e. in a month's time or whenever the need arises.

Some Basic counseling Principles

- ▲ Counseling is centered on the difficulties of the client.
- ▲ Counseling is a learning situation which eventually results in a behavioral change.
- ▲ Effectiveness in counseling depends largely on the readiness of the client to make changes and the therapeutic relationship with the counselor.
- ▲ The counseling relationship is confidential.

2.2. Characteristics of effective counselor

Counsellor characteristics are importance on the belief that "good" counsellors have unique and identifiable personal characteristics, and that if identified, those characteristics can be used as a tool for improving counsellor and counselling quality. However, clients react differentially to counsellor characteristics (sometimes irrespective of the counsellor's skills) and that those reactions are important components of counselling outcomes. Today, the study of counsellor characteristics is refocused and is intended to facilitate "matching" of counsellors and clients.

- *Characteristics of an effective counselor*
- Demonstrate a positive belief in himself or herself
- Has self-awareness and knows his or her own biases or prejudices
- Has tolerance for vagueness.
- Has the ability to model appropriate behaviors.
- Has the ability to be altruistic (unselfish).
- Is ethical.
- Ability to use him/herself as a vehicle of change.
- Is committed to understand specialized knowledge of the field and find it personally meaningful.
- Stays current in professional knowledge by continuing to learn.
- Respects the client's worldview, personal experience, spirituality, and culture.

- Has a good self-care strategy.

Counselor Interpersonal skills that affect counseling outcomes:

- The ability to listen and understand without judgment.
- The ability to be sensitive, empathic, and patient.
- The ability to convey to the client that the counselor values the client's experiences.
- The ability to convey the belief that the client is: capable, trustworthy, respectable, worthy and dependable

Additional Characteristics of Counselors

- Counselors need a high level of energy to remain alert and attentive to their clients.
- Counselors take risks everyday and face rejection by their clients or face clients or situations they may not be prepared to face.
- Counselors face uncertainty all the time and need to be able to handle it.
- Counselors are expected to develop intimate relationships with their clients *as clients*

Inappropriate Responses in Counseling

- **Judging:** For example, "You wouldn't have these problems if you had acted differently!"
- **Attacking:** For example, "How could you be that irresponsible?"
- **Denial:** For example, "Don't worry. I'm sure that it's nothing important."
- **Pity:** For example, "Poor thing! How terrible that happened!"

2.3. Environmental set up of Counseling

The settings or contexts can also differ. Most often counselling takes place in offices, private or institutional, set aside specially for that activity. The décor of such offices is designed to support the purpose of counselling, for instance functional easy chairs with a coffee table between them. Often counselling services are located in specially designated areas, for instance student counselling services. Helpers may sometimes use counselling skills in areas designed for counselling, for instance in some voluntary agencies, but frequently they use counselling skills in locations that represent their primary work role: personnel offices, classrooms, tutorial rooms, hospital wards, outplacement clinics, churches, banks, law offices and community centres. Furthermore, while counsellors rarely go outside formal locations, helpers such as priests, nurses, social workers and members of peer support networks may use counselling skills in people's home settings.

Physical Setting: Counseling can happen anywhere, but the professional generally works in a place that provides -

- ▲ Privacy,
 - ▲ Confidentiality,
 - ▲ Quiet and
 - ▲ Certain comfort
- S - Squarely face person vs. sitting kitty-corner.
 - O - use Open posture vs. crossed arms and legs
 - L - Lean a little toward the person vs. settling back in your chair
 - E - use Eye contact vs. staring off into deep space
 - R - Relax, keep it natural vs. sitting like a board
 - F – look friendly vs. neutral or scowling

Take a look at how you are sitting right now. Hmm ... arms crossed? Slumped? Bored expression? Looking offside? Not good.

Ethical & Legal considerations in counseling

- Ethical codes serve as principles upon which to guide practice.
- There are two dimensions to ethical decision making:

Principle ethics: Overt ethical obligations that must be addressed.

Virtue ethics: Above and beyond the obligatory ethics and are idealistic.

Ethical Issues that Influence Counseling Practice

1. Client Welfare: Client needs come before counselor needs and the counselor needs to act in the client's best interest
2. Informed Consent: Counselors need to inform clients as to the nature of counseling and answer questions so that the client can make an informed decision.
3. Autonomy: having freedom of choice, self-determination
4. Confidentiality: duty to respect privileged information. Clients must be able to feel safe within the therapeutic relationship for counseling to be most effective
5. **Dual Relationships:** When a counselor has more than one relationship with a client (e.g. the counselor is a friend and the counselor.)
6. **Sexual Relationships:** Professional organizations strongly prohibit sexual relationships with

clients and in some states it is a criminal offense.

7. **Malpractice:** When a counselor fails to provide reasonable care or skill that is generally provided by other professionals and it result is to injury to the client.

Suggestions for Avoiding Malpractice

Pre-counseling: Make sure to cover all information regarding:

- The financial costs of counseling.
- Any special arrangements.
- The competencies of the counselor.
- Avoid dual relationships.
- Clearly indicate if a treatment is experimental.
- Identify limits to confidentiality.
- Help the client make an informed choice.

During Counseling

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Seek consultations when necessary.
- Maintain good client records.
- Take proper action when a client poses a clear and imminent danger to themselves or others.
- Comply with the laws regarding child abuse and neglect.

At the end of Counseling:

- Be sensitive to the client's feelings regarding termination.
- Initiate termination when the client is not benefiting from services.
- Address the client's post-terminations concerns.
- Evaluate the efficacy of the counseling services.

What competencies Counselor should have?

- Counselors need to accurately represent their credentials and qualifications.
- Counselors need to continue their education.
- Counselors need to only provide services for which they are qualified.
- Counselors need to keep up on current information of the field and especially in specialty areas.
- Counselors need to seek counseling when they have personal issues.

When To Break Confidentiality?

- If a client threatens another person's life or with significant bodily harm.
- When a child under the age of 18 is being sexually abused.
- If the counselor determines the client needs hospitalization.
- If the information is involved in a court action
- When a counselor is performing a court ordered evaluation.
- When the client is suicidal.
- When the client When the client file a case against the counselor.
- When the client uses a mental disorder as a legal defense.
- When an underage child is being abused.
- When a client discloses intent to commit a crime or is dangerous to others.
- When a client needs hospitalization.

Counselor's Responsibilities and Obligations

- Counselors have the duty to appeal adverse decisions regarding their client(s).
- Counselors have a duty to disclose to clients regarding the limitations of the counseling service and the limits of confidentiality under this service.
- Counselors have a duty to continue treatment and are not supposed to "abandon" a client just because the client does not have the financial means to pay for services.