

# Assessment and diagnosis in counseling

# Factors influencing counseling techniques

- **Therapeutic alliance**
- **Therapeutic alliance** between therapist and clients historically recognized as crucial component for successful therapy outcomes from all different theoretical backgrounds.
- Many studies suggest that the words and actions that the therapist uses to promote a healthy and working alliance have proven to be an important contributing factor to change for the client (Sullivan, Skovholt, & Jennings, 2005)

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- Client drop-out rates continue to be a widespread problem; several studies have found that clients will often discontinue the therapy if they are dissatisfied with the therapist or the therapist's techniques (McCarthy & Frieze, 1999).

# Therapist (counselor quality)

- Therapists agree that the initial contact with the client, even if it is just a phone call, must be done in a sensitive and responsive way in order for the client to feel understood and respected from the beginning stages of the relationship (Sullivan et al., 2005).

# Training therapists (counselor quality)

- It has been shown by Fauth et al. (2007) that poor therapeutic responsiveness can have negative effects on the outcome of therapy, and research suggests that adding therapeutic responsiveness to training of therapists may increase the therapeutic alliance and overall outcome of therapy

# Experience of the therapist

- It has been found that skillful therapists tend to use techniques that follow certain methods, but even within these methods they continue to remain flexible and open (Hoglund, 1999).

# Client

## Motivation/Personality/Symptomology

- Past research that has focused on which client characteristics have an impact on the therapeutic alliance, such as a client's motivation level and their ability to form relationships, has shown that these traits and characteristics have an impact on both the alliance and the therapy outcome (Black et al., 2005).

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- The evidence supports that suitable patients who are open and have the ability to establish a positive working alliance with a therapist who skillfully demonstrates a well defined therapeutic method will achieve favorable results (Hoglund, 1999).
- Suitable clients for therapy are generally characterized by less problematic personality traits, an ability to establish stable relationships, and an ability to verbalize and cooperate.



# Physical setting as a factor

- Physical Setting Counseling may take place anywhere but some kind of physical setting may promote and enhance the counseling process better than others. Benjamin (1987) and Shertzer and Stone (1980) emphasise that among the most important factor that influences the counseling process is the place where counseling occurs.
- Though there is no universal quality that a room should have certain optimal conditions within the room where counseling is to be rendered can provide a conducive environment to both counselor and counselee.

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- The optimal condition include a room with quiet colors, lighting that is neither too flashy and bright nor too dull and depressing clutter free with harmonious and comfortable furniture and good ventilation. It should be free from outside disturbances and should exude a feeling of warmth.
- In short it should be comfortable such that a relaxed atmosphere is provided in which the counselee can talk in a relaxed mood.

# Sitting Arrangement

- The sitting arrangement within the room depends on the counselor. Some counselors prefer to sit behind a desk. However it has been postulated that a desk can be a physical and symbolic barrier against the development of a rapport between client and counselor.
- Benjamin (1987) suggests that counselors may include two chairs and a nearby table in the setting. The chairs could be at a 90 degree angle from one another so that the clients can look at their counselors or straight ahead. Counselors could opt for other variation of physical arrangement as per their comfort level.

# Proximity between Counselor and Client

- The distance between the counselor and client (the spatial features of the environment) can also affect the relationship.
- A distance of 30 to 39 inches has been found to be the average range of comfort between counselor and client of both genders. This optimum distance may vary with room size and furniture arrangement.

