

Chapter Five

Ethical issues in counselling

Values in counselling

Research findings has indicated that counsellors' values influence every phase of the therapeutic process, including the theories of personality and therapeutic change employed, assessment strategies, therapy goals, identifying client problems that will be treated, choice of techniques, and evaluation of therapeutic outcomes. Clients are influenced by therapists' values and often adopt some of these values. Supporting this idea, Gerald Corey et al (2011) argued that in the counselling relationship, counsellors should understand his/her values and the influence they will have on your counselling. We ask you to consider the possible impact of your values on your clients, the effect your clients' values will have on you, and the conflicts that may arise if you and your clients have different values.

Consequently, there is a hot argument among professional regarding to the values of counsellors. Some professionals believe in value neutrality; they believe that therapists can and should keep their values out of therapy. On the other hand, other professionals argued that psychotherapy is value neutral is no longer tenable. Therefore, clinicians need to take into consideration the role of personal influence in their practice. In our view, it is neither possible nor desirable for counsellors to be completely neutral in this respect. Although it is not the counsellor's function to persuade clients to accept a certain value system, we do think it is crucial for counsellors to be clear about their own values and how they influence their work with clients, perhaps even unconsciously.

Clinicians may not agree with the values of their clients, but it is essential that they respect the rights of their clients to hold a different set of values. The way therapists deal with clients' values can raise ethical issues. Therapists should not attempt to teach clients specific moral rules and values because doing so violates clients' diversity and prevents them from growing by making their own choices based on their values.

Client's rights

In counselling, according to Gerald Corey et al (2011), as part of a basic ethical practice the counsellor should talk with clients about their rights, because, frequently clients do not realize

that they have rights. Mostly, clients may unquestioningly accept whatever their therapist say or does. There may be an aura about the therapeutic process, and clients may have exaggerated confidence in their therapists, much like the trust patients often have in their physicians. For most people the therapeutic situation is a new one, and they may be unclear about what is expected of them and what they should expect from the therapist. For these reasons we think the therapist is responsible for protecting client's rights and teaching clients about these rights. The ethics codes of most professional organizations require that clients be given adequate information to make informed choices about entering and continuing the client-therapist relationship.

The Rights of Clients and Informed Consent

One of the best ways to protect the rights of clients is to develop procedures to help them make informed choices. Informed consent involves the right of clients to be informed about their therapy and to make autonomous decisions pertaining to it. The main purpose of informed consent is to increase the chances that the client will become involved, educated and a willing participant in his or her therapy. Mental health professionals are required by their ethics codes to disclose to clients the risks, benefits, and alternatives to proposed treatment. The intent of an informed consent document is to define boundaries and clarify the nature of the therapeutic relationship. The goal of the informed consent process is to give clients adequate and continuous information so that they may anticipate what they will be asked in treatment.

According to APA (2002) when obtaining informed consent to therapy, psychologists inform clients/patients as early as is feasible in the therapeutic relationship about the nature and anticipated course of therapy, fees, involvement of third parties, and limits of confidentiality and provide sufficient opportunity for the client/patient to ask questions and receive answers. Similarly, *American Counselling Association (2005) code of ethics stated that* counsellors explicitly explain to clients the nature of all services provided. They inform clients about issues such as, but not limited to, the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of services; the counsellor's qualifications, credentials, and relevant experience; continuation of services upon the incapacitation or death of a counsellor; and other pertinent information.

Confidentiality

The most important obligation of professionals in helping professions is to maintain the confidentiality of their relationships with their clients. Mental health professionals have an ethical responsibility, as well as a legal and professional duty, to safeguard clients from unauthorized disclosures of information given in the therapeutic relationship. Professionals must not disclose this information except when authorized by law or by the client to do so. Confidentiality is the foundation of safe therapy.

Confidentiality is rooted in a client's right to privacy, and in most states of America therapists have a legal duty not to disclose information about a client. Clients have the right to expect that communications will be kept within the bounds of the professional relationship. Hence, there are limitations to the promise of confidentiality; there are situations in which confidential information will be disclosed to a third party. Regarding to this, the APA (2002) ethics code provides the following guidelines for disclosure of confidential information: Psychologists may disclose confidential information with the appropriate consent of the organizational client, the individual client/patient, or another legally authorized person on behalf of the client/patient unless prohibited by law.

Maintaining client's personal issues secret or counsellors are ethically obliged to keep a client's communications confidential. This means that counsellors do not talk to anyone about the client or even reveal that they are seeing a client without prior written permission from the client. However, exceptions could be there if the **state law** requires. If the judges specifically orders to disclose or in the opinion of the counsellor, it is important for reasons of safety that he /she disclose either to family or to the police.

Dual relationship: counsellors are not supposed to have any type of relationship excepting the one of counselling. Sexual relationship with clients to be totally avoided. In addition, giving counselling to relatives or friends to be avoided