

The counselling process:

Stages of the counselling process

Stage 1: Initial Disclosure

Stage 2: In-depth Exploration

Stage 3: Commitment to action

Three stages of Counselling in Perspective

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Introduction

Counselling is a concept that has existed for a long time. We have sought through the ages to understand ourselves, offer counsel and develop our potential, become aware of opportunities and, in general, help ourselves in ways associated with formal guidance practice.

In most communities, there has been, and there still is, a deeply embedded conviction that, under proper conditions, people can help others with their problems. Some people help others find ways of dealing with, solving, or transcending problems.

In schools, if the collaboration between teachers and students is good, students learn in a practical way. Young people develop degrees of freedom in their lives as they become aware of options and take advantage of them. At its best, helping should enable people to throw off chains and manage life situations effectively.

Unprecedented economic and social changes have, over the years, changed the ways in which we manage our lives. Consequently, not all the lessons of the past can effectively deal with the challenges of modern times. Effective counselling, especially in institutions of learning has now become important. Boys and girls, and young men and women, need to be guided in the relationships between health and the environment, earning skills, knowledge, and attitudes that lead to success and failure in life.

The need for counselling has become paramount in order to promote the well-being of the child. Effective counselling should help to improve the self-image of young people and facilitate achievement in life tasks. Counselling should empower girls and boys to participate fully in, and benefit from, the economic and social development of the nation.

Counselling

Many people will, at some point in their lives, find themselves in the role of a counsellor without having a true understanding of the concept of counselling or what the role of the professional counsellor entails.

There is a big difference between a professional counsellor and a person who uses some counselling skills as part of their role, for example their role as a friend or colleague. A professional counsellor is a highly trained individual who is able to use a different range of counselling approaches with their clients. In this assignment I am trying to introduce the processes of counselling and three stages of the counselling process and three stages of Counselling in Perspective with Counselling theories.

'Counselling' can be a confusing term - it often has different meanings for different people.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (9th Edition) gives at least two definitions of counselling, which appear to be conflicting, adding to potential confusion:

“give advice to (a person) on social or personal problems, especially professionally.”

and

“the process of assisting and guiding clients, especially by a trained person on a professional basis, to resolve especially personal, social, or psychological problems and difficulties.”

Counselling is:

- The process that occurs when a client and counsellor set aside time in order to explore difficulties which may include the stressful or emotional feelings of the client.
- The act of helping the client to see things more clearly, possibly from a different view-point. This can enable the client to focus on feelings, experiences or behaviour, with a goal to facilitating positive change.
- A relationship of trust. Confidentiality is paramount to successful counselling. Professional counsellors will usually explain their policy on confidentiality, they may, however, be required by law to disclose information if they believe that there is a risk to life.

Counselling is not:

- Giving advice.
- Judgemental.
- Attempting to sort out the problems of the client.
- Expecting or encouraging a client to behave in a way in which the counsellor may have behaved when confronted with a similar problem in their own life.
- Getting emotionally involved with the client.
- Looking at a client's problems from your own perspective, based on your own value system.

Counselling and Psychotherapy

Both '*psychotherapy*' and '*counselling*' are terms that are used to describe the same process. Both terms relate to overcoming personal difficulties and working towards positive changes. Counselling is a **helping approach** that highlights the emotional and intellectual experience of a client, how a client is feeling and what they think about the problem they have sought help for. Psychotherapy, however, is based in the **psychodynamic approach** to counselling - it encourages the client to go back to their earlier experiences and explore how these experiences effect their current 'problem'.

A psychotherapist, therefore, helps the client to become conscious of experiences which they were previously unaware of. Counsellors, however, are less likely to be concerned with the past experiences of the client and are generally trained in a **humanistic approach**, using techniques from client-centred therapy.

The Role of the Counsellor

First and foremost the counsellor is aware that no two people are alike. No two people understand the same language in the same way; their understanding will always be linked to their personal experience of the world. Therefore, during the counselling process, it is important that the counsellor does not try to fit clients into his/her idea of what they should be and how they should act.

The role of the counsellor is to enable the client to explore many aspects of their life and feelings, by talking openly and freely. Talking in such a way it is rarely possible with family or friends, who are likely to be emotionally involved and have opinions and biases that may be detrimental to the success of the counselling. It is important that the counsellor is **not** emotionally involved with the client and does not become so during counselling sessions. The counsellor neither judges, nor offers advice. The counsellor gives the client an opportunity to express difficult feelings such as anger, resentment, guilt and fear in a confidential environment.

The counsellor may encourage the client to examine parts of their lives that they may have found difficult or impossible to face before. There may be some exploration of early childhood experiences in order to throw some light on why an individual reacts or responds in certain ways in given situations. This is often followed by considering ways in which the client may change such behaviours.

Effective counselling reduces confusion, allowing the client to make effective decisions leading to positive changes in their attitude and/or behaviour. Effective counselling is not advice-giving and is not acting on someone else's behalf (these are more the roles of a life coach). The ultimate aim of counselling is to enable the client to make their own choices, reach their own decisions and to act upon them accordingly.

Counselling Skills

Communication skills are obviously of utmost importance to counsellors, these skills including: active listening, clarification, reflection and effective questioning skills.

The counsellor will attempt to build a certain amount of rapport with their client, but not to an extent that would allow them to become emotionally involved.

Counsellors need to be empathetic, seeing things from the client's point of view, rather than sympathetic (feeling sorry for their clients). Empathy can help the counsellor to ask appropriate questions and lead the client to positive conclusions.

Stages of the counselling process:

1. Initial Disclosure- Relationship Building,
2. In-depth Exploration - Problem Assessment
3. Commitment to action - Goal Setting

Objectives of this section:

- List some misconceptions about counselling
- Define the counselling process
- Identify the steps in the counselling process
- Explain how the counsellor creates empathy
- Elaborate on the role of genuineness in building counsellor-client relationship
- Discuss the role of problem assessment in counselling
- Describe goal setting in counselling

INTRODUCTION

“What actually happens in counselling may depend less on the theoretical orientation of the specific counsellor than on a set of more general features of the counselling situation as a particular type of helping relationship”.

A common set of principles that cuts across most forms of counselling theories is described as the *counselling process*, which will be examined below. Focus will be on how two strangers meet and begin to establish understandings that gradually evolve into a meaningful and productive relationship.

OVERVIEW

Misconceptions about Counselling

The Counselling Process

Step 1: Relationship Building

- Empathy
- Genuineness

Step 2: Problem Assessment

- Why assess?
- What to assess?
- How to use assessment?

Step 3: Goal Setting

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COUNSELLING

For some people, seeking professional help is out of the question. Counselling is thought to be for losers, not people who are strong and capable. However, the vast majority of people who seek counselling do so because it takes great courage and strength to work on their own issues and become proactive in improving their life. How do you view counselling? The following are some misconceptions about what counselling is and how it works:

- **Counselling is only for people who have serious emotional or mental problems.**
You don't have to be in a crisis to go for counselling. When your vehicle isn't running properly or as well as it should, it doesn't necessarily mean it needs a major overall but rather a tune-up. The same could apply to you; counselling could be used only as a tune-up for problems you may be facing. Why wait until you can no longer function at home, school, work before seeking help. When you are not feeling well physically, you seek the help of a physician. The same principle applies to if you are not feeling good about your life or some aspect of it.
- **Counselling is for people who are too weak to overcome an addiction or has some other type of inadequacy in dealing with problems on their own.**
An individual is not psychologically impaired or weak if they are going for counselling. Confronting and addressing your problems through counselling takes courage, self-discipline and motivation. It is a proactive, smart decision to address issues before they start affecting you negatively. The main purpose of going for counselling is to get good advice.
- **The counsellor will teach you how to cope with your problem.**
Counselling helps to draw out answers within yourself and identifies your beliefs, values, and thoughts which affect how you act and feel. Counselling can teach you how to express repressed feelings of anger, joy, guilt, etc. Counselling is essentially a safe place for an individual to explore their lives and help to process their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, etc. This is not to say that counselling is not a place to find solutions. Yes, finding solutions that make sense to the client is critically important! But it can be much more.
- **A good counsellor will provide you with a quick solution to your problems with little to no effort on your part if you ask them.**
The counselling process requires some patience. Although the process may seem slow and drawn out at times. Counselling is not an instantaneous answer to all problems. It can take a lot of self exploration. Before things can get better, they often get worse



because old wounds are being opened up and looked at in order to deal with them in an effective manner.

- **When in counselling, the counsellor does most of the talking and you listen.**
People tend to have two different views about this. Some people seem to think that all counsellors do is sit and listen to clients with no input at all. Other people think that counsellors do all the talking and that clients are going to get lectured to. Counsellors are listeners, but the process of working through a person's problem is a collaborative one. Counsellors need to go at the "speed" of the client and need to custom fit their way of working to suite the needs and desires of the client. This means that there will be an interaction that involves participation of both the client and the counsellor.
- **Counsellors will work towards changing your beliefs and values to conform to the right way to feel and act.**
Counsellors help you draw out answers from within yourself. Each person is different and dealing with problems takes personal evaluations and self-discovery in order to deal with the problem effectively.
- **If you choose to seek professional help, you are considered mentally unhealthy.**
Quite the contrary, confronting and addressing your problems through counselling takes courage, self-discipline and motivation. There are many reasons for seeking professional help; the following are some of them:
 - Feel depressed, sad, downhearted, hopeless and don't understand why or what to do to change the way you feel.
 - Have no purpose or direction in your life.
 - Going through a personal or professional transition.
 - Feeling stressed due to work, school, family or financial problems.
 - Is or has been a victim of abuse, whether physical or mental.
 - Cannot control your anger, becomes resentful and says/does things you regret later.
 - Have lost someone close to you and feel you cannot go on with your life.
 - Feel alienated from yourself from others.
 - Not able to make friends.
 - Arguments with spouse almost never result in an efficient compromise.
 - Time spent gambling is taking away from my family life.
 - In the process of ending a relationship.
 - Have problems communicating with your parents.



Counselling doesn't stay and end in the counselling room. The skills you learn can be applied to many aspect of your life, to empower and enrich your relationships at home, at work and in your community, as well as provide you with increased well being to becoming the person you were meant to be and always wanted to become. The skills and growth you experience will be carried with you in your everyday life.

- **Counselling is painful, unpleasant and serious!**

As much as issues can be painful and hard to face, the counselling relationship can be very pleasant. There can be times when there is a lot of humour within the counselling room. Some people become relieved that they can simply be themselves within the counselling room and once they experience that it is a safe place for them, they relax and enjoy working on improving their life. They learn that the counsellor is not there to judge them or make them feel bad. Once safety and trust has been established, counselling can be the best investment you ever make in yourself!



- **Can it really be confidential?**

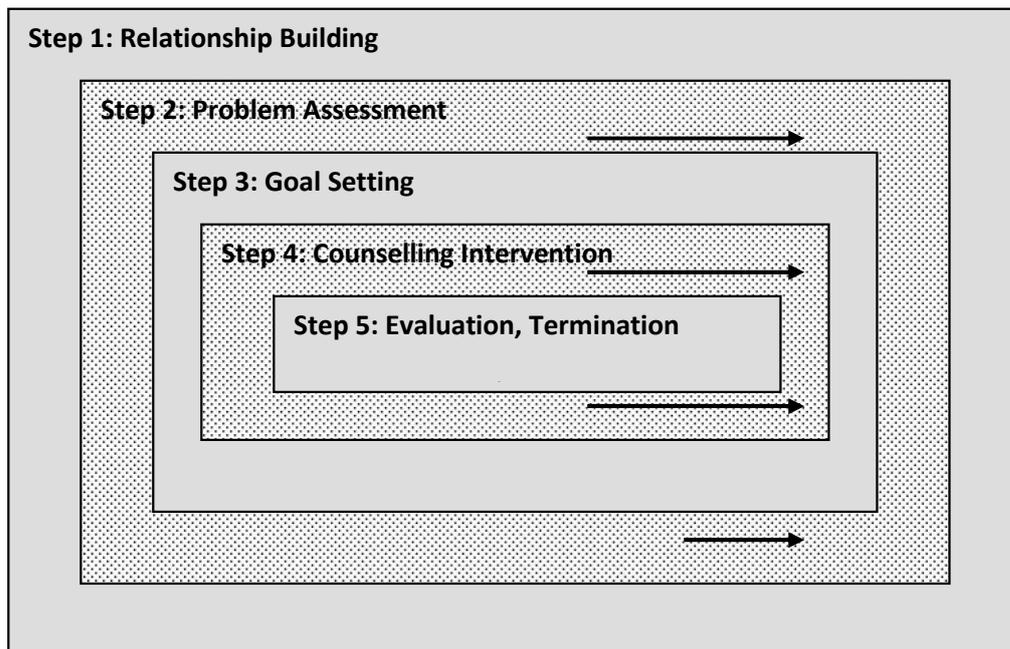
No information disclosed (even the fact that you walked in the door) by you can be divulged to any third party without your written permission to do so. As a matter of fact, even if you gave your written consent, you have the power at any point in time of revoking your consent. In other words, you are the one in the "driver's seat" with regards to who you wish to have and not have your personal information. If you have any questions regarding confidentiality, can ask your counsellor regarding it.

“An unresolved issue will be like a cancer with the potential to spread into other areas of your relationship, eroding the joy, lightness, love and beauty.”

THE COUNSELLING PROCESS

The counselling process is a planned, structured dialogue between a counsellor and a client. It is a cooperative process in which a trained professional helps a person called the client to identify sources of difficulties or concerns that he or she is experiencing. Together they develop ways to deal with and overcome these problems so that person has new skills and increased understanding of themselves and others. For example students in a college or university may be anxious about how to study in university, lack of clarity on educational or career direction, have difficulty living with a room-mate of another race or religion, have concerns with self-esteem, feelings with being “stressed out”, difficulties in romantic relationships and so forth.

The fact that counselling is described as a process, there is the implicit meaning of a progressive movement toward an ultimate conclusion. Hackney and Cormier (1987) describes the counselling process as a series of steps through which the counsellor and client move.



1st Stage: Initial Disclosure - Relationship Building

The first step involves building a relationship and focuses on engaging clients to explore issues that directly affect them. The first interview is important because the client is reading the verbal and nonverbal messages and making inferences about the counsellor and the counselling situation. Is the counsellor able to empathise with the client? Does the client view the counsellor as genuine?

2nd stage: In-depth Exploration - Problem Assessment

While the counsellor and the client are in the process of establishing a relationship, a second process is taking place, i.e. problem assessment. This step involves the collection and classification of information about the client's life situation and reasons for seeking counselling.

3rd stage: Commitment to action - Goal Setting

Setting goals is very important to the success of counselling. It involves making a commitment to a set of conditions, to a course of action or an outcome.

Step 4: Counselling Intervention

There are different points of view concerning what a good counsellor should do with clients depending on the theoretical positions that the counsellor subscribes to. For example, the person-centred approach suggests that the counsellor gets involved rather than intervenes by placing emphasis on the relationship. The behavioural approach attempts to initiate activities that help clients alter their behaviour.

Step 5: Evaluation, Termination or Referral

For the beginning counsellor, it is difficult to think of terminating the counselling process, as they are more concerned with beginning the counselling process. However, all counselling aims towards successful termination. Terminating the counselling process will have to be conducted with sensitivity with the client knowing that it will have to end.

Note that each of these steps continues even though the counsellor and the client moves to the next step. For example, after building a relationship, the counsellor moves to Step 2 which involves assessing the problem encountered by the client. In the meantime, the counsellor continues to strengthen the relationship that has been built. In other words, Step 1 or the building of a relationship does not stop but is ongoing until Step 5 which involves termination or perhaps the client is referred to for further action.

STAGE 1: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING - INITIAL DISCLOSURE

“*Relationship*” is a term that has been used in many different situations. It could imply the ties between two people in love, the bond between family members or close friends or colleagues or even the bond between a person and his or her pet. In counselling, relationship takes on a more specific meaning. The counsellor establishes *rapport* with the client based on trust, respect and mutual purpose. When there is good rapport, a positive psychological climate is created and vice-versa. The likelihood of desirable outcomes is greater when the psychological climate is positive. *Mutual purpose* means both the counsellor and client have common goals leading to what has been described as a therapeutic alliance.

Carl Rogers was among the earliest to emphasise the importance of building a relationship between the counsellor and the client. He identified three important conditions for the establishment of an effective counselor-client relationship: Empathy, Genuineness and Unconditional Caring.

a) EMPATHY

According to Rogers, empathy “means that the therapist senses accurately the feelings and personal meanings that the client is experiencing and communicates this acceptant understanding to the client”. Counsellor’s help clients make and implement important decisions in life. Most decision making involves an emotional dimension. The person who understands his or her inner realm consisting of memories, hopes, fears and dreams, will have a better insight of who he or she is which hopefully will lead to better decisions. This inner realm is often called the person's “**inscape**”. Empathy is intimate participation in the inscape of another.

The word “empathy” comes from the German word “*einfihlung*” which roughly means “*in feeling*” or “*feeling into something*.” It is the active practice of feeling into the inscape of another. Empathy is sometimes confused with sympathy. It is definitely not sympathising with the client and neither is it just passive receptivity of the client's *inscape*, but something we do. Allowing the counsellor into the inscape of the client is an act of great trust. Entering the inscape of another is also a responsibility. How does a counsellor get into the inscape of the client? When you sit with a client, the first challenge is to listen as openly as possible, without expectation or judgment.

Always remember: this person is not you. Race, class, gender, culture, region, specific family history, specific personal history; all have their influences. You must assure the client that they feel safer to speak. Feel safe means being free to speak even the most hurtful things, feeling

Some Skills for Relationship

Building for the Counsellor

- Introduce yourself
- Invite client to sit down
- Ensure client is comfortable
- Address the client by name
- Invite social conversation to reduce anxiety
- Watch for nonverbal behaviour as signs of client’s emotional state
- Invite client to describe his or her reason for coming to talk
- Allow client time to respond
- Indicate that you are interested in the person

heard, understood and accepted. Your client may reveal all their experiences, from earliest childhood to the present and the way you respond will either build or destroy that sense of safety.

Some of the client's message is verbal, some is non-verbal (tone of voice, facial expression, posture, and very much more). Some of the client's messages are explicit while some of it is implied and both shape the client's reactions. If you really listen, and really care, you will inevitably have emotional responses to what you hear. As a counsellor you have to listen as openly as possible. You should be able to distinguish between emotions you are picking up from your client, and those that are entirely your own. For example, confronted with a very angry client, an empathic counsellor would feel into the client's anger. But, if the counsellor had previous painful experiences with anger, he or she might bring their own feelings. It is important to be clear about where each feeling comes from. Empathy is an intellectual and emotional skill that requires consistent and patient practice. Be patient with yourself. Give yourself room and time to grow.

b) GENUINNESS

- Genuiness refers to the counsellor's state of mind. It means that you as a counsellor can respond to the client as a human being and not in terms of a therapist. You are comfortable with yourself and the counselling situation. The genuine counsellor is one who is congruent, spontaneous, nondefensive, consistent and comfortable with the client. In other words, a genuine counsellor is one who is without pretenses, fictions, roles or veiled images. How do you as a counsellor show that you are genuine?
- **Congruence:** which means that your words, actions and feelings are consistent. In other words, what you say corresponds to how you feel, look and act. For example, you say that you are comfortable with discussing about homosexuality but show signs of discomfort when your client reveals that he has homosexual tendencies. When this happens, there is incongruence which can contribute to confusion and mistrust. If a counsellor is to be trusted, he or she must strive to overcome their prejudices, stereotypes and biases.
- **Spontaneous:** this is the ability to express oneself and with tactful honesty without having to screen your response through some social filter. It does not mean that you should blurt everything that comes to your mind. Imagine what will happen if you do this! Spontaneity creates the effect of "realness" which has the effect of putting the client at ease as you are seen as more human. Surely, you do not want your client to see you as a 'stiff' and formal person.
- **Positive Regard:** Rogers placed importance that the counsellor treat the client as a person with inherent worth and dignity regardless of the client's behaviour or appearance. This is significant when the client is someone who is of a different ethnic background, religion, gender, socioeconomic status or educational level from the counsellor. In other words, the client is treated as a human being and the counsellor should also embrace the client's worldview.

c) Warmth

Warmth is the ability to communicate and demonstrate genuine caring and concern for clients. Using this ability, counsellors convey their acceptance of clients, their desire for client's well-being, and their sincere interest finding workable solutions to the problems that clients present. Warmth can be communicated also through nonverbal behaviours such as a smile, tone of voice, facial expression. Warmth indicates to the client acceptance.

Key Steps to Success in Counselling

There are FOUR key steps to being successful in the counselling process:

1. Willingness

Many people who need counselling either will not seek it or they come for therapy and are not willing to make any changes in their lives. They want others to change; they want their environment or circumstances to change but they are unwilling to do anything different themselves. Many individuals have difficulty with the process of change because it can create anxiety getting outside one's comfort zone (the known is better than the unknown). They need to have the courage (or not be afraid) to acquire new habits; try new methods of doing things, and changing thinking patterns or behaviours which can take a great deal of energy and time.

2. Motivation

Some individuals will tell you that they are willing to make changes in their life but lack the drive or energy to actually do so. They will begin the process by seeking therapy and they will express a desire for change but will not make the necessary effort to carry out the process. Only when an individual has both the willingness to change and the motivation to do so, will the counselling process have a high probability of success.

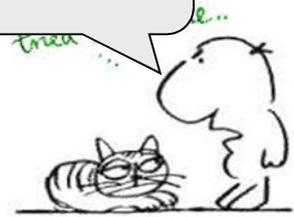
3. Commitment

The old adage, "quitters never win and winners never quit" basically explains what is needed for the counselling process to succeed. Many of us want things right now because of the lack of delayed gratification. However, people who believe that "anything worth having is worth waiting for", will persist in the pursuit of change. The counselling process requires commitment and patience. The key to success in counselling, or in any task in life, aside from having the willingness and the motivation to change (adapt or learn) is to stay the course of the therapy and realise that interpersonal problems develop over many years and it will take time to resolve.

4. Faith

Faith is the final and most critical step in creating success. If a person does not believe in themselves or in what they are doing, it becomes almost impossible to accomplish any project or task. In other words, the more you believe in something, the more you increase your chances of being successful at it. Faith in a trained and well-educated counsellor is essential for success of the counselling process.

This cat needs counselling, it tried to bite me.....



CONCLUSION

Empathy, genuiness and warmth are three conditions that enhances relationship building in the counselling situation: empathy, genuiness and warmth. These qualities are conveyed to the client thorough verbal and nonvrebal behaviours of the counsellor. The greatest obstacle in the relationship building stage is the tendency for the counsellor to move too quickly. It is also important for the counsellor to be sensitive and reponsive to each client's worldview.

STAGE 2: IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION - PROBLEM ASSESSMENT

People seek a counsellor to help resolve concerns or problems that are interfering with their daily life or causing them despair. The counsellor comes to the counselling situation with the expectation to do something to ease or improve the client's situation. In the second stage of the counselling process, the counsellor attempts to assess the client. Assessment refers to anything counsellors do to gather information and draw conclusions about the concerns of clients. Assessment takes place at the beginning of the counselling process. But, some degree of assessment takes place throughout the counselling process with purpose of finding missing pieces of the puzzle, i.e. the client. According to Seligman (1996), assessment should attempt to recognise the importance and uniqueness of the client. In a way, saying to the person, "You are special and I want to get to know you and understand why you are the way you are". The counsellor needs such knowledge about the client so that nothing is left out. For example, you might have left out an important piece of information about your client which may affect the counselling or therapeutic process.

WHY ASSESS YOUR CLIENT?

It should be remembered that you are assessing your client not for the purpose of judging or evaluating him or her. The purpose of assessment is to seek clarification; you want to know about your client. Seligman suggests the following reasons for assessing a client:

- Enable counsellors to make an accurate diagnosis
- Determine a person's suitability for a particular treatment plan
- Enable counsellors to develop a treatment plan
- Make goal-setting easier and achievement of goals measurable
- Enable assessment of environment or context
- Facilitate generation of options and alternatives

WHAT TO ASSESS?

Hackney and Cormier (2005) listed the following important components of assessing the client:

Identifying Data

- Name, address, phone number [to enable the counsellor to contact and gives an indication of the conditions under which the client lives]
- Age, gender, marital status, occupation [gives an indication of the age of the client and some background about marital status]

Problems Presented

Present the problem exactly the way the client reports them and the following questions might reveal additional information:

- How does the problem interfere with the client's daily life?
- What are the behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with the problem?

- How often and how long has the problem existed?
- Is a pattern of events? e.g. when? With whom? Is it predictable?

Client's Current Life Style

- How does the client spend a typical day?
- What social, religious and recreational activities is the client involved in?
- What is the nature of the client's educational situation?
- What special characteristics about the client? e.g. age, physical, cultural, etc.

Family History

- Father and mother: age, occupation, personalities, roles, relationship with client
- Siblings: age, present life and relationship with client
- Family stability: jobs held, family moves and reasons.

Personal History

- Medical history: illness, injury
- Education history: academic performance, extra-curricular activities, hobbies and interests, relationships with peers
- Career: jobs held, types of jobs, relationships with colleagues and fellow workers
- Client's personal goals in life

Description of the Client during the Interview

- Physical appearance : posture, dress, gestures, facial expression
- How client related to counsellor in the session?
- Client's warmth, readiness, motivation, passivity, etc.
- Were the client's remarks logical? Connected to another.

Summary and Recommendations

- Connection between problem stated by the client and other information collected.
- Should the client be assigned to a particular counsellor?
- Are the goals for counselling stated by the client realistic?
- How much counselling might be required?

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM PRESENTED BY THE CLIENT?

Here, the counsellor tries to gather specific details regarding the nature and content of the problem presented by the client as well as other problems that may have been mentioned during the earlier and subsequent sessions. Usually, a person will seek counselling because of a problem and during the counselling sessions something else might be revealed. Hence, it is important to have more than one session with the client to determine more specifically the problem encountered.

Whiston suggested that to understand in more detail the problem stated by the client, the counsellor could explore the following areas:

How does the problem manifest itself?

- Feelings associated with the problem (e.g. anger, fear)
- Thinking associated with the problem (i.e. the client's beliefs, perceptions)
- Behaviours associated with the problem (e.g. rude, insults, avoids being in a crowd)

- Physiological complaints associated with the problem (e.g. stomach aches, unable to sleep)
- Interpersonal effects (e.g. quarrels with family members, keeps to himself, bullies classmates)

Is there a pattern of events leading to the problem?

- When does the problem occur? Where? With whom?
- What happens before the problem and after the problem occurs?
- What makes the problem better or disappear for a while?
- What makes the problem worse?

How long has the problem persisted and does it interfere with the client's life?

- How long has the problem existed?
- How often does the problem occur?
- How long does the problem last when it does occur?
- In what ways does the problem interfere with client's daily functioning?

How has the client coped with the problem?

- How has the client coped? What has and has not worked?
- What strengths, resources and support systems does the client have to help him or her change? (e.g. understanding parents, siblings, good friends)
- What is the client's worldview? (on gender, religion, ethnicity, peers)

Besides these sources of information obtained from the counselling sessions, the counsellor could also obtain additional information about clients using psychological tests and self-ratings

HOW IS THE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION TO BE USED?

There are different ways in which counsellors use the information collected about their clients. Some counsellors look mainly for patterns of behaviour. Others use it for planning relevant counselling strategies and approaches to use with problems. For example, a person who complains that he is unable to make friends, the counsellor might look at the client's behaviour in interpersonal relationships and use behavioural strategies that emphasise acquisition of social skills and interpersonal strategies that deal with relationships between people

Counsellors who do not assess the problems presented by their clients "are more likely to formulate wrong conclusions about client problems and irrelevant or non-workable counselling approaches and strategies. As a result, not only is more time spent on 'hit and miss' counselling, but ultimately clients might leave with the same set of problems they brought to the first session"

CONCLUSION

Assessment is important in seeking relevant information about clients and their problems. The information can be used to initiate the process of change for clients. Assessment collected at the early stages of the counselling process will help counsellors formulate hypotheses. Assessment is an ongoing process during counselling. Assessment gives an idea to the counsellor the intensity of the problems and how the client is coping with the problem.

STAGE 3: GOAL SETTING - COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Like any other activity, counselling must have a focus.

Focus of the Client = Problem

Focus of the Counsellor = Problem + Client + Counselling Process + Goal

Sometimes, you hear both counsellor and client complain that the counselling session is going nowhere. This is where goals play an important role in giving direction. Goals are the results or outcomes that client wants to achieve at the end of counselling. Goals help the counsellor and client determine what can and what cannot be accomplished through counselling. In goal setting, the client identifies with the help of the counsellor, specific ways in which they want to resolve the issues and what course of action should be taken to resolve the problem.

WHY DO YOU NEED GOALS?

According to Dixon and Glover, “once a goal is formulated and selected by a problem solver, it is likely to be rehearsed in the working memory and stored in long-term memory. A goal encoded in this way, then, becomes a major heuristic for the problem solver as he or she interacts with the environment”.

- With clear goals, clients are more likely or motivated to work toward achieving those goals.
- With goals clients learn how to structure their lives towards achieving the goals.
- With goals, it is easier for the counsellor to *select* and evaluate appropriate *counselling interventions*.

When goals are stated clearly, both the counsellor and client have a better understanding of what is to be accomplished. For example, “to help the client develop his or her self-esteem”. Clarity of purpose allows the counsellor to work more directly with the client’s problems or concerns. Stating goals in behavioural terms, enhances the clients’ understanding of what is to be done. It also allows both client and counsellor recognise progress when it happens which reinforces further progress.

WHAT PREVENTS A CLIENT FROM SETTING GOALS?

Occasionally, the client may be reluctant to participate in goal setting. Although it does not happen frequently, there are times when clients simply cannot or will not participate. It is possible that a person who resists setting goals could be protecting the very behaviour that is in need of modification because that behaviour is also serving some desirable behaviour. For example, a smoker who recognises the negative consequences of smoking, including its addictive properties, he or she also clings to the habit, believing that it helps him or her relax during stressful moments, or that it increases the enjoyment of a good meal.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING AND DEFINING GOALS

Goals should be selected and defined with care. Below are some guidelines for goal selection that can be used with students:

- Goals should relate to the desired end or ends sought by the student.
- Goals should be defined in explicit and measurable terms.
- Goals should be feasible.
- Goals should be within the range of the counsellor's knowledge and skills.
- Goals should be stated in positive terms that emphasise growth.
- Goals should be consistent with the school's mission and school health policy.

Process of Selecting and Defining Goals with the Student

- Determine the student's readiness to negotiate goals.
- Explain to the student the purpose of selecting and defining goals.
- Select appropriate goals together.
- Define the goals explicitly.
- Determine the feasibility of goals and discuss their potential benefits and risks.
- Assist the student to make a choice about committing to specific goals.
- Rank goals according to the student's priorities and according to the nature of the goals. The easiest goals should be addressed first. This allows the student to feel success, which builds confidence and motivation.

Breaking Down Large Goals into Smaller Steps

The first task in developing strategies to attain goals is to reduce them to manageable parts. These parts consist of discrete actions to be undertaken by the student. Behaviour change is very difficult for all of us and particularly for addicts. It is important to bear in mind that when a student agrees to carry out a task, it does not necessarily mean that the student has the knowledge, courage, interpersonal skill or emotional readiness to implement the task successfully.

The student needs to be helped to set small, realistic goals that are achievable, to avoid disappointment by large failures at the beginning of the relationship.

It is the task of the counsellor to get clients to identify what they gain from their current behaviour. For example, if a student comes to the counsellor because of disruptive behaviour to gain the attention of the teacher. Perhaps, the counsellor could suggest that the student use another way to gain the attention of the teacher which will become the goal.

CONCLUSION

Goal setting is a central part of the change process that people often take for granted. And yet, many people (including many counsellors) are not very skilled at setting their own goals at helping others to identify and set goals. Goals can motivate clients to make desired changes and help counsellor to evaluate progress.

SUMMARY

- The counselling process is a planned, structured dialogue between a counsellor and a client.
- The fact that counselling is described as a process, there is the implicit meaning of a progressive movement toward an ultimate conclusion.
- Relationship building: The first step involves building a relationship and focuses on engaging clients to explore issue that directly affect them.
- The word "empathy" comes from the German word "*emfuehlung*" which roughly means "*in feeling*" or "*feeling into something*."
- Some of the client's message is verbal, some is non-verbal.
- The genuine counsellor is one who is congruent, spontaneous, nondefensive, consistent and comfortable with the client.
- To listen empathically, you have to set aside as much as you can of your own "stuff" and enter the world of the client.
- Problem assessment: This step involves the collection and classification of information about the client's life situation and reasons for seeking counselling.
- The purpose of assessment is to seek clarification; you want to know about your client.
- The counsellor tries to gather specific details regarding the nature and content of the problem presented.
- It is possible that a person who resists setting goals could be protecting the very behaviour that is in need of modification.
- When goals are stated clearly, both the counsellor and client have a better understanding of what is to be accomplished.

Three stages of Counselling in Perspective

Overview of three of the main approaches used by professional counsellors, psychodynamic, humanistic and behavioural – there are many more approaches but these three are the most commonly practised. While some professional counsellors use only one approach, others are more flexible and might use techniques from more than one method.

Counselling Theories, Approaches and Techniques

Theories tell us why people do and what they do.

Some theories are applied to specific group while other theories are applied to large populations.

Various theories have been advanced to explain human growth and development.

These Counselling theories traditionally have been grouped according to their common underlying principal,

This theories includes;

- 1. Psychoanalytic theory**
- 2. Behaviour theory**
- 3. Cognitive theory**
- 4. Humanistic theory**

The theories provide the justification for Counselling and a basis on which practice is founded.

- It is important that Counsellors be able to accurately describe what they do rather than rely on the assumption that others know what they do.
- A Client approach to counsellor is expecting a service, and Counsellors should be able to state exactly what that service is.
- Counsellors have a responsibility to inform their clients about when they can help and what they cannot help - Counselling is a helping service, but it cannot help in all cases.
- Counselling is essentially information giving and the information must be accepted and used by the client in order to effect changes in himself/herself.

Psychoanalytic theory

- Psychoanalytical theory was developed from the work of Sigmund Freud; an Australian psychiatrist (1856-1939).
- His work centred on the unconscious mind and investigates the drives and impulses for behaviour.

Directive/clinical/Counsellor centred Counselling

This theory rely on Counsellor or therapist, who is the major player,

- The counsellor directs the client to do what he/she feels can help in solving the client's problem.
- Counsellor who uses this method draws from his/her competence and experience and prescribe solutions to the clients problems

PSYCHOANALYTICAL COUNSELLING

- Freud maintain that personality development is connected with three areas of personality: The id, the ego and Super ego.
- These three areas are in a constant state of interaction and together determine how an individual behaves

ID	EGO
	SUPEREGO

Benefits and limitations of Psychoanalytic theory

- It is helpful for Counsellors to know about this theory as it the foundation of all.
- If people are able to understand what happened to them as children, they may be able to take steps to change and live more fully.
- The power is held by the Counsellor or therapist rather than by the client (Counsellor centred methods)
- Psychoanalytical therapy usually takes may years before a client can see a change. It is a very slow process. In a 1 hour session, the use of techniques from psychoanalytic theory is very limited.

Psychodynamic Approach to Counselling

Psychodynamic counselling evolved from the work of Sigmund Freud. During his career as a medical doctor, Freud came across many patients who suffered from medical conditions which appeared to have no 'physical cause'. This led him to believe that the origin of such illnesses lay in the unconscious mind of the patient. Freud's work investigated the unconscious mind in order to understand his patients and assist in their healing.

Over time many of Freud's original ideas have been adapted, developed, disregarded or even discredited, bringing about many different schools of thought and practice. However, psychodynamic counselling is based on Freud's idea that true knowledge of people and their problems is possible through an understanding of particular areas of the human mind, these areas are:

The Conscious – things that we are aware of, these could be feelings or emotions, anger, sadness, grief, delight, surprise, happiness, etc.

The Subconscious – these are things that are below our conscious awareness but fairly easily accessible. For example with appropriate questioning a past event which a client had forgotten about may be brought back into the conscious mind.

The Unconscious – is the area of the mind where memories have been suppressed and is usually very difficult to access. Such memories may include extremely traumatic events that have been blocked off and require a highly skilled practitioner to help recover.

Freud's main interest and aim was to bring things from the unconscious into the conscious. This practice is known as psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is used to encourage the client to examine childhood or early memory trauma to gain a deeper understanding – this in turn may help the client to release negativities that they still hold, associated with earlier events. Psychoanalysis is based upon the assumption that only by becoming aware of earlier dilemmas, which have been repressed into our unconscious because of painful associations, can we progress psychologically.

Freud also maintained that the personality consists of three related elements:

Id, Ego and Superego

Id - The Id is the part of our personality concerned with satisfying instinctual basic needs of food, comfort and pleasure – the Id is present from (or possibly before) birth.

Ego – Defined as "The realistic awareness of self". The 'Ego' is the logical and commonsense side to our personality. Freud believed that the Ego develops as the infant becomes aware that it is a separate being from its parents.

Superego – The Superego develops later in a child’s life from about the age of three, according to Freud. Superego curbs and controls the basic instincts of the Id, which may be socially unacceptable. The Superego acts as our conscience.

Freud believed that everybody experiences tension and conflict between the three elements of their personalities. For example, desire for pleasure (from the Id) is restrained by the moral sense of right and wrong (from the Superego). The Ego balances up the tension between the Id wanting to be satisfied and the Superego being over strict. The main goal of psychodynamic counselling, therefore, is to help people to balance the three elements of their personality so that neither the Id nor the Superego is dominant.

HUMANISTIC THEORY

- Carl Rogers (1902-1987) and Abraham Maslow took humanistic approach to personality theory.
- They believed in the basic goodness of human nature and inherent desire of individuals to achieve higher level of functioning.
- Humanistic theory emphasizes the essential elements of being human-the genuineness, inherent worth and dignity of human beings and people should explore their potential for growth and achievement.
- The role of the Counsellor is to provide the necessary conducive climate characterized by core conditions to enable clients to solve their own problems.

Humanistic Counselling depends on the assumptions that:

- Individuals should have the freedom to explore their subjective experience
- The people should be aware of their inner feelings.
- People have the capacity to solve their own problems.
- Counsellor should be genuine, empathic and warm.

The humanistic theory suggests a particular Counselling process (e.g., the Egan model) divided into four stages;

- i) Relationship building
- ii) Exploration-Counsellor facilitates client to look at the issues that concern him or her.
- iii) Understanding-It occurs after the issues have been identified and prioritised for action.
- vi) action plan-Counsellor and client have drawn up a plan of action that the client can implement.

CLIENT CENTRED/NON DIRECTIVE COUNSELLING

- Theory rely on client –centred/ non–directive Counselling take the opposite of directive Counselling
- The Counsellors believe that the client can achieve his/her own goals.
- Counsellor gives the client the opportunity to determine his/her own direction.
- The client comes willingly for help and accepts specific conditions for Counselling.
- The Counsellor and the client talk freely and extensively about the presenting problem
- The Counsellor and client freely and extensively discuss about the presenting problem and finally the client is able to determine the solution.

Benefits and limitations in relation

- Humanistic theories of Counselling enable the Client to be the expert and to make their own decisions. Humanistic Counselling empowers the client.
- VCT, however, even though the session is client focused, the Counsellor leads the session to ensure that all issues are covered, so it is not totally humanistic.

Humanistic Approach to Counselling

In contrast to the psychodynamic approach to counselling, childhood events and difficulties are not given the same importance in the humanistic counselling process. Humanistic counselling recognises the uniqueness of every individual. Humanistic counselling assumes that everyone has an innate capacity to grow emotionally and psychologically towards the goals of self-actualisation and personal fulfilment.

Humanistic counsellors work with the belief that it is not life events that cause problems, but how the individual experiences life events. How we experience life events will in turn relate to how we feel about ourselves, influencing self-esteem and confidence. The Humanistic approach to counselling encourages the client to learn to understand how negative responses to life events can lead to psychological discomfort. The approach aims for acceptance of both the negative and positive aspects of oneself.

Humanistic counsellors aim to help clients to explore their own thoughts and feelings and to work out their own solutions to their problems. The American psychologist, Carl Rogers developed one of the most commonly used humanistic therapies, Client-Centred Counselling, which encourages the client to concentrate on how they feel at the present moment.

Client-Centred Counselling The central theme of client-centred counselling is the belief that we all have inherent resources that enable us to deal with whatever life brings.

Client-centred therapy focuses on the belief that the client - and not the counsellor - is the best expert on their own thoughts, feelings, experiences and problems. It is therefore the client who is most capable of finding the most appropriate solutions. The counsellor does not suggest any course of action, make recommendations, ask probing questions or try to interpret anything the client says. The responsibility for working out problems rests wholly with the client. When the counsellor does respond, their aim is to reflect and clarify what the client has been saying.

A trained client-centred counsellor aims to show empathy, warmth and genuineness, which they believe will enable the client's self-understanding and psychological growth.

Empathy involves being able to understand the client's issues from their *own frame of reference*. The counsellor should be able to accurately reflect this understanding back to the client.

Warmth is to show the client that they are valued, regardless of anything that happens during the counselling session. The counsellor must be **non-judgmental**, accepting whatever the client says or does, without imposing evaluations.

Genuineness (sometimes termed **congruence**) refers to the counsellor's ability to be open and honest and not to act in a superior manner or hide behind a 'professional' facade.

BEHAVIOUR THEORY

- In behaviour Counselling the Counsellor takes a directive role, believe that he/she is there to help the client and that the Counsellor has something to offer to help the client solve a problem.

Behavioural Counselling is based on the following themes:

- The consequences of a behaviour rather than its causes
- The immediate effect of dysfunction behaviour
- The therapeutic interventions that are aimed at unlearning a dysfunctional behaviour and replacing it with approved behaviour.
- The motivations for behaviour are mainly environmental.

Techniques of behaviour Counselling include:

- Visualization
- Feedback
- Role – play
- Desensitisation

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS IN RELATION

- Behavioural theories emphasize the responsibility of the client and focus on action planning and self – management.
- This emphasis is strongly relevant to planning risk-reduction strategies.
- Behavioural theory is not focused on the emotional responses of the client or the way in which the past will influence the present.
- It can therefore feel a little cold and mechanical.
- Behaviour theory works much faster than psychoanalysis, behavioural therapists usually see clients for a number of sessions whereas the majority of clients for VCT are seen only once.

Behavioural Approach to Counselling

The Behavioural Approach to Counselling focuses on the assumption that the environment determines an individual's behaviour. How an individual responds to a given situation is due to behaviour that has been reinforced as a child. For example, someone who suffers from arachnophobia will probably run away screaming (response) at the sight of a spider (stimulus). Behavioural therapies evolved from psychological research and theories of learning concerned with observable behaviour, i.e. behaviour that can be objectively viewed and measured.

Behaviourists believe that that behaviour is 'learned' and, therefore, it can be unlearned. This is in contrast to the psychodynamic approach, which emphasises that behaviour is determined by instinctual drives.

Behaviour therapy focuses on the behaviour of the individual and aims to help him/her to modify unwanted behaviours. According to this approach unwanted behaviour is an undesired response to something or someone in a person's environment. Using this approach a counsellor would identify the unwanted behaviour with a client and together they would work to change or adapt the behaviour. For example, a client who feels anxious around dogs

would learn a more appropriate response to these animals. Problems which respond well to this type of therapy include phobias, anxiety attacks and eating disorders. Behavioural counsellors or therapists use a range of behaviour modification techniques.

Once the unwanted behaviour is identified, the client and counsellor might continue the process by drawing up an action plan of realistic, attainable goals. The aim would be that the unwanted behaviour stops altogether or is changed in such a way that it is no longer a problem.

Clients might be taught skills to help them manage their lives more effectively. For example, they may be taught how to relax in situations that produce an anxiety response and rewarded or positively reinforced when desirable behaviour occurs. Another method used involves learning desirable behaviour by watching and copying others who already behave in the desired way. In general, the behavioural approach is concerned with the outcome rather than the process of change.

The behavioural counsellor uses the skills of listening, reflection and clarification, but rather than use them as a process of revealing and clarifying the client's thoughts and feelings, the skills would be used to enable the counsellor to make an assessment of all the factors relating to the undesirable behaviour.

COGNITIVE THEORY

- Cognitive approaches to personality theory stress the importance of rational thought processes and phenomenological approach.
- People react individually to situations based on their perceptions rather than objective reality.

Key point in Cognitive theory

- All human beings are rational and have the capacity to reason.
- No two people will respond to an event in the same way, so it is not events that produce bad feelings but the way these events are interpreted.
- Emotions and behaviour are determined by thinking behaviour.
- Counsellors will help clients understand how their thinking influences their emotional responses.

Benefits and limitations in relation

- As with behaviour Counselling, cognitive behaviour focuses on behaviour change, which is the key aim
- It allows for wide interpretation than behaviour Counselling and allows for childhood's influences to be considered.

Conclusion

Counselling, in different forms and with different interpretations, has existed in societies for a long time. Counselling has now become institutionalized. Schools, for example, have to a large extent taken over the task of providing psychological support to boys and girls.

The differences and contradictions in present-day counselling have their origin in the social and historical forces that have shaped modern culture. People in all societies, and at all times, have experienced emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems. In each culture, there have been well established ways and methods of helping individuals with their problems.

Young boys and girls are a large segment of the population. It, therefore, makes strategic sense to target them through guidance and counselling. Counselling is important at this stage, because this is when boys and girls develop positive sexual attitudes and practices. It is when students begin to understand who they are, and how they can contribute to healthy relationships. They start to develop attitudes of respect toward members of the opposite sex, and see how each community member can contribute to development. Personal and social counselling should also assist in awakening students to educational and vocational opportunities.

Personal counselling empowers girls, and teaches them to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, and is marked by an ability to acknowledge areas of expertise and to be free to make positive choices.

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