



Skills Passport

Opening Script
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Carkhuff Rating Scale
Improve Counselling Skills

Counselling
Skills
Explained

Top Tips - Counselling Skills Explained in plain English
Rate your Skills - Carkhuff Rating Scale Matrix

Forward from Rory

Hello and welcome to my 'Introduction to Counselling Skills 'Primer'.

Anyone who has trained as a counsellor or to use counselling skills in a work related role will tell you that like any skill - practice makes perfect!

Like learning to ride a bike, you will inevitably fall over a few times, brake too hard or not at all, and find yourself on the wrong side of the road from time to time.

Mastery of any craft takes practice and a positive response from feedback given to you, even if it is a bit difficult to hear.

A few words on the 'core conditions' of empathy congruence and unconditional positive regard, I consider these to be human moral qualities, not skills, although some people may disagree

I separate the above from 'skills', as being empathic, genuine, and displaying a non – judgmental attitude are moral attributes that need to be developed through personal reflection and life experience,.

I believe that these can be enhanced in training, but not 'taught' as such; skills on the other hand can be acquired by almost anyone with the capacity to learn through interaction with others.

Finally, you will notice that through this book, I have made reference to the terms 'Counsellor' and 'Client', my reason for this is to avoid confusion and make ideas such as seating placements and 'role-play' scenarios easier to understand.

Some training organisations ask students in training to use the term speaker and listener which is technically the correct terminology for those in training or using counselling skills as part of another role such as a support worker, teacher, etc.

First Things First!

Many awarding bodies and training organisations ask as part of the assessment process for students to make a skills recording with one of their peers.

Criteria for passing a skills recording vary from one awarding body to another, however some of the pass criteria on a lot of courses are very similar.

These are:

1. Make a recording of between 15 and 30 minutes demonstrating that you are using a range of skills.
2. Make a contract with the 'Client' outlining what is on offer, length of session, limits of confidentiality both from the ethical body (such as the BACP or UKIP) and the training provider.
3. Asking the client to confirm verbally the limits of confidentiality for the benefit of the assessment recording (so the person marking the recording knows the 'Client' fully understands and gives informed consent to be recorded).
4. That the session ends within the negotiated time limits and the 'counsellor' checks if the 'client' is ok to finish.

On the next two pages you will see an opening and closing script that will help you open the session, check for informed consent and close the session, this covers the criteria outlined above in sections 2, 3, and 4.

The script has been written to hit as much of the pass criteria as possible, it is also worth rehearsing it first before making a recording – Remember practice makes perfect!

Opening script

“Hello my name is I am a student on a level III counselling skills course; I work within the BACP* ethical frame work.

The limits of confidentiality are the college’s policy*, which is if you disclose that you may harm yourself or others and the BACP confidentiality which is if you disclose any act of terrorism, drug trafficking or money laundering.”

We are in a room in the college* which is private, it has tables and chairs; this session is being recorded for assessment purposes. A tutor is present as an observer.

At this point it may be useful to clarify if your speaker understand this and is happy to proceed.

“We have 10/20/30 minutes, where would you like to begin”

*insert whichever ethical body you are working under such as UKCP, COSCA , and your training provider

Closing a Session

Around ten minutes from the end reflect to the speaker the time left, i.e. *'We have around ten minutes left'*

As the session comes to a close, use the skill of summarising to reflect back both the emotion of the speaker's story and some of the facts.

i.e:

'It seems you are angry about your boss's attitude toward you and as a consequence you are looking for another job'

At the end ask your speaker how they feel, check that they are ok.

Understanding Carkhuff

An Introduction to the Carkhuff

Counselling Interaction Rating Scale

In this section we look at how to measure our counselling interactions, in particular how the 'core conditions of Empathy, Congruence and Unconditional Positive Regard are 'transmitted' to the client by the Counsellor.

In 1969, Robert R Carkhuff, a contemporary of Carl Rogers developed a way of assessing the characteristics he believed a facilitator should demonstrate while working with a client.

The following 'Rating Scales' are adapted from his book 'Helping and Human Relations, Vol. I' and are measured for effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5

Below is a basic scale, which is fully expanded upon

1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0
None of these conditions are communicated to any noticeable degree in the person	Some of the conditions are communicated and some are not.	All of the conditions are communicated at a minimally facilitative level	All of the conditions are communicated, some fully.	All of the conditions are fully communicated simultaneously and continually

Most courses at an intermediate level will ask you to attain level 3 in the scale to evidence your competence in using what Carl Rogers described as the 'Facilitative or core conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard.

The rating scales contained in the following pages give guidance on what level you may be working at and how you are progressing.

One of the best ways to evaluate your effectiveness is to record your sessions (with permission) and use the rating scales and evaluation sheets to assess how you are proceeding in your skills development.

Understanding Carkhuff

In common with a lot of counselling theory Carkhuff's work is written in the academic language of the 1960's, consequently some of the terminology is not what one would come across in day to day conversation.

For example the term 'incongruence'

In the section below I have 'translated' some of the more obscure terms

Carkhuff	Plain English
<i>Collude</i>	Agree or 'take sides' with an individual
<i>Congruence</i>	Being real with self and others
<i>Idiosyncratic</i>	Individual - Unique
<i>Incongruence</i>	Not genuine or real with self and others
<i>Organismic sensing</i>	How you really feel about something or someone
<i>Pseudo-professional</i>	Pretending to be professional
<i>Transformation</i>	A change in the behaviour of an individual

RATING SCALES • CONGRUENCE

Level 1.0

A considerable discrepancy exists between the counsellor's overt responses and his/her actual feelings. Alternatively, congruent responses are negative and retaliatory or judgemental. Likewise striking discrepancies occur between verbal content and voice quality. The counsellor is guarded and defensive and attempts to conceal feelings. Any self disclosures emanate from the counsellor's needs and are irrelevant or inappropriate to the client's needs at the time.

Level 2.0

Incongruence exists between the counsellor's behaviour and feelings, and self-disclosure identifies with rather than empathises. The counsellor withholds appropriate responses. Rather than being genuine and human, the counsellor responds from an artificial, contrived and sterile 'professional' role, altogether lacking in spontaneity. Instead of making appropriate self-disclosures, the counsellor seems to hedge or cover up for either personal or pseudo-professional reasons.

Level 3.0

The counsellor shows no incongruence between behaviour, statements and feelings. She/he sounds present as s/he listens, attends, reflects, or clarifies, ie, the counsellor engages with the client but does not necessarily share own feelings or experience. NB: Level 3.0 is minimally facilitative.

Level 3.5

The counsellor is neither defensive nor insincere but does not openly express him/herself or become involved in the process. S/he is willing to express some non-threatening feelings but these do not actively assist the clients process. S/he is also willing to share experiences which block listening e.g. confusion, not having heard something, etc.

Level 4.0

It is clear the counsellor is present and authentic and is willing to engage in the here and now relationship with the client. This may involve sharing appropriate personal feelings or sensations in response to the client. These may be positive or negative or ambivalent, but must be relevant to the client's needs and shared in such a way that facilitates exploration. At this level, there is still some hesitancy or discomfort in these expressions despite an attempt at transparency. There is a sense that the counsellor is willing to risk him/herself past the usual comfort zone.

At this level, the counsellor shows sensitivity and discrimination in addressing the process in the relationship, or sharing his/her own feelings around difficulties in the counselling

process. With new clients or those who are not used to this level of contact, it may be more appropriate to say nothing, hence the importance of discrimination.

Level 5.0

A high degree of self-awareness and counsellor presence is evident, creating good contact with the client. Good rapport and trust are not sacrificed in the interventions despite the possibility of discomfort. The counsellor displays a high degree of realness, vitality and transparency, which are acutely facilitative within the counselling relationship.

Transformation and insight may occur when this level of openness and authenticity is present. This kind of congruence may deepen the intimacy of the counselling relationship, create moments of intense encounter and sometimes be painful for both counsellor and client. However, the timing and readiness of the client to receive this level of congruence, is accurately intuited, gauged or checked out by the counsellor.

Clearly, a good working relationship will have been established in order to support this level of honesty and intimacy.

RATING SCALES • EMPATHY

Level 1.0

The counsellor's verbal and behavioural responses are irrelevant, subtract significantly from the feelings expressed and the content of the client's material, and do not attend appropriately to the client's expression. Responses include advice giving, arguing, changing the subject, criticising or expressing opinions.

Level 1.5

The counsellor's responses qualify as negligibly accurate, and any of the client's feelings that are not distinctly defined tend to be entirely ignored. Counsellor responses may mislead or block off the client. There is little contact.

Level 2.0

The counsellor responds to at least part of the surface feelings of the other person, but his/her responses noticeably do not respond to the intensity of feelings expressed. The counsellor may respond from her/his frame of reference or understanding, rather than to what the client expresses.

Level 2.5

The counsellor wants to understand and makes the effort but the responses either subtract slightly from the level of feelings the other expresses or only stay with the content (events, story). The counsellor may sound mechanical and uninvolved. Responses that

are reassuring, questioning or probing or merely parroting expressions of the other person in the same words belong to this level. The counsellor responds to historical feelings rather than those being expressed either verbally or non-verbally in the session.

Level 3.0

The counsellor offers open, relaxed attention and stays alongside the client in his/her frame of reference rather than becoming empathic to other people in the client's story. The counsellor mirrors and names the obvious, surface current feelings and communicates understanding at the level of feeling the client expresses. Most of the client's stated feelings and experiences are reflected but the client is not facilitated to a deeper level of exploration. When content is reflected, it is done so accurately and appropriately and not at the expense of the reflection of feelings. When client's feelings are vague or ill defined, the counsellor helps the client to be more specific in naming feelings.

Responses at Level 3 are minimally facilitative and helpful.

Level 3.5

At this stage, the counsellor has a more extensive range of feelings language and is able to facilitate the client's exploration more specifically as a result. S/he, as a result, more engaged with the client and willing to enter their world but not quite at a Level 4. This level may also reflect empathy which at times is Level 3 and other times as Level 4.

Level 4.0

The counsellor's responses accurately yet tentatively identify implicit, underlying feelings somewhat beyond the expressions of the client and complement feelings with content that enable the client to go deeper in his/her own exploration. He/she may reflect the client's non-verbal cues eg. Tone of voice, breathing, gestures and posture. This level of empathy arises out of a felt experience, an organismic sensing of the client's world. Cognitive (non-feeling related) responses, if present, should not distance or disempower the client or take him/her away from feelings and should be linked to organismic sensing. The counsellor begins to demonstrate dual focus, i.e. focusing in closely and yet maintaining an overview of the client's process.

He/she may reflect and sensitively develop the client's metaphors without sacrificing closeness. He/she is open to facilitate the client's here and now process so that it adds to rather than detracts from the client's exploration. The counsellor is clearly in contact with their client and offers empathy while remaining congruent.

The counsellor is sensitive in facilitating a client who is out of touch with his/her feelings. If appropriate to the relationship, the counsellor may reflect the here and now process, and/or share congruent feelings, and/or explore the client's expectations of counselling.

Level 4.5

Responses at this level intuitively grasp the wholeness of the client's experience through accurately reflecting the underlying process and feelings and significantly add to the awareness of underlying patterns. If questions are used, they help to clarify or explore the client's experience or feelings more deeply without taking them out of their frame of reference. The counsellor stays patiently and fearlessly with the client in uncomfortable emotional and physical experiences which might include stuckness, despair or even physical nausea. He/she is sensitive and expressive enough to match the client's style of expression, language and emotional intensity and may offer empathy in unusual or idiosyncratic ways.

Level 5

The counsellor's presence and responses significantly add to the feelings and meaning expressed by the client. A quality of naturalness is present. The counsellor moves with all the complex nuances of the client's changing and fluid process. It is as if there are no seams between them. The counsellor is fully in tune with the client and responses visibly touch or impact the client. This may lead to deep awareness and transformation in the client. The counsellor can 'reach the heart of the matter with love' because he/she demonstrates a refined sensitivity, good judgement, discrimination, a warm tender heart, is fearless, and has the courage to face deep pain and strong feelings. Inevitably a quality of intimacy will be present. The counsellor is able to facilitate use of themes within the session and from past sessions.

RATING SCALES • UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

Level 1.0

Verbal and non-verbal responses communicate overt disrespect, or negative regard, declaring verbally or non-verbally the other person's feelings and experiences unworthy of consideration. The counsellor becomes the focus of evaluation, actively disapproves of behaviour, imposes own values or beliefs, labels client behaviour, dominates the conversation, challenges the accuracy of the other's perception, or depreciates the worth of the other by communicating that the client is incapable of acting constructively or functioning appropriately on his/her own.

Level 2.0

The counsellor communicates little respect for the feelings, potentials or experiences of the other person. He/she may ignore what the other says, respond in a casual, passive, clichéd or mechanical manner, and withhold from involvement. She/he may decline to enter into a relationship, display a lack of concern, or be coolly 'professional'. Colluding with deflective behaviour, e.g: laughter and crowding the client (interrupting or talking over, or not 'allowing' silences) comes into this level as well as rescuing and sympathising.

Level 3.0

Both through general attitude, words and demeanour, the counsellor communicates a positive, genuine (but not over-) concern and respect for the other person's feelings, ability to act constructively and express him/herself. The counsellor suspends his/her own judgement of the other and communicates an openness or willingness to enter into a relationship. The counsellor responds at an appropriate frequency, leaving neither too much nor too little time between interventions and thus showing a willingness to work with the client on his/her material.

NB: Level 3.0 is minimally facilitative

Level 3.5

This level reflects a fuller expression of respect and unconditional positive regard for the client but does not quite reach a Level 4.

Level 4.0

The counsellor demonstrates trust in the client's actualising tendency i.e., stays engaged with an alongside the client's process even when difficult. He/she is without agenda, maintaining an attitude of creative indifference to the client's choice of direction, and stays comfortably in the client's frame of reference. The counsellor's pacing is sensitive. She/he times responses with appropriate frequency, leaving neither too much nor too little space. He/she manages silences effectively, neither pressurising the client nor leaving them abandoned too long in silence.

The counsellor is willing to invest him/herself enough to risk receiving potentially hurtful feedback. He/she might share congruent responses e.g. disappointment or irritation. Counsellors may observe here and now process or may sensitively challenge incongruent behaviour such as laughing or chatting.

Level 5.0

The counsellor is able to integrate honest, fresh expression with caring and sensitivity for the client. Strong personal responses such as boredom and irritation may be owned and expressed within the content of a sound relationship. It will be clear that they are shared in goodwill and have a helpful outcome. Deep respect for the clients as an equal human being is visible in a choice of phrase, tone of voice and body language.

The counsellor is willing to risk giving feedback that the client might not otherwise hear. Although it can be confrontative and may feel hurtful, it is essentially transformative and within the context of the client's therapeutic needs. The counsellor works without prejudice, equally respecting all of the client's complex process; internal conflicts, diverse and opposing parts of the personality or a desire for change as well as a resistance to it.

Correct Seating for a Successful Observation

One of the most powerful ways of gaining insight in to you counselling technique is to receive feedback from your tutors or peers.

The most successful way of doing this is to work in what is known as a triad – ‘a group of three’.

One person takes the role of the counsellor, another the client and the third person acts as observer.

The seating arrangement is very important, as the observer needs to be near enough to both parties to hear the interaction clearly, but far enough away so they do not impose on the speaker.

Remember a counselling skills session should be a two way interaction, the observer needs to be a silent party a bit like a fly on a wall!

Counselling Skills Seating Plan



The seating plan below is how ideally a skills observation session should take place.

The term 'client' is used solely for the purpose of demonstrating a 'skills' session seating plan and not a real counselling session with a client.

Top Tips

1. Don't fake it!

Some trainers ask the student who is in the role of 'client' to make up a story for the role playing counselling skills – my advice is don't do it – and here's why.

Training to use counselling skills is about being real and genuine, if you make up a story to use in your role as 'client' the student in the role of counsellor will struggle, because (unless you are an academy award winning actor) you will find it almost impossible to access real emotional responses from a story you have made up on the spot.

Consequently the student in the role of 'counsellor' will find it almost impossible to work with your incongruence or fakery. .

The best that can be achieved here is a 'level 2' response on the Carkhuff scale, as level 3 is the minimum level to pass most courses then we have a problem.

So, if you are asked to be a 'client' in a counselling skills session, try to bring something real, if this is a bit scary then negotiate your boundaries before you start ,if you feel you are getting in too deep or you feel very uncomfortable , then it is ok to say 'stop'.

Remember that self protection is one of the most important skills and awareness you can gain in counselling training, setting boundaries with your 'counsellor' is fine , if in doubt ask your tutor for guidance .

2. Listen twice as much as you speak

The philosopher Marcus Aurelius once asked the question “Why do we have two ears and one mouth ? , before concluding “It so so we can listen twice as much as we speak”.

A 2-1 ratio in favour of listening and speaking is a good guide to use for anyone starting out using counselling skills , remember the more you listen the more the person sat in front of you will speak which will make it easier to for you to use a wider range of skills.

3. Make sure your recording device works!

I have lost count of the amount of times that a student has come to me stating that they have made the best skills recording I will ever hear, only to find out that they haven't hit the 'record button' or have placed the recorder so far away from the 'client' that it is impossible to hear what has been said.

So test out the recorder and where it is placed first to avoid disappointment later!

4. Don't worry if you get it wrong (whatever that is!)

A lot of students worry about being good enough of having the right skill, and while you have to provide a recording that passes the criteria, it may be worth reflecting on the story of Thomas Edison - you know -the man who invented the light bulb.

He was asked "what is it like to be the man who failed a thousand times to make a light bulb?"

He replied "I did not fail, I just know a thousand ways of not making a light bulb", failure is in perception only, and as we know he did succeed.

Building a repertoire of counselling skills takes time and practice; if you can, record all your skill sessions, doing so will give you really good feedback.

Person–Centred Counselling

Basic Concepts

The person-centred approach to counselling belongs to the **Humanistic School of Therapy** and was devised by **Carl Rogers** an American psychologist who in the 1950s proposed a form of therapy which focussed on the clients experience of themselves, as opposed to the counsellor being an expert and telling them what to do, or what was wrong with them.

The therapy relied on the quality of the relationship between the counsellor and the client this is sometimes called a 'way of being' with the counsellor demonstrating what is known as the Core Conditions which form the basis of the relationship these are:

1. **Empathy (the counsellor trying to understand the client's point of view)**
2. **Congruence (the counsellor being a genuine person)**
3. **Unconditional Positive Regard (the counsellor being non judgemental)**

The Core conditions when shown by the counsellor to the client will, according to the theory will **'be necessary and sufficient' for therapeutic change**, which means the client will be able to find their own answers.

Person Centred therapy **harnesses the clients natural self-healing process**, and given the right relationship with the therapist, clients can decide what they want to do with their lives, to this end person centred therapy is **a personal growth model** also known **as non directive therapy, the client is not taught the model** of therapy or undertake homework.



Carl Rogers (1902 -1987)

Founder of the Person Centred Approach to therapy

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– ATTENDING

The Meaning of Attending

Attending means being in the company of someone else and giving that person your full attention, to what they are saying or doing, valuing them as worthy individuals

In a one-to-one counselling relationship this is the supportive service that a counsellor must provide. Failure to do this will mean the client is not being supported fully, and may not feel able to disclose or make progress.

Attending also means a counsellor must pay attention to everything a client says and does. This includes reading the client's body language and also taking into consideration all the silences and pauses in the conversation. Actively listening not only conveys information, but also encourages the client to continue talking.

How to Attend

To begin and maintain attendance a counsellor must first welcome the client warmly, making him/her feel comfortable, in the counselling environment, will make the client feel more relaxed about disclosing personal information about their emotions, feelings and thoughts.

By maintaining eye contact with the client, a counsellor shows they value what the client has to say. Looking at the client, as they speak, also shows the counsellor is respectful. A counsellor should also be aware of the tone of their voice, during time in the client's presence. Slowing down speech will make the client feel more relaxed and less rushed. It will convey that the counsellor has adequate time to listen to the client's problems and concerns. The counsellor's facial expressions must also convey interest and comprehension.

Tracking, or following the flow of what the client is saying, is a key skill that the counsellor must also be confident demonstrating. Without the ability to do this a counsellor will not be able to provide the level of supportive service a counselling client requires.

Reflection

How might you feel when someone is giving you their undivided attention?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– SILENCE

Use of silence

Culturally we have been taught to be uncomfortable with silence; this can influence the counsellor's use of silence and the client's reactions to it.

New counsellors are typically uncomfortable with pauses; often rushing in to fill the gaps, by doing this the counsellor assumes inappropriate responsibility for the counselling session.

The person centred counsellor trusts that the client will work in a way, and at a pace, that is suitable for them. The counsellor gives the client control of the content, pace and objectives, this includes listening to silences as well as words, sitting with them and recognising that the silences may facilitate the counselling process.

What type of feeling can cause you to fill the silence?

Silences occur for a number of reasons

For the counsellor it can be:

- A deliberate use of silence to encourage the client's self-exploration
- A deliberate use of silence to encourage the client to "carry the burden" of the conversation.
- An organisational use of silence enabling the counsellor to collect her/his own thoughts.
- A natural ending to a phase of discussion.

For the client it can be:

- An organisational use of silence enabling the client to collect her/his own thoughts, remember events, assess values and reflect on feelings.
- A time to make connections, to wait for words or images to occur.
- A space in which feelings can be nurtured and allowed to develop.
- A space in which the client is able to recover from "here and now" emotions.
- An attempt to elicit a response from the counsellor, such as satisfying a need for approval or advice.

Reflection

How do you feel about silences?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– REFLECTING

Reflecting and Paraphrasing

Part of the '**art of listening**' is making sure that the client knows their story is being listened to, this is achieved by the helper/counsellor repeating back to the client parts of their story, this known as **Paraphrasing**.

Reflecting is showing the client that you have not only 'heard' what is being said but what feelings and emotions the client is experiencing when sharing their story with you.

This is sometimes known in counselling 'speak' as **the music behind the words**.

It is like holding up a mirror to the client, repeating what they have said, shows the client they have your full attention, it also allows the client to make sure you fully understood them and if not they can correct you.

Reflecting and Paraphrasing should not only contain what is being said but what emotion or feeling the client is expressing.

Let's look at an example:

Client **Mohammed** - 'My ex-wife phoned me yesterday, she told me that our daughter Nafiza (who is only 9) is very ill after a car accident, 'I am feeling very scared for her 'they live in France so I am going to have to travel to see her and now I have been made redundant I don't know how I can afford to go'.

Counsellor /helper – 'So Mohammed you have had some bad news about your little girl who has been involved in an accident, you are frightened for her and also have worries over money now you have lost your job'.

Client – 'Yes yes ... that's right' (notice the helper/ Counsellor does not offer advice or stat asking how long he and his wife have been separated, but reflects the emotion of what is said 'frightened')

Reflecting and Paraphrasing, is the first skill we learn as helpers and remains the most useful, to build a trusting relationship with a helper the client needs not only to be 'listened to but' be heard and valued as a person.

Reflection

What is the difference between 'listening' to someone and 'hearing them'?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

- CLARIFYING

Clarifying means using questions to make sure you understand what is being said so you are not confused and the client feels full understood to do this effectively you need to understand the type of questions to ask.

Have you ever been in a situation where you have been asked one question after another?. It can feel like you are being interrogated, rather than listened to!

Someone who is skilled in the 'art of listening' will use **open questions**, using them sparingly, to help you clarify what the client has said so that you can reflect and paraphrase more accurately.

Open Questions

These generally begin with 'How...?' 'What...?' 'Who...?'

They require an answer other than 'yes' or 'no'.

They may be used to gain information (what happened as a result?), explore thoughts, feelings, attitudes and opinions (what were you hoping to achieve?) or to consider hypothetical situations (how might you deal with. ..?).

'Why?' questions are useful open questions but beware of making them sound too judgmental (e.g. 'Why did you do that?').

Closed Questions

These questions invite a 'Yes' or 'No' answer and may be unhelpful in terms of the replies given.

Many people believe they are asking 'open questions' when in fact they are asking complicated 'closed questions'.

Repeated use of 'closed questions' may result in the client saying less and less and the Counsellor feeling pressurised to ask more and more questions to keep the relationship going.

Makes sure that you only use questions to clarify your understanding, do not be intrusive, and remember that when a client is answering a question they are not accessing the part of the brain which deals with emotions.

Reflection

Is the question 'what date is your birthday' an open or closed question?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– FOCUSING

Focusing

1. This skill is particularly useful after one or two sessions, when the helper/counsellor has heard the client's story. Focusing involves making decisions about what issues the client wants to deal with.
2. The client may have mentioned a range of issues and problems, and focusing allows the counsellor and client together to clear away some of the less important surrounding material and concentrate on the central issues of concern.
3. Focusing may involve prioritising issues and making decisions about the urgency of the issues the client has brought. Which issues may need swift action? Which may be left until later?
4. Focusing involves thinking through the implications of prioritising. If one issue is dealt with first, how will this affect the other issues? What will this mean for the client? Focusing involves an estimate of the length of time the counselling is likely to take, and discussion of this with the client.
5. Focusing involves looking at one's own level of experience as a counsellor. Are there concerns around coping and competence regarding the client's issue? Do you need to refer on?
6. Focusing may involve goal-setting, and/or contracting with the client. It involves a realistic assessment of what is possible.

Reflection

How would you ask a client which issue they would like to look at first, without sounding disrespectful?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– RAPPORT

Establishing Rapport with a Client

To work well with a client we need to establish rapport with him or her. Rapport is important, whatever model of counselling the counsellor is working with. Unless a client feels a sense of rapport, they will be unlikely to be able to work well with the counsellor. Rapport means a sense of having connection with the person. Rapport will be helped and facilitated by how the counsellor manages his or her own feelings towards the client, and how s/he behaves with the client. For example, the counsellor needs to think about...

- Being well prepared for the session, unrushed, calm ready and prepared to be there for the client, putting one's own issues and problems out of the way, for the duration of the session.

Making a safe and trusting environment: Taking trouble to make the setting appealing, offering a restful, clean, uncluttered, pleasant setting, comfy seating, perhaps a cup of tea, absolutely no intrusions, soundproofed and discreet.

Being aware of who the client is. For second and follow on sessions, knowing the client's name, remembering key things about their issues. (Taking time to read last week's notes).

Offering empathy, making efforts to be there with the client, and for the client, trying to see how the client feels about things and how the client sees things, (which is likely to be different from the counsellor's perception).

An accepting manner: Remaining un-shocked, whatever the client brings Being non-judgemental, however much the client's behaviour surprises or appals us. Offering unconditional positive regard (UPR) to the client, however s/he has been behaving. Maintaining respect for the person (though not always condoning the behaviour).

Unrushed, allowing the client time. Allowing the client to stay with whatever feelings come up, without trying to solve all the problems at that moment. Being patient with clients who find it hard to talk about themselves.

Being Congruent: Being honest, in a well-considered and kindly way. Not being 'brutally honest' in a confrontational or rude way, but gently challenging dysfunctional beliefs and behaviours, when the time is right. If Rapport is established, the client will grow to trust the counsellor, and a good foundation is laid for real growth and healing to occur.

Reflection

How do you know known someone is building rapport with you?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– SUMMARISING

Summarising

We have looked at paraphrasing and 'reflecting back' skills. Summaries are longer paraphrases. They condense or crystallise the essence of what the client is saying and feeling.

Summaries usually cover a longer time period than a paraphrase. Where 'reflecting back' / paraphrasing can be used after a few sentences, a summary may be used after some time: perhaps half-way through a counselling session, or near the end of a counselling session.

The summary 'sums up' the main themes that are emerging.

Summaries are useful.

- To clarify emotions for both the helper/counsellor and the client.
- To review the work done so far, and to take stock.
- To bring a session to a close, by drawing together the main threads of the discussion.
- A summary may be used to begin a subsequent session, if appropriate.
- To start the process of focusing and prioritising 'scattered' thoughts and feelings
- To move the counselling process forward.

Reflection

How do you feel when someone has clearly listened and understood you?

AN INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING SKILLS

– IMMEDIACY

IMMEDIACY

The following notes are intended to provide guidelines for students and to offer an overview of this very useful skill. They are not intended to be exclusive or cover all aspects of the subject.

Definition of immediacy:

“Immediacy is the ability of the counsellor/helper to use the immediate situation to invite the client to look at what is going on between them in the relationship. It often feels risky and unfamiliar. It implies the use of the present tense. It is one of the most powerful skills in counselling.” www.findacounsellor.info

Used appropriately it can:

- Reveal how you are feeling/thinking/sensing;
- Feedback the client (or speaker) what you are feeling/thinking/sensing in the here and now (and possibly linking this to the client's/speakers issue);
- Inviting the client/speaker to speak about any issues which has not been spoken about or

E.g. *“I notice that when I ask you a question about your relationship with Ian, you avoid answering. It feels like you don't want to speak about your relationship today, is that how it feels to you?”*

Using immediacy:

1. To work with and address any area that the client wants to look at, but is hesitant to look at

For Example :

“It feels like you are being defensive to what I am saying, even though I feel I am being accepting of your story ... Is it possible that.... (then link to the client's issue)”

“I notice that you say you are not angry about this issue, however when you speak about it you clench your fists”

It can also be used to work with any difficulties in the relationship

1, Issues around trust

"When we first met you told me that your experience of men has not been the best, I wonder how it feels working with a male counsellor."

2. Boundary issues:

"I am aware that you have spoken about someone we both know, I wonder if you have noticed my reaction and this is stopping you talking about him."

3. Issues of Difference

"I am aware that you are going through a difficult divorce with your wife, and that I am a female counsellor, can we talk about this?"

Using immediacy, food for thought!

- Be clear and genuine about your own internal response.
- Choose your words carefully and be thoughtful about how you word your responses
- Who is immediacy for?, Yourself or the client /speaker will it help?
- Take a risk , sometimes it can feel uncomfortable using immediacy however taking a risk can help build a stronger relationship between yourself and the Client/speaker.

Remember that immediacy is a useful way of strengthening the relationship, use it thoughtfully.

References

Fiona Ballantine Dykes. (2014). What is IMMEDIACY (Study Focus 1). Available: [http://www.findacounsellor.info/articles/14/question-what-is-immediacy-\(study-focus-1\).html](http://www.findacounsellor.info/articles/14/question-what-is-immediacy-(study-focus-1).html). Last accessed 20th of February 2014

Reflection

What would stop you being immediate in a skills session, consider you answer and get feedback from a peer or tutor.

Counselling Skills Observation Sheet

Comment on your observation of the following:

What is on offer	
Time boundaries	
Working agreement, including presented, problem	
Specifies ethics: particularly confidentiality limits	
Uses:	
Attentiveness and rapport building	
Active listening, including the use of minimal encouragers and the managing of silence	
Core conditions (List)	
Effective questioning	
Paraphrasing and summarising	
Focusing and challenging	

Counselling Skills Observation Sheet pg 2

Reflecting on the counselling skills process and immediacy	
Awareness of boundaries including referrals	
Checks understanding with the speaker	
Works at appropriate pace	
Ending session:	
Sensitivity to speakers' needs and feelings	
Summarises themes and any future work, finishes on time	
What went well	
Areas to improve	
Observers Observations	