

Course Unit: Counselling

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Course Objectives:

- Provide the definition of counselling
- Discuss the different theories, principles and types of counselling
- Explain the effective phases of counselling, and outline the barriers to this process

Definition of Counselling

Counselling is defined as a two-way face-to-face communication process in which one person tries to help another person in order to understand a problem and identify a solution to that problem. It refers to the act of working with a client so as to help him/her to clarify his/her personal goals and find ways of overcoming their problems. The aim of counselling is to assist an individual to change behaviours that are interfering with the normal life situations.

Counselling involves providing the client with the necessary information to enable them to solve their problems or make a decision on the way forward. The main reasons why people need counselling are to:

- Help them understand the problems they are experiencing;
- Give them information that they are lacking so as to solve their problems;
- Assist them to understand alternative approaches to solving the problems that they are facing;
- Help them to explore the problems and clarify conflicting issues;
- Assist them to adjust to the problem or find better ways of coping and living with the problem; and
- Assist others who may be experiencing similar problems



Note:

- Many people believe that counselling is able to solve all human problems and must be provided only by professional counsellors. However, this is not true. Counselling cannot solve all human problems, and you do not need to be a counsellor in order to help an individual with a problem.

Counselling can be described as being either formal or informal. Formal counselling is provided by professionals trained in counselling, such as professional counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and church ministers; while informal counselling is provided by people and other professionals not trained in counselling, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, and parents. Whether counselling is either done formally or informally, the purpose is to help the individual to understand his/her problem(s) and find answers and coping mechanisms over them.

The Process of Counselling

The process of counselling defines the procedure followed by the counsellor when he/she is conducting counselling sessions. During counselling, the counsellor tries to establish a good interpersonal relationship with the client in that process. This is to enable the client to voluntarily give information related to his/her problem without any fear(s).

Interviewing

This is a purposeful interaction involving two or more persons whereby they exchange views with one party asking questions while the other party providing their response to those questions. In nursing, patients/clients are interviewed to gather information to enable with the planning for their care.

In counselling, interviews are conducted to gather information so as to help clients to resolve some problems. The interview that is conducted by a counsellor is called a **therapeutic interview**, whose purpose is to identify some social problems and psychological problems facing the client. A therapeutic interview is initiated by a client when he/she visits a counsellor/therapist, during which the counsellor should have a technique of asking questions during the interview.

Questions can be in an open-ended or closed-ended, probing, structured or unstructured form. Probing and open-ended questions are recommended for interview because the client's response is unlimited.

Preparation for Interview:

- The interview should be conducted in a private room, which should be spacious enough to allow the counsellor and the client to sit comfortably;



- The room should have adequate furniture, which includes a good table and comfortable chairs;
- The environment should be free from noise and there should be no distracting equipment or pictures on the wall;
- The room should have adequate ventilation and lighting, and should be clean and tidy;
- The counsellor should sit in a position facing the client, and likewise the same for the client sitting in a position facing the counsellor; and
- The preparation of the room is also determined by the type of interview to be conducted. For example, if you are interviewing a client to offer reproductive health services, visual aids on different methods of family planning should be displayed on the walls in the interview room

Steps in the Counselling Process

When you counsel a client, you progress through a series of inter-connected and overlapping stages to help clients make informed decisions. Both the client and counsellor actively participate as they exchange information and discuss the client's feelings and attitudes about the matter at hand.

There are six basic steps applied in the counselling process and they are remembered with the acronym: "GATHER", which refer to the following:

- G – Greet the client and welcome him
- A – Ask the client about himself/herself and the family. Ask the help he/she requires from you, and find out the reason for his/her coming to see you as a counsellor
- T – Tell the client what you can do or cannot do for him/her so as to resolve his/her problem; Tell him/her about the resources he/she can use to resolve his/her problems; and Tell him/her about your commitment to help solve the problem
- H – Help the client to formulate the course of action and identify resources to resolve the problem
- E – Explain available services and where they are located, and Explain the cost of these services
- R – Return appointment, make the next appointment with the client to enable the counsellor review his/her progress

Counselling Phases

Entry Phase

The initial contact of the counsellor and the client is very much important since it starts building up a helping relationship. This is the time the client develops faith that the counsellor is able to help him/her. During the first contact with the client, the counsellor should communicate effectively using both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication skills so as to make the client feel comfortable, and also that he/she (the client) have confidence in the counsellor.



The communication skills that are used to establish rapport are grouped in the acronyms CLEAR and ROLES, which represent verbal and non-verbal expressions respectively, and are further defined under these terms:

CLEAR:

- C – Clarify the needs of the clients
- L – Listen attentively to what the client is telling you
- E – Encourage interaction, talk to the client and let him respond
- A – Acknowledge what the client says and probe for more information
- R – Reflect back to the client, clarify what he/she says and summarizes

ROLES:

- R – Relax before the client in a good position/setting
- O – Open up and establish a good rapport. Be empathetic and avoid crossing your arms across the chest
- L – Lean forward a bit towards the client and use bodily language; that is, postures and gestures to show that you care
- E – Eye contact, keep looking at the client, and retain interest and attention
- S – Sit squarely before the client in a respectable and comfortable position

The entry phase constitutes the period of welcoming the client and setting the climate for counselling. This is the beginning of establishing a rapport and a helping relationship. The aim of the entry phase is to win the confidence of the client that the counsellor has adequate knowledge and skills to help him/her to resolve the prevailing problems.

Work Phase

The working phase is the counselling session, which starts when the counsellor convinces the client that he/she is able to offer help. The counselling sessions should take about 45-60 minutes. In this stage, the counsellor probes the client on more about the problems where he/she finds out on how the problem started and how it has been progressing. He/she also finds out about any aggravating factors to the prevailing problems.

The counsellor finds out on whether it is the first time the client is experiencing this problem and how he/she has been dealing with it. Thereafter, the counsellor can then move on to the next stage of setting goals, since he/she had all the information required necessary to solve the client's problem(s). Here, the counsellor already has identified the causes of the problem and the available resources to solve it. In this stage, the counsellor agrees with the client on the number of sessions to hold, number of issues and/or problems to discuss during the sessions, and set priorities over these issues/problems.

Termination Phase

Termination means ending the counselling relationship, and such is decided by the counsellor when the client shows signs of improvement and ability to solve his/her



problems. The counsellor introduces the idea of termination and encourages the client to rely on himself/herself instead of the counsellor, since self-reliance will come to gradually separate them both.

They both likewise agree to reduce the number of sessions and to complete all pending issues before termination. There are some clients who may require further counselling support after termination. In this case, encourage gradual termination and allow the client the opportunity to visit you (the counsellor) whenever need arises.

Types of Counselling

Different clients come for counselling with various problems. The type of counselling is determined by the nature of problems presented by the clients, and such will include individual counselling, group counselling, marital counselling, family counselling, educational counselling, spiritual counselling, and special group counselling.

Individual Counselling

This occurs when a counsellor is working with only one person at any one given time; for example, when a nurse is dealing with a single patient. Individual counselling is a one-on-one discussion between the counsellor and the client. The two form an alliance, relationship or bond that enables trust and personal growth. Individual counselling is aimed at helping you to cope with addiction, mental health, trauma and with stresses that can cause anxiety and depression, it's about helping you to heal from the negative things that have happen in everyday life, such as losses, separation and divorce, family conflict, violence or abuse. Individual counselling can assist in coping with stressful life situations, work/school problems, grief, and emotional distress or relationship difficulties.

Group Counselling

This occurs when a counsellor is working with more than one person at any given session, and will always be recommended for persons facing similar problems or concerns, such as the alcoholics, where each of the individual need each other's support and encouragement to change their behaviour; for example the acronym **Alcoholic Anonymous** (AA) is an association formed by alcoholics who have stopped drinking and provide group counselling and support for each other. People are encouraged to discuss personal experiences and changes in their daily lives.

Marital Counselling

This occurs when the counsellor is working with marital couples. This process is conducted by a trained therapist who understands the problems and trails of marriage and married lifestyle. Married counselling is done when both couples are present, and here the counsellor assists them to understand their problems and get ways of solving them out.

Family Counselling



This occurs when a counsellor is working with more than two members of a family at any one given session. It focuses on family matters and is conducted when the concerned family members are all present. Effective counselling cannot occur if some family members are excluded from the process, hence they are required to be all present.

Educational Counselling

This occurs in schools and learning institutions where students are counselled in relation to academic matters and their learning performances. The counselling specialty concerned with providing advice and assistance to students in the development of their educational plans, choice of appropriate courses, and choice of college or technical school.

Spiritual Counselling

This is a type of counselling related to spiritual issues. It takes a look that life is innately personal and individuals want to build their own unique, flowing relationship with it, organically and without force. With the soul being the starting point individuals come from the heart, whilst not forgetting their head, and from this heart space they care for the sacred interdependence of all life.

Special Group Counselling

The special group is composed of any group of people who require counselling to enable them to adjust better in their lives, and such include:

- Drug and substance abusers
- Rape victims and rapists
- HIV and AIDS infected and affected people
- Individuals and families and with handicapped persons, such as the blind, lamed, deaf, retarded
- Families with such disputes like marriage issues, divorce, separation, etc
- Such individuals who require to have an abortion or might have undergone through such
- Those people who require assistance for reproductive health family planning
- Those individuals who experience sexual difficulties or need in such importance
- Issues with employment, such as retrenchment,

Note:

- Counselling is a supportive relationship that is required to bear good fruits, such which is yielded by having the counsellor possessing certain qualities for use in carrying out an effective task in this mandate. These qualities are discussed as hereunder.

Qualities of a Good Counsellor

A good counsellor is required to possess good qualities, such which include patience,



warmth, confidentiality, honesty, empathy, observance, being non-judgemental, avoiding embarrassment, having relevant discussion, and respecting the client's opinions. These qualities are further discussed as follows:

Patience

A good counsellor should be very much patient with his/her client, no matter how many times the client repeats with himself/herself. The counsellor should not hurry the client at all or show impatience; nor should you show that you are bored or tired of holding long discussions with the client. You should only go to the next step of explaining when the client has understood clearly the content of the information he/she is giving just if patient. The client will feel that you accepts him/her as a person and is interested in what he/she is talking about, such which encourages him/her to open up even more.

Warmth

As a counsellor, you should provide non-possessive warmth in a counselling environment. How? Smile and show a lot of concern and acceptance to the client.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means keeping secret all the information given by the client. As a counsellor, let not anyone get to know what the client has discussed with you. To maintain confidentiality, counselling should be done individually and in a private room; and as a counsellor, one has the obligation to treat all information that you have been given with confidence. The client consults you because he/she believes that all information he/she discloses will remain secret. It will not be professional to disclose any information obtained from a client during counselling except only to other professionals who are involved in the care process.

Honesty

Honesty refers to the act of telling the truth to the client, such which is always a great quality required as a counsellor. You should never tell a lie to your client; for is you are not sure of something, get to inform your client to wait and that you will go look for more information.

Honesty is exercised by both the client and the counsellor. Get to encourage your client to be very much honest on the information that he/she is giving. Do not hide any information of concern to the client. Being honest makes the client regard you as a dependable and trustworthy counsellor.

Empathy

It is the ability to imagine oneself in the position of another person, and thus share and understand that person's feelings. Empathy is ability of the counsellor to put himself/herself



in the position of the client by understanding his/her feelings, such which involves fitting in somebody else's shoes, and hence it means that you perceive his/her feelings and their meanings.

As a counsellor, you should understand what your client is feeling in his/her current situation and communicate this understanding to him/her. Empathy involves being very close to the client and sharing your thoughts and feelings, hence creating acceptance, love, and understanding. Empathy is characterized by both sharing and separateness. That is, even though you share your thoughts and feelings with your client, remain separate and retain objectivity.

Observance

A good counsellor must be very much observant. As you listen to your client talking, observe the facial expressions and try to interpret the meaning of all non-verbal communications. Facial expressions may reveal painful memories expressed in the form of anger, sadness, and frustrations.

Get to carefully listen to client, observing if facial expressions correspond with the speech. Carefully observe the state of swinging, mood, and its relevance to the conversation. The observations are made to detect any inappropriate behaviour expressed by the client; and will likewise make the client get to feel that the counsellor is interested in the conversation.

Being Non-Judgemental

Being non-judgemental means that the client is accepted the way he/she is, and that the counsellor recognizes his/her basic rights, whether they be good or not. The feelings made by the client that he/she is accepted as a person with his/her own rights encourage him/her to disclose information.

As a counsellor, you should not be judgemental, avoid being critical over the client whenever he/she is wrong, carefully listen to him/her as he/she talks so as to understand his/her message, and thereby provide suggestions and not criticism.

Avoiding Embarrassment

Embarrassment is a situation where one feels uncomfortable in a social setting. Get to avoid embarrassing your client by holding the counselling session in a private room. You can also avoid embarrassing the client by understanding the cultural background of the community. Try to avoid sensitive probing questions that make the client to develop feelings of guilt.

Probing questions are statements that focus on the experiences, feelings and thoughts of the clients. As a counsellor, you should observe and interpret non-verbal communication after asking a sensitive probing question. The counsellor can restate the same question in a



different fashion if the client looks uncomfortable.

Having Relevant Discussion

Relevant discussion means that the counselling session is confined to the topic. During counselling, the client is given sufficient time to narrate his/her story, as the counsellor listens and observes the client carefully to pick up the core information related to the problem.

The counsellor encourages the client to come out with core information while noting any deviations or irrelevant information. The counsellor then assists his/her client to keep to the main points that will help to solve the problem.

Respecting the Client's Opinions

This means that the counsellor accepts the client as a human being with his/her own rights to make decisions concerning his/her welfare. The counsellor should know that the client has the ability to give constructive ideas to solve his/her problem(s).

The counselling relationship improves when the client becomes aware that his/her views are respected, whereby the counsellor recognizes that the client is better placed to know his/her problems and has the resources to which have to be solved.

The counsellor likewise accepts the views of the client in principle even if they may not be good or credible. The counsellor's role is to provide the client with the additional information and to suggest alternative option of solving the problem. The client is therefore assisted to solve his/her problems through the counselling process.

Barriers to Effective Counselling

Counselling involves a face-to-face communication between the client and the counsellor. The factors that may lead to communication breakdown, all affect counselling.

[Ask the Class to name 10 factors that may lead to communication breakdown]

Barriers to effective counselling interfere with the counselling process by making the client unable to fully make informed decisions or disclose their feelings and concerns.

[Ask the Class to list down 4 barriers to effective counselling]

- Physical barriers
- Inappropriate non-verbal behaviour by the provider
- Differences in social and cultural background
- Barriers caused by the client and the counsellor
- Language and level of education
- Psychological barriers

Physical Barriers



These refer to those factors both in the environment and the physical appearance of the counsellor that prevent or reduce opportunities for the communication process to occur. Such include the interviewing room, dress code and appearance age and/or gender of both the client and the counsellor.

Interviewing Room

The interview should be conducted in a private quiet room. The room should be spacious enough to allow both the counsellor and the client to sit comfortably, and properly facing each other. It should be clean and tidy, with adequate ventilation, a good size table, comfortable chairs, and there should be no distracting equipment or pictures on the wall.

The room should be free noise, be provided with adequate lighting. The preparation of the room is also determined by the type of the interview to be conducted; for example, if you are interviewing a client to offer reproductive health services, visual aids on different methods of family planning should be displayed on the walls of the room during the interview.

Dress Code and Appearance

If you do not look presentable and pleasant, the client might have a problem being attentive to you and likewise getting serious to be involved in the interview process. Make a keen look over the dress code, such which may not interfere with or distract the interview process.

Age and Gender

A difference in age between the counsellor and the client may also affect the outcome of the session. If the counsellor is young enough to be the client's child, the client might find it difficult to open up. In youth counselling, it is advisable for counsellors to be of the same age group and gender as their clients, since this will help the client overcome discomfort when discussing personal and sensitive issues.

Inappropriate Non-Verbal Behaviour by the Provider

This involves all the little things you do while you talk to a client. The gestures that you make could either make the counselling session a success or a failure. Some of the gestures that could make you fail include frowning, showing signs of boredom or humour, showing signs of disgust, or displaying signs of disapproval towards the client.

Your response should be geared towards encouraging the client to disclose his/her feelings and concerns fully to you. Therefore, you should try to cultivate interest and concern such as a smile and an occasional nod in appreciation of what the client is telling you.

Differences in Social and Cultural Background

When a client comes from a different nationality, race, or ethnic group, it may be difficult for you as the counsellor to really know of his/her beliefs, taboos, and cultural practices. The client may not be able to take action because perhaps the information you give him/her



does not tally with his/her beliefs. As a good counsellor, you should endeavour to know of the client's cultural background before you start the session.

Barriers Caused by the Client and the Counsellor

The barriers caused by the client include lack of interest and his/her emotional state, hence the counsellor needs to motivate the client and arouse his/her interest as soon as the counselling session starts. Likewise, get to stimulate active thinking and learning while providing a shared experience since lack of interest makes a client to become inattentive and hence create prejudice.

If you feel that the client is so emotionally disturbed that he/she will not benefit from the session, get to postpone it to another day so as to give them time to deal with the emotions they are experiencing at that time.

Other Barriers:

Other barriers caused by factors that are related to both the counsellor and the client are summarized as follows:

- Failure to listen, by both the counsellor and the client, and it may be manifested by not receiving the intended message
- Failure to prob
- The counsellor being judgemental over the client, mostly by either approving or disapproving the client's statements
- Rejection, which may occur when the counsellor refuses to discuss some topics with the client
- Parroting, whereby the client continues repeating the same phrase even if the counsellor asks him/her question in a different version
- Defending, which is an attempt to protect something or someone from negative feedback
- Giving advice; that is, the counsellor telling the client what he thinks should be done
- Privacy disruption, which occurs if counselling sessions are held in a room where privacy is not observed. For example, if an interview is held in the presence of relatives or other persons
- Changing topic, whereby the counsellor directs the interaction into areas of self-interest rather than following the lead of the client

Theoretical Approaches to Counselling

Psychoanalytic Theory (Freud's Theory)

This is whereby the counsellor focuses on what happened to the client in the past, which has been forgotten; and also focuses on what is presently happening in the life of the client. The analysts try to understand repressed experiences that may be contributing to the current problems the client is experiencing. As a result, the counsellor can now be able to



offer effective counselling services to the client. The knowledge gained in learning the psychoanalytic theory will assist the counsellor to identify those clients who require referral to the psychologists for further management.

Person-Centered Approach (Carl Rogers)

The person-centered theory is based on Maslow's Theory of self-actualization, "The Needs Theory". Here, the counsellor assumes that "self-actualization" motivates human beings to exploit their capabilities or potentialities. It is assumed that people have the capability to guide, regulate, and control themselves, provided that certain definable conditions exist.

In this approach, it is assumed that an individual's psychological problems are caused by failure to actualize to the maximum. Psychological problems cause blockages to the process, and the work of counselling is to release the blockage.

It is assumed that this is a self-concept in which an individual perceives the self, a means by which the individual interacts with life in a way that makes him to meet his basic needs. Self-concept can also be put in as a process by which one ignores, denies, distorts, or inaccurately perceive experiences.

This theory helps counsellors to identify the maladjusted behaviour of the client. Hence, through counselling, the counsellor can be able to identify the resources the client has to sustain in order to correct the maladjusted behaviour.

Behavioural Theory

The behavioural theory of counselling is also known as "behaviour therapy", which is based on the principles of learning to assess the behaviour of clients. The psychologists design psychometric tests, numerical scores, checklists and questionnaires, which are given to the client to respond to. The assessments are done in order to try to understand the human emotions and behaviours of the client.

This method is used to identify, diagnose, or identify the maladaptive behaviour of the client. It is also useful in changing the client's maladaptive behaviour. It alters the maladaptive behaviour by increasing socially assertive responses. The counsellor should use the behavioural approaches with one realistic and achievable goal. Some of the goals the counsellor may set include:

- Overcoming deficits in behaviour
- Strengthening maladaptive behaviour
- Weakening maladaptive behaviour
- Encouraging the capacity to relax, to ease tension and headaches
- Encouraging adequate social skill; that is, socialize more with people , talk more with people, attend social gatherings (such as churches, women groups, men's gatherings, etc)



- Capacity of self-control; that is, encourage the client to control emotions

Eclectic (Multi-Modal) Approach

Arnold Lazarus, a clinical psychologist developed this approach, basing on the belief that there is no single psychological theory, which can effectively be used in counselling all the clients. The approach borrows concepts and techniques from different schools of thought depending on the individuals, their uniqueness of psychological problems and circumstances. The eclectic approach advocates for a comprehensive therapy assessment using concepts drawn from various psychotherapeutic counselling theories.

Counselling Relationship

The counselling relationship using the multi-modal approach focuses on working closely together with the clients and avoiding attacking the client's sense of dignity as a person but providing the required therapeutic support to correct or improve on the maladaptive behaviour.

The counsellor using multi-modal counselling should be skilled in numerous theoretical approaches to be able to conduct effective counselling. For example, he/she should be skilled in psychoanalytic counselling, behavioural counselling, and cognitive counselling. Understanding of several psychotherapeutic approaches enables eclectic counsellors to provide effective counselling services to their clients.

