

Counselling: A Strong Tool For Checking Examination Malpractice And
Coping With Examination Anxiety.

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COUNSELING PROCESS

Counseling is a process which involves the interaction of the counselor, with the client and vice versa. This interaction or relationship should be seen as a process of establishing a cooperative interactions so that the client is assisted in exploring himself or herself and the situation in which he or she is. The counseling process therefore involves a wide range of factors among which include the client's needs and expectations, the change in behaviour expected of the client and recognizing the various aspects of the counseling process.

COUNSELING: A HELPING RELATIONSHIP

Counseling is a process of establishing a cooperative relationship and then using that interpersonal interaction to help the client learn his or her desired appropriate behavior. However Okon (1982) opines that the helper is anyone who assists person to overcome or deal with problems. But when one talks about counseling as a helping relationship, one's mind is focused on special relationship. This is why Patterson (1969) states that counseling differ from other relationship for the relationship is established and continues because the client feels not a need or a special help assistance with a problem that he has not been able to resolve by himself through other relationships. Also, counseling respects the privacy as well as the confidentiality of the client(s) and it is a deeper and closer relationship. These differences make counseling a relationship that is helping, curing and growth oriented. In this chapter attention is on the description of helping relationships, with particular emphasis on the therapeutic alliance and the communications involved during this relationship. It is believed that the effectiveness of any counseling relationship depends on the counselor's skill in communicating effectively his or her understanding of the client's feelings, behaviors, concerns. This is why Hansen et al (1977) said that "the counselor's skill in understanding the relationship dimensions and his skill in communication can facilitate the client's entrance into the therapeutic alliance". Apart from the therapeutic alliance that is essential in counseling as a helping relationship, others factors include such essential as principles, availability of core and response conditions, effective communications and a reciprocal impact. All these factors in counseling as a helping relationship are discussed here except the core and response conditions which have been earlier discussed.

Therapeutic Alliance

This alliance is characterized by the conviction of both the counselor and te client that the main goal of interacting is to assist the client. The therapeutic alliance can develop when two readiness factors are met which are:

1. The client must possess a disposition or positive expectation of the counselor on which to build and strengthen an internal conception of a good "significant other".
2. There must be sufficient need gratification geared to the individual client to foster the perception of the counselor as a helpful and constructive person.

The extent, the client internalize the therapeutic alliance depends on how positively the client has been disposed to the experiences with the counselor. Also the changes that may be noticeable in the clients may be a result of the internalization of the therapeutic alliance. The idea of internalization therefore involves the process by which the representation of the counselor and a more gratifying relationship between the client and the counselor becomes assimilated into the client's inner world of object relations.

Understanding this, Hurwitz (1974) identified four factors as sub-processes that will contribute to the growth of the counseling relationship. These are corrective emotional experience, enhanced self-esteem, transference improvement and identification. These sub-processes are briefly examined below.

The counselor could respond differently to certain aspects of the client's behavior than he had expected. In an ordinary relationship, the significant others to the client may generally respond to certain behaviors with criticism and an indication of rejection but in the counseling relationship the counselor relates to him or her in a non-judgmental and accepting manner. The type of response given to the client by other significant others which is not accepting leads the client into internalizing such feelings hence a low self-esteem. This experience with others may lead the client to expect the same response from the counselor more especially if he or she is coming to such a person for the first time. When the client in the process of interacting with the counselor finds out that his/her expectations are unrealistic, rather the counselor is accepting he/she begins to modify his/her misperceptions hence a reduction in the defensive behaviors he or she might have put on. This acceptance of the client as a human being is a corrective emotional experience for the client which differs from what others used to give him.

Enhanced Self-Esteem (ESE)

Horwitz (1974) observed that every client who improved had more positive feelings about himself. "The ability of the counselor to accept the "badness" of the client's behavior reduces the pressure for the client to defend himself (Hanse e; at 1977). This is why counseling is seen as a helping relationship which according to Okon (1982) should be "a mutually learning process" in which "the helper supports the helpee so that they come to terms with their problems through

exploration, understanding, and action". The moment the client is able to understand his or her problems and experience, the helpers' concern for his weakness, an enhanced self-esteem is gradually being built in the client.

Transference Improvement

As an indication of an internalized good relationship is that effort by the client to please the counselor by exhibiting an improved adaptive behavior. When the client has shown a positive reaction to the counselor with his/her new appropriate behaviors, he then receives sufficient internal and external reinforcement to stabilize the new behavior. Transference improvement that develops in the atmosphere of a trusting relationship can be expected to persist because the reinforcement that will aid its continuity is coming from the counselor. The end product is that the client internalize the new adaptive behavior which after sometimes becomes a permanent behavior in client's behavior repertoire.

Identification

The client may identify with some of the attitudes and feelings the counselor has shown to him. Such identification may be based on;

1. Counselor's sense of commitment
2. His feelings of responsibility and concern for the client.

Identification therefore is that the ingredient of the counseling relationship are absorbed and assimilated into the client's feelings about himself.

The process of identification with certain specific attitudes shown by the counselor is another by-product of the internalization process. Identification in such a sense can be said to be the process of becoming like an external person which in the counseling relationship is, taking on the certain qualities of the counselor. Identification involves a modification of the self representation which has hindered self growth and actualization.

From all these, it is indicative that for a therapeutic alliance to be meaningful and effective it does go through the interrelated process briefly discussed above. The counselors' attitudes are very influential factors in producing the kind of relationship that leads or does not lead to client improvement. So counselor must watch out for their attitudes so that the desired effective helping relationship may be established and maintained throughout the counseling encounter. This is why Gahagan (1984) said a relationship in a counseling situation is not just "the sum total of all our interactions with someone but a contract or implicit agreement to interact with someone but a contract or implicit agreement to interact with them at the same level of frequency and intensity".

Effective Communication

Okon (1982):20) observed thus:

Regardless of the setting or nature of the helping relationship, regardless of the personal values and beliefs of the people involved, and regardless of the theoretical orientation of professional helper, the underlying prerequisite skill in any helping relationship is effective communication.

Effective communication especially with the clients connotes the capacity to listen, pay attention, perceive and to respond verbally and nonverbally to the client is a way that will make the client feel the counselor has attended, listened and have accurately perceived.

Counselors at times communicate both positively and negatively to the client by either or both verbal and nonverbal means. Such communications hinders or fosters clients self-disclosure to us. Some of the verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are found supportive to the client which could form a sound base for effective communication in a counseling relationship are listed below:

Table 1.1: Supportive Helping Behaviors;

Verbal	Nonverbal
Uses understandable words, reflects back clarifies helpess statements appropriately, interprets, summarizes helpee, responds to primary message uses verbal reinforces (for example "mm-mm", "I see", "yes") calls helpee by first name or "you" appropriately gives information occational head answers questions about self, uses humor occasional to reduce tension is nonjudemental, adds greater understanding to helpee's statement phrases interpretations tentatively so as to elicit genuine feedback from helpee	Tone of voice similar to helpee's, maintains good eye contact, occasional head nodding, facial animation gesturing, close physical proximity rate of special body leans toward helpee occasional touching.

In the same manner behavior that are non supportive to the client which could be communicated to the client include inattentiveness, imposition of the helpers value and beliefs on the helpee, judgement, I'm better than you attitudes. These behaviors put the helpee in a defensive position. Other non-helping behaviors as indicated by Okon (1982) are presented in Table 1.2

Table 1.2: Nonhelping Behaviors

Verbal	Nonverbal
Advice giving, preaching placating, blaming, cajorling, exhorting, extensive, probing and questioning especially "why" questions, directing, demanding, patronizing attitude, over interpretation, using words helpee doesn't understand, staying from topic, intellectualizing, overanalyzing, talking about self too much.	Looking away from helpee, sitting far apart or turned from helpee, sneering, frowning, scowling, tight mouth, shaking, pointed finger, distracting, gestures, yawning, closing eyes, unpleasant tone of voice, rate of speech too slow or too fast.

An effective helper must be able to communicate effectively with the client. Such communication must in words and deeds demonstrate concern for the client and reflect the facilitative response conditions earlier discussed. However it may be noted that the extent to which the counselor is understood in the counseling relationship may be a result of the following factors.

1. The relationship of the information communicated to the client to the client's needs.
2. The relationship of the existing information in the client's perceptual field.
3. The openness of the client's perceptual field at the moment of communication.

The difficulty experienced in communication during the counseling relationships may be attributed to problems of motivation, psychological barriers and language difficulties. These problems areas as they affect communication between the counselor in particular can stimulate the forward movement to effective adjustment of the client in his communication during the counseling relationship.

Principles of Effective Helping

An effective counseling involves the application of basic principle of effective helping. Among such principles are the principles of understanding, sequential process, appreciate self-understanding these principles and apply them in the process of counseling. Their application not only make counseling effective but also add to the specialty of counseling relationship.

In a counseling relationship, the principle of understanding connotes that the counselor have a thorough knowledge of the client and the problem. This clear understanding involves that the counselor has a set of concepts or theoretical

knowledge exposed enough to theories of counseling which he or she could use to understand the client and the problem.

In counseling, the process is sequential and his process must be gone through stage by stage in an effective manner if the relationship is to be productive. Any effective counseling relationship has starting or entry point, the middle or the exploration stage and the termination and possibly a follow-up points. These stages must be sequentially followed in order to produce an effective interaction. Additionally self-disclosure more must be ready to say all about himself or herself in an atmosphere to occasionally bring in some relevant information about himself or herself to help the client get a more understanding of the problem and himself. However, such self-disclosure by the counselor or the client should not be a brain-washing statements.

Finally, ethical principles must be observed in the counseling relationship, some of these ethics revolve around issues of confidentiality, values, theoretical position, privacy, etc. The counselor must adhere to some of these ethics as long as they serve the purpose of assisting the client to grow.

Reciprocal Impact

Counseling relationship is not a one way traffic. It is a relationship that has a reciprocal impact. In an effective counseling relationship where the client is expected to change, there ought to be a reciprocal impact in the client-counselor relationship. According to Kell and Meuller (196:21), the counselor and client constantly stimulate each other to behave in ways that might or hinder the client's changing.

At the entering of the counseling relationship, both the client and counselor introduce into the relationship their total life experiences. On the part of the counselor, he or she enters the relationship with many attitudes that arise from different aspects of his/her experiences which are again a product of his/her professional training and undertakings. The training has given him or her theoretical background of how problems originate, manifest and how they can be resolved. These dynamics shaped the counselor perceptions of the client and his problems hence entered into relationship from that dynamics.

The client also bring to the counseling situation his own conflicts which have been generated out of frustrations in his previous interactions with other people. His attitudes about people are formed and this coupled with his previous relationship with other counselors, what he has read and heard about counseling, the client enters the relationship with an idea of what "counselors are like, what he wishes to keep secret, what he wishes to change, and perhaps even some ideas about how this change should take place" (Kell & Meuller, 1966:23).

In this situation and under this circumstances of preconceived idea about each other, the relationship is entered. In the process of interaction both the client and the counselor's beliefs are modified. The modified belief is a consequence of an effective relationship. A counseling relationship which terminates without this reciprocal impact on both could be turned as an ordinary conversation or ineffective counseling. As the counseling session develops, with the client gaining more confidence in the counselor and ready to disclose the personal data that are relevant to the problem, and as the counselor continued in understanding the client, the intensity of the relationship begins to strengthen and the client begins to lean heavily on the counselor. The counselors strength of accepting, warmth etc. continued to invite the client's expression of his needs and demands and all these invariably have some influences on the counselor. It is therefore worthy to note, that an effective counseling relationship has a reciprocal impact on the both parties.

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