

# **Elements of a Successful Therapeutic Relationship**

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## **Introduction**

This essay will outline the characteristics and roles I aspire to embody as a clinical mental health counselor. Next, I will explore counselor identity strategies, followed by the counselor dispositions I will implement in my counseling profession. In addition, a discussion of the counseling skills I plan to practice in building connections with clients will be given. Finally, this essay will review how theoretical knowledge is essential to providing quality counseling.

## **Counselor Role**

As a future clinical mental health counselor, I aim to offer counseling services to clients, couples, households, and groups struggling with mental health difficulties. My primary role as a counselor will be to aid clients in attaining their highest level of personal and social well-being through eliminating harmful behaviors, education, recovery, and enhancing their standard of living (Hershenson & Power, 1987). In doing this, counselors facilitate clients in discovering how to make informed choices and adopt different methods of interacting, expressing, and reasoning. Counselors must concentrate on their clients' ideal objectives, examine their current performance and assess what modifications are needed to reach client goals. I must also determine the client's treatment requirements, select the most suitable approach, and provide a diagnosis. While monitoring the therapy continuously and reviewing it periodically, I will work closely with other behavioral health care experts, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, to ensure integrated care for my clients. As a clinical mental health counselor, certification and licensure is extremely important because it allows me to practice legally and obtain the credentials necessary to acquire the training and skills required to practice

competently and within the standards of professional ethics. States set licensing or credentialing criteria for workers in health care to ensure public safety. In every state, professional counselors must be licensed to practice legally. Licensure laws impose minimum standards in training, testing, and expertise. I will become certified and licensed by the state and adhere to the ethical guidelines set forth by my professional organization. In summary, competent counselors should be knowledgeable about research, use approaches based on proven results, have affiliations in professional organizations, obtain required license or certification, and follow ethical codes.

### **Counselor Identity Strategies**

As a counselor, I will subscribe to governing state boards and professionally endorsed codes of ethics while providing services based on my expertise and qualifications. I aim to apply evidence-based strategies and scientifically proven therapies and remain updated with the counseling profession by attending continuing education and participating in counseling organizations. I intend to develop a counselor identity grounded in leadership, activism, and volunteerism. Clients receive treatment from various practitioners, such as speech pathologists, physical therapists, social workers, and medical doctors. It calls for skill and expertise to maintain our counselor identity while taking part in conversations with other healthcare professionals. By evaluating when collaboration with other providers is needed and selecting implementation methods, counselors facilitate the provision of holistic therapy for clients. Even when we are required to work with specialists with advanced training, we must maintain our counselor identity by practicing within ethical guidelines while advocating for the client's welfare. When collaborating in multidisciplinary teams, we must work within our area of expertise as counselors and articulate the reasoning for the services we render in counseling.

Adopting a collaborative decision-making model allows us to stand up for our profession and clients in multidisciplinary teams. Professional identity is a significant factor as a developing counselor because we continuously evolve as counselors and grow professionally throughout our careers. Professional identity equips developing counselors with experience, the ethical codes necessary to deliver counseling services, and a clear understanding of the counselor's role. The counselor's identity is developed through education and training by becoming self-aware through acknowledging values, beliefs, and cultural differences. Through the educational program, internship, and practicum, the evolving counselor builds the skills necessary to provide assistance to clients and gain management strategies by learning from other experienced professionals. Overall, counselor identity is continuously developed by remaining current with education, research, treatment strategies, advocacy opportunities, and professional organization membership.

### **Dispositions**

When I examined the counselor dispositional expectations, I recognized that I would incorporate all of them into my counseling relationships. All the expectations listed are very necessary to include. Acceptance, empathy, and cultural diversity will dominate my counseling practice. Before enrolling in the master's program for counseling, I was not open to listening to perspectives outside my own. With an unbiased attitude during therapy, I will foster a conducive environment for change by integrating acceptance as a disposition. As an ACA member, I was introduced to acceptance by the code of ethics, which prohibits counselors from imposing their values and beliefs on clients. When counseling clients, I will demonstrate empathy daily.

Clients will always be treated with unconditional positive regard, and I will avoid any actions that do not benefit them. Because I believe everyone is worthy of respect, empathy is a natural characteristic I have displayed throughout my life. Every genuine relationship begins with empathy and is essential in fostering change. A part of being genuine involves being conscious of your individual experiences and being comfortable with sharing with the client, which can strengthen the therapeutic relationship. Lastly, Cultural diversity is necessary for counseling because today's client populations consist of diverse cultures. Counselors must accept differences in clients and offer assistance, dignity, encouragement, and respect for their uniqueness. When it comes to cultural diversity in the therapeutic relationship, I would need to have a knowledge and appreciation of my client's culture, identity, ethnicity, race, gender, and any other aspects of diversity that will play a key role in their lives. The first step I would need to take to be effective in multicultural counseling is to identify and acknowledge these differences between myself and my client.

### **Counseling Skills**

I will utilize my counseling skills to form relationships with my clients and help them accomplish their therapeutic objectives. The counseling skills I will employ are active listening with conversations that will allow my clients to experience being listened to, acknowledged, affirmed, and motivated. I will establish a trusting therapeutic alliance by actively listening, displaying empathy, and remaining present throughout the session to allow the client to feel cared for and prioritized as important. I will stay attentive and empathetic to make communication more effective and create a calm, relaxed atmosphere for my client to open up and share. To foster trust and maintain positive connections, non-verbal communication techniques such as nodding, leaning forward, and maintaining eye contact will be utilized,

enhancing the client's desire to share more information. I will come to each session prepared and aware of the client's general overview. Recognizing the client by name and referring to key personal information in the introduction will suggest to the client that I value their time and concerns. The counseling setting will be safe, uncluttered, and pleasant to avoid unnecessary distractions which may hinder therapy. As the client displays comfort with me as their counselor, I will begin reflecting on their feelings, thoughts, and actions to gain further clarity. Reflecting the client's experience back to them will suggest their concerns are the focus. Other effective techniques I can use are asking open-ended questions, self-disclosure with caution, treating my client with respect, and listening without judgment. Having empathy for someone's experiences and the resulting way they are affected by them also demonstrates your respect for them. Using active listening skills, such as reflection, summarization, and open-ended questioning, can also show respect for the client and the desire to understand their concerns. Another critical skill to help the client feel safe is to review HIPPA and Informed Consent information that can help them feel they can trust me to be careful with what they share and to inform them of their rights and responsibilities to give structure to the relationship

### **Theory Knowledge**

I am knowledgeable about various counseling theories, and I will use these theories to guide my work with clients. This element of counseling is so important. A counselor should know which approach to take based on the client's needs because each client is unique and will benefit from a customized therapy strategy. Having a working knowledge of all theories should be held by all counselors. There is no such thing as one size fits all in counseling. Individual treatment plans are essential to a successful approach to therapy. Therefore, when the client and counselor set goals for treatment, the counselor should understand and incorporate the type of

theory to use according to the client's needs and goals. When counselors determine the best methodology to use, they can observe, analyze, and modify a client's actions, emotions, perceptions, or relationships. The use of theories is the counselor's guidance process for developing possible responses to client problems. Knowledge of the various theories is essential in effective counseling strategies and coordination. It provides the counselor with an understanding of the client, identifying multiple options for the client's progress and growth. Before the knowledge of varying strategies for the client's advancement is determined, the counselor must understand what initial intervention is appropriate. Therefore, without a theoretical framework, many counselors would be without the comprehension of the client's behavior, thoughts, and feelings or the direction of the techniques to support the clients with their problems (Petko, Kendrick, & Young, 2016)

## **Conclusion**

This essay outlined the characteristics and roles I aspire to embody as a clinical mental health counselor. Next, I explored counselor identity strategies, followed by the counselor dispositions I will implement in my counseling profession. In addition, a discussion of the counseling skills I plan to practice in building connections with clients was given. Finally, this essay reviewed how theoretical knowledge is essential to providing quality counseling.

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