

Self-Reflection

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Introduction

This paper is intended to elaborate on the material covered in this course about counseling skills. First, a discussion of the essential information gained about the abilities necessary to be a productive counselor and any unexpected skills acquired will be elaborated on. Next, I will outline my strengths as a potential counselor and what I deem are skills and dispositions that I find complex or problematic as a potential counselor. In addition, details of specific actions I will take to prepare for my practicum and internship experiences will be given. Finally, I will review the role of a consultant-counselor and when to seek consultation as a professional counselor.

Counseling Skills

As I learned about the skills required to be an effective counselor, I realized that building a collaborative client-counselor relationship on a foundation of trust is paramount to successful counseling. To effectively transform the client, the counselor must display empathy, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and a nonjudgmental attitude. One of the most critical factors determining whether therapy is successful for the client is the therapeutic relationship between the counselor and the client. As a result of this collaboration, the counselor can assist and guide the client in discovering their strengths, resources, and solutions, enabling them to deal with and solve their problems. In addition, this collaborative alliance produces clients with confidence who are willing to take responsibility for the success of achieving their goals.

Empathy allows the counselor to see and feel things from the client's perspective to understand the true nature of the client's story. Authentic empathy necessitates the counselor to

show an accurate grasp of the client's predicament and a thorough awareness of the complicated feelings and behaviors it generates. The counselor must also employ unconditional positive regard for all clients, which means accepting them despite what they disclose and respecting them despite what they reveal, which promotes confidence and personal development. Finally, counselors must be genuine and able to freely be themselves by being in touch with what they truly believe and value to create the trust necessary for the client to open up and disclose their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Being genuine makes a seamless connection between your thoughts and actions, including verbal and nonverbal expressions.

The skill that surprised me the most as I worked through the course was that counseling is not merely about advising or making choices for clients but about attentively listening to help clients identify their concerns clearly, reach optimal solutions, and adapt to their situations. When counselors are genuinely present and engage with the client through attentive listening, a rapport built on trust is established by demonstrating care for what is relevant to the client. Once clients feel acknowledged and seen, they are empowered to believe in their ability to accomplish goals which give them hope for a better future.

In addition to establishing a trusting relationship with the client, which is collaborative, optimistic, supportive, encouraging, warm, respectful, unbiased, and friendly, counselors must possess and develop multiple skills to become effective in counseling. These skills include attentive listening, displaying empathy, remaining nonjudgmental, accurately reflecting the client's disclosures, probing, asking open-ended questions, summarizing, gently challenging, and confrontation. The counselor must also have practical communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. For example, the counselor must display positive body language, appropriate vocal tone, proper eye contact, and a relaxed posture while interacting with clients to communicate

acceptance, support, and encouragement. Lastly, counselors must effectively review Informed Consent information and HIPPA to help clients feel safe and understand what to expect during therapy.

Strengths as a Potential Counselor

My strengths as a potential counselor include being an attentive, empathetic listener and a warm, friendly, non-judgmental, effective communicator. These skills are necessary and must always be present when engaging with clients. Being able to welcome clients with care and optimism sets the stage for forming a trusting therapeutic atmosphere. As a counselor a vital part of counseling is to help clients feel listened to, valued and affirmed. This can be accomplished through active listening. Facing the client, nodding in affirmation, maintaining eye contact, open body posture, and a relaxed demeanor are all practical communication skills that I will employ as a counselor to demonstrate a focus on the client and what they are saying. Being a good listener and communicator will help me understand the issues clients are most hesitant to talk about and share. How counselors respond verbally and nonverbally affects the willingness of the client to share vital information. Counselors need to be able to decipher ambiguous or nonverbal signals, such as body language and facial expressions, and read between the lines to communicate and attentively listen effectively.

Difficult Skills and Dispositions as a Potential Counselor

Because I care for others to the detriment of my interest in many instances, my empathetic nature may be challenging to balance as a counselor. I must always be aware of my welfare and professional boundaries to prevent my empathy from hindering my practice. Avoiding dual relationships with clients will be challenging because I love networking and forming meaningful friendships. Self-awareness and psychological fitness are necessary for

effective practice; utilizing these will help ensure counseling is ethical and balanced. In addition, productive therapeutic relationships rely on the counselor separating their feelings, preserving professionalism, and not allowing their personal experiences, beliefs, or opinions to affect how they interact with clients. I will develop psychological fitness that includes having clear motives to be a counselor and resolve unfinished mental issues by pursuing personal counseling services before helping others.

Preparing for Practicum and Internship

As a part of preparing for the Practicum and Internship, I will continue learning and developing the counseling skills and dispositions I have already started using. For counselors to develop practical skills, feedback and supervision are essential. Therefore, I must find an appropriate organization for my practicum that fulfills all the requirements and provides adequate supervision during the practice. A supervisor oversees a counselor's self-awareness, professional training, ethics, and experience to promote the counselor's self-learning and skills (Kabbir, 2017). Also, during the practicum, it is crucial to work on the areas of weakness to improve by utilizing supervision to grow. In preparation for my future practicum and internship, my goal is to find an opportunity to expand my knowledge and eventually practice what I love. Therefore, supervision is paramount when choosing a practicum site because the supervisor monitors the student's progress and assists in developing counseling abilities.

Consultant-Counselor Role

Both counselors and consultants offer help and recommendations to clients seeking direction or resolution. While counselors generally provide a range of strategies for addressing difficulties, consultants often concentrate more on developing specific strategies for clients to implement. The role of the counselor-consultant can be a valuable resource for clients looking

for a precise remedy to their problems. A consultant has a deep understanding and proficiency in areas that may be relevant to a client. In most cases, the consultant's job will be for a short period with a specific focus. In general, consultation therapists are required to have a diverse set of skills, including clinical training, management skills, and consultative abilities.

During counseling, I would request consultation when I needed clarification on an issue that required a specialist or when I needed to be less biased or impartial about the subject area. I would also seek consultation when I find myself in a difficult situation where I can no longer manage independently. Eventually, as I gain experience and expertise in the areas of counseling, I will become a consultant for other counselors.

Conclusion

Reviewing the skills, I have acquired and identifying areas for improvement has been very beneficial to my awareness of my development throughout the course. In this reflection, I acknowledge my abilities and limitations while planning for my future as a clinical mental health counselor. I plan to continue developing these skills and gaining further knowledge to become an effective counselor. This course provided the essential skills and knowledge to become an effective counselor. I learned to develop active listening skills with empathy to develop client relationships. Also, I collaboratively acquired the skills to formulate approaches and strategies for clients to transform.

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