



# CHCCSL003

Facilitate the  
counselling  
relationship  
process



# **CHCCSL003**

## **Facilitate the counselling relationship and process**

**Release 1**

**Learner Guide**

Aspire Version 1.1

## CHCSSL003 Facilitate the counselling relationship and process, Release 1

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# Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCCSL003 Facilitate the counselling relationship and process*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program.

## How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature	
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.	
Examples	These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.	
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.	
Callouts	Callouts reiterate key learning points to help students revise for their assessments.	
Weblinks	Weblinks provide learners with additional content to contextualise their learning and develop their understanding.	
Videos	Videos provide a visual reference of key concepts to aid comprehension and guide learner exploration. Each video is accessed by a QR code in the Learner Guide (or a button in the eBook version) for ease of access.	 
Glossary/margin definitions	Key terms are defined where they first appear to help consolidate understanding. A glossary of terms is provided at the end of the Learner Guide to assist learner revision of key concepts.	
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.	
Learning Checkpoints	There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.	
Case studies	Case studies are interspersed throughout the learning content to provide a workplace setting that contextualises key concepts.	



## Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

These skills are listed below:

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents</li> <li>• Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology</li> <li>• Interpreting key information in relevant documents</li> <li>• Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents</li> <li>• Communicating through written letters, email and online</li> <li>• Recording progress; reporting incidents</li> </ul>
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying instructions</li> <li>• Providing information</li> <li>• Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution</li> <li>• Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language</li> </ul>
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance</li> <li>• Interpreting measurements</li> </ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities</li> <li>• Managing your work and seeing how well you are going</li> <li>• Making goals for yourself at work</li> <li>• Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement</li> </ul>
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying problems</li> <li>• Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes</li> <li>• Reviewing the outcome</li> </ul>
Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas</li> <li>• Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something</li> <li>• Making suggestions to improve work</li> </ul>
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport</li> </ul>



Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning your workload and commitments</li> <li>• Implementing tasks</li> <li>• Completing work on time</li> <li>• Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks</li> </ul>
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and applying decision-making processes</li> <li>• Reviewing your behaviour and the impact of your decisions</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely</li> <li>• Accessing, organising and presenting information</li> <li>• Using equipment correctly and safely</li> </ul>

Note: Not every unit of competency will contain all foundation skills.

## What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Support clients to identify concerns	1A Assist the client to feel comfortable and express their concerns freely	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Explore the client's presenting issues and establish their nature and depth	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Identify and promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Support clients to identify their primary concerns in relation to the presenting issues and to prioritise concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1E Recognise indicators of client issues requiring referral and report or refer	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Support clients to work through concerns	2A Identify and work with uncertainty and ambivalence of clients	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Support clients to experience and process difficulties and discuss parallels and links in the client's experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Identify and implement interventions that have meaning for the client's immediate situation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Support the client to identify and use known and previously unknown strengths	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Explore perceptions of the client's feelings by reflecting back, clarification and review	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2F Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues and begin to identify ways of dealing with them	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2G Acknowledge and work with changes in the client's life as appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



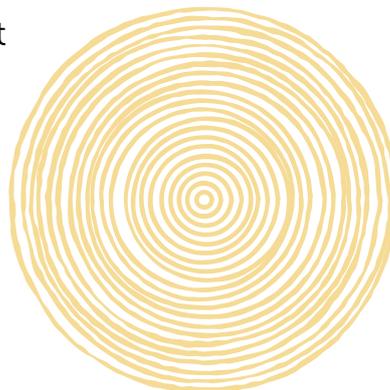
Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Monitor the counselling process	3A Monitor and review the value of the counselling process with clients and work on threats and disruptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Review your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between their hopes, expectations and reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Facilitate change at a pace the client can tolerate and assimilate	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending the current counselling	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3E Acknowledge, value and work with individual uncertainty in the counselling relationship	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3F Apply ethical codes of conduct in addressing counselling dilemmas	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 4 Bring the counselling process to an end	4A Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge change	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4B Use the ending process to enable the client to understand the nature of earlier issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4C Use boundaries to plan the structure and contract endings appropriately and support the client's autonomy	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4D Inform clients about any opportunities for further support and complete documentation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident





## Topic 1: Support clients to identify concerns

- 1A Assist the client to feel comfortable and express their concerns freely
- 1B Explore the client's presenting issues and establish their nature and depth
- 1C Identify and promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action
- 1D Support clients to identify their primary concerns in relation to the presenting issues and to prioritise concerns
- 1E Recognise indicators of client issues requiring referral and report or refer



# 1A

## Assist the client to feel comfortable and express their concerns freely

**To support and assist a person to identify their concerns, a relationship of trust needs to be fostered.**

Once trust has been established, the person will feel they can speak freely and be listened to without judgment. Creating an environment that encourages the person to tell their story enables the underlying and primary issues that need addressing to be identified. It takes time to build a trusting relationship and it is important that the person understands the legal and ethical guidelines that will be upheld during the counselling process, and how these underpin their own rights and the rights and responsibilities of the counsellor.

The five stages of a counselling session are as follows:

The stages of counselling sessions
1. Introduction and establishment of a relationship when encouraging the person to share their story
2. Hearing the person's story and exploring presenting issues
3. Identifying issues that require immediate action
4. Prioritising primary concerns and exploring options and plans for change
5. Concluding the session with appropriate referrals for the person's issues, if required

### Introduction and establishment of a relationship

**The introduction and establishment of a relationship is the first stage of a counselling session and may be referred to as the initial disclosure and relationship building.**

This is when a trusting relationship is created. Creating an environment that is comfortable and safe for the person to share their story is critical. It is also very important for the counsellor to stay with the perspective of the person to foster the trusting relationship.



Techniques for managing this stage of the session include:

- informing the person of legal and ethical considerations
- using communication techniques to build trust and rapport with the person.

### Video: 5 Stages Alignment - Counselling

Watch the following video to learn about and explore the initial stages and phases of counselling intervention: [aspirelr.link/yt-five-stages-counselling](https://aspirelr.link/yt-five-stages-counselling)



Visit the following website to learn about what to do before the first session:

[aspirelr.link/good-therapy-navigating-intake](https://aspirelr.link/good-therapy-navigating-intake)

For information on the practical considerations of the counselling process, visit:

[aspirelr.link/ncbi-counselling-considerations](https://aspirelr.link/ncbi-counselling-considerations)

For specific information about the therapeutic usage of space in the counselling process, visit: [aspirelr.link/counselling-process-space](https://aspirelr.link/counselling-process-space)

## Legal and ethical considerations

The establishment of a counselling relationship must be underpinned by legal and ethical considerations such as the human rights of the person, confidentiality, discrimination and the rights and responsibilities of all involved in the counselling process.

It is important at this stage that the person is informed of and understands their rights. This will help them understand that the environment in which they tell their story is safe, fair and legal.

Here is some more information about legal and ethical aspects to keep in mind:

### Human rights

It is important to advise the person of their human rights and that their value, regardless of their background, where they live, what they look like, think or believe, will be respected. They should be informed that human rights are based on principles of equality and respect and are shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They will be demonstrated by you providing fair treatment to them and enabling them to make choices about the counselling process they receive. Advising the person that their human rights will be upheld provides the foundation for building a trusting relationship.



### Privacy

When hearing a person’s story, you must always be aware of protecting and maintaining their privacy. You must protect confidential details and obtain the person’s consent if you wish to talk about their story with someone else. The person needs to know that the privacy laws that protect their story cover written, verbal, recorded or computer-stored material.

To read more about privacy, confidentiality and disclosure, you can visit:

- [aspirelr.link/aacqa-privacy-policy](https://aspirelr.link/aacqa-privacy-policy)
- [aspirelr.link/law-handbook-privacy-confidentiality](https://aspirelr.link/law-handbook-privacy-confidentiality)

### Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is part of respecting a person’s privacy and individual rights. In practice, confidentiality means not discussing an individual’s personal information unless they have given their consent for this to happen. Confidentiality applies to any personal information pertaining to the counselling process. The person needs to know that confidentiality, like privacy, applies to all written, verbal, recorded or computer-stored material.

### Disclosure of information

You need to inform the person that there are some circumstances when you are required to disclose information. These situations need to be explained so they understand your legal obligation. Situations including the following:

- The information is requested by a court of law.
- A person’s interests require disclosure and there is a serious risk which justifies breaching confidentiality; for example, risk of suicide, self-harm or harm to others.
- There is a duty to the public; for example, there is public threat or concern.
- The person has consented to the disclosure. This would occur if the person has given you permission to share a disclosure with another professional; for example, their doctor or a family member.

### Discrimination

**Discrimination** is never acceptable behaviour and is against the law. It is unlawful to discriminate against people based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability or impairment, marital status, sexual preference, or political or religious beliefs. When a person is being encouraged to tell their story it is important they understand that they will not be discriminated against in any way, and that it is your legal responsibility to ensure that non-discriminatory practice is upheld.

#### Discrimination

The act of excluding or treating a person differently based solely on an attribute such as disability, age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

### Mandatory reporting

When encouraging the person to share their story it is essential that they are informed of instances when you are mandated to file a report. Discussing your obligation to make the report may impact the person’s level of trust, but explain to them that you must prioritise their safety and the safety of others if this is at risk.

Mandatory reporting requires you to report known or suspected cases of abuse or neglect. While mainly applying to children, it can also apply to people living in residential care. The laws around who needs to report and in what circumstances vary slightly across each state and territory.



### Video: Privacy and confidentiality

Watch the following video on maintaining confidentiality and privacy when working with young people: [aspirelr.link/yt-young-people-confidentiality](https://aspirelr.link/yt-young-people-confidentiality)

Pay particular attention to the types of information that must be kept private.



### Video: What are human rights

For more information on what human rights are, watch the following video: [aspirelr.link/yt-what-are-human-rights](https://aspirelr.link/yt-what-are-human-rights)



For more information on how to build trust and confidentiality in the counselling environment, visit: [aspirelr.link/counselling-trust-confidentiality](https://aspirelr.link/counselling-trust-confidentiality)

## Rights and responsibilities of workers, employers and clients

**Everyone involved in the counselling process has rights and responsibilities they must fulfil to facilitate a positive outcome.**

In every service, the employer or service provider is responsible for the successful operation of the organisation. The employees, or support workers, must complete their work tasks to ensure the service runs efficiently.

Your primary responsibility when providing counselling within a service is to ensure the person's safety. The rights and responsibilities of a worker are outlined below:

Workers' rights	Workers' responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow policies and procedures to always work in a safe manner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A workplace free from harassment and discrimination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comply with duties of care and follow instructions carefully</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a grievance (complaint) process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be competent and work within their level of training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive wages in accordance with award rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be willing to learn and be trained in new skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear direction as to their duties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be punctual, courteous and respect cultural and social diversity</li> </ul>



## Employers' rights and responsibilities

Employers have rights and responsibilities to both workers and clients. Some of the rights and responsibilities of an employer or service provider include:

- providing a safe workplace
- ensuring that employees have all the skills, knowledge, training and qualifications required to carry out their role competently
- expecting certain levels and standards of performance from employees
- expecting employees to uphold all ethical and legal obligations that apply to their role.

## Individuals' rights and responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities of individuals receiving services need to be clearly communicated to them. Information about the rights and responsibilities of the people receiving services from a particular organisation or within a particular industry sector can be found in service standards, professional practice standards and organisational policies.

Here are some examples of the rights and responsibilities of a person receiving counselling services:

Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To be treated with respect and dignity</li><li>• To be consulted</li><li>• To be involved in the decision-making process. For example, clients must always provide informed consent prior to receiving counselling or treatments</li><li>• To have privacy and confidentiality respected</li><li>• To have the right to a complaints process</li></ul>
Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To supply the service with information needed for them to provide appropriate support</li><li>• To respect the rights of the person providing support</li><li>• To respect the privacy and dignity of the person providing support</li><li>• To notify the services of changes in support requirements</li><li>• To ensure their home is safe for support staff</li></ul>

For more information on the rights and responsibility of clients receiving counselling, visit: [aspirelr.link/clients-rights-responsibilities](https://aspirelr.link/clients-rights-responsibilities)



## Communication techniques to build trust and rapport

**To ensure that the person feels comfortable sharing their story, it is essential to create a safe psychological, emotional and physical space so that trust and rapport can be established.**

Relating to the person in an open and positive way and demonstrating compassion and understanding will help develop a positive counselling relationship. It is also important that the physical environment enhances communication by providing comfortable seating while allowing the person to choose where they sit.

Here are additional qualities that a counsellor should demonstrate in order to build trust and rapport:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Empathy</b></p>	<p><b>Empathy</b> The ability to understand, share and identify the feelings of others.</p>
<p>To demonstrate <b>empathy</b> you must be able to see things from the other person's point of view and understand the feelings of another person. When counselling, it is important to comprehend the challenges, thoughts and experiences of the person. This creates an empathetic environment which encourages the person to share their story.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Positive regard</b></p>	<p><b>Positive regard</b> Demonstrating value and respect towards a person regardless of their circumstances, behaviour or appearance.</p>
<p>In order to encourage the person to share their story, there must be a foundation of warmth and understanding.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Respect</b></p>	
<p>Demonstrating respect means treating the person with dignity, consideration and courtesy. Respect for a person sharing their story may be demonstrated by listening without judgment, without bias and allowing the person to freely express their thoughts and feelings without interruption.</p>	

### Video: 3 Quick rapport-building techniques

Watch the following video on how to build rapport with counselling clients:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-rapport-building-techniques](https://aspirelr.link/yt-rapport-building-techniques)



### Video: Communicate with empathy

Watch the following video on how to communicate with empathy:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-communicate-empathy](https://aspirelr.link/yt-communicate-empathy)

Pay particular attention to the ways you can tailor your communication to meet the needs of the other person.



### Video: Empathetic listening skills

The following video explains how to perform and use empathetic listening: [aspirelr.link/yt-empathetic-listening](https://aspirelr.link/yt-empathetic-listening)

Pay particular attention to what empathetic listening entails and what it does not.



## Stay with the person's perspective

The perspective and context are the conditions, circumstances and/or the setting, which provide the framework within that the story is told.

When listening to a person's story, it is vital at this stage to stay with their perspective and context. The perspective and context of the person may include aspects such as abuse, homelessness, isolation, disempowerment and/or disconnection from family members. It is critical to consider the perspective and context of the person because it is within this contextual environment that counselling will take place to address issues and encourage changes. If the whole picture is not considered, the focus of the counselling may be too narrow, and all aspects of the person may not be addressed in the assessment and intervention.

## Example

### Staying with their perspective to help them express their concerns freely

Jeremy is a young man who has come to Sarah for counselling. Jeremy appears uncomfortable and hesitant when he arrives. Sarah smiles and offers him a choice of places to sit and tells him to adjust the chair if he wants. She offers him a cold drink and chats with him about his trip to her office.

Once Jeremy is settled, Sarah begins by explaining his rights to him. She tells him that legally and ethically she must ensure that he is not discriminated against in any way, and that she is obligated to protect the privacy and confidentiality of his story. She also explains to Jeremy that she is not there to judge what he shares but there are certain circumstances when she would be required to breach confidentiality. Sarah explains those circumstances to him, makes sure that he understands them and informs him that if a breach of confidentiality is required, she will tell him first. Jeremy relaxes when he realises his privacy will be protected and he feels safe to share his story with Sarah.



Jeremy starts by telling Sarah that he has a difficult time managing his anger. He says he has been living on the streets for some time and tells Sarah about the circumstances that contributed to his homelessness. Sarah listens to his story with empathy and compassion to understand the context of Jeremy's story. By understanding the context of Jeremy's issues, Sarah can develop a counselling approach that will suit his needs. Sarah states what counselling interventions she is trained in, and she explains how these can assist Jeremy with his concerns and issues. Sarah confirms with Jeremy if they are interventions he would be interested in to address his concerns. Jeremy says he is interested in trying anything new that might help him with his anger issues.

## Practice Task 1

### Question 1

Provide two techniques that may be used to foster a trusting relationship.

### Question 2

Provide two reasons why explaining a person's human rights to them can contribute to them feeling comfortable to express their concerns.



**Question 3**

List two examples of the context of a person's story.

**Question 4**

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Suspected or known child abuse are the only cases that must be reported under mandatory reporting laws.	Yes / No
b. Protecting a person's privacy and maintaining their confidentiality means protecting all written, verbal, recorded or computer-stored material that relates to the person and their story.	Yes / No
c. Disclosure means sharing the person's story with your supervisor, without their consent, when you are finding it difficult to understand their perspective.	Yes / No
d. Clients and workers have a right to a safe workplace.	Yes / No
e. Clients are responsible for supplying accurate information that allows workers and organisations to provide the support required.	Yes / No

**Question 5**

List three responsibilities workers have.



**Question 6**

Describe two actions counsellors can take to follow the client's story and stay with their perspective.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their answer to the question.

# 1B

## Explore the client's presenting issues and establish their nature and depth

**The second key stage of a counselling session is listening to the person's story and exploring presenting issues.**

In order to explore the person's issues and determine the nature and depth of the issues, you must be aware of interconnections between the concerns. Presenting issues rarely stand alone and there can be many factors that contribute to and impact the issue.

Understanding a person's story requires the art of listening. It involves listening without judgment and being aware of other dimensions of the story, not just the words you are hearing. Listening for key words, themes, contextual indicators and observing body language can help identify the possibility of underlying issues. For example, a person may seek counselling regarding a sleep disorder. When telling their story they may mention relationship conflicts, substance misuse or traumatic events that may indicate there are deeper underlying concerns contributing to the presenting issue.

To determine the nature and depth of the underlying concerns, you must be aware of **interconnections** between the concerns and the presenting issue to build a more complete and in-depth picture of the person's story.

### Interconnection

A link between two or more things that are related to each other.

## Techniques for managing this stage

To ensure that you explore the nature and depth of presenting issues, you need to use various listening and critical thinking techniques.

Techniques for managing this stage include the following:

- Listen to the story in the context of the person's present life and situation.
- Consider the presenting issue as one part of a whole.
- Consider how the presenting issue may link to deeper underlying concerns.
- Be aware of all stressors the person is experiencing.
- Listen for contributing environmental factors, and emotional, behavioural and social issues which are impacting the person.

## Video: Contracting and ending a first counselling session



Watch the first part (up to 10:06) of the following video which role-plays a first counselling session: [aspirelr.link/ending-initial-session](https://aspirelr.link/ending-initial-session)

Pay particular attention to how the client's issues are identified and explored.

### Example

#### Explore the client's presenting issues and establish their nature and depth

Beth has come to Patricia for counselling regarding stress and anxiety. Beth tells Patricia her story, describing her feelings of chronic anxiety which she feels powerless to control. Patricia encourages her to talk about the current circumstances of her life and learns that Beth lost both parents in the last two years and is caring for a younger brother. Beth tells her that she feels unprepared for being a carer and that she and her brother are struggling financially. Patricia notices that Beth uses negative words when referring to her caregiver skills and says she feels as if she is failing her parents because she is struggling to provide care for her brother.

Patricia listens to Beth's story and considers the link between Beth's current life situation and the presenting issue of chronic anxiety. Patricia also notes the various stressors that Beth is experiencing and considers the possibility that grief, guilt and low self-esteem are contributing factors in her chronic stress and anxiety.

## Practice Task 2

### Question 1

Which of the following steps encourage exploration of presenting issues and identification of any underlying issues? Tick all that apply.

- Listen to the story in the context of the person's present life and situation.
- Listen for contributing environmental factors, and emotional, behavioural and social issues which are impacting the person.
- Consider the presenting issue in isolation.
- Listen to the story without bringing environmental factors or the person's emotional issues into it.
- Be aware of all stressors the person is experiencing.



**Question 2**

Briefly outline two techniques you could use to help determine the depth and nature of underlying issues.

# 1C

## Identify and promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action

**The third stage in the counselling session process is identification of issues that require immediate action.**

Issues that require immediate action are of the highest priority and urgency as they may indicate that crisis intervention is needed to ensure the person's safety and/or the safety of others. It is critical to identify and prioritise these situations, and your ability to recognise signs of distress can enable you to manage the situation and take action quickly.

### Identify issues and situations

**The person's safety is the primary concern and, as a counsellor, it is critical that you recognise when a person's issue or situation is one that requires immediate action.**

Indicators that a person is in a situation requiring immediate attention may include:

- neglect
- abuse
- risk of harm
- risk of self-harm
- urgent physical issues such as sickness, deteriorating medical conditions
- mental health disorders which have deteriorated
- homelessness
- family/domestic violence.

#### **Video: The science of risk factors**

Watch the following video on risk factors in people's lives:

[aspirelr.link/yt-science-risk-factors](https://aspirelr.link/yt-science-risk-factors)

Pay particular attention to the different risk factors that exist in all domains of a person's life.



### **Neglect**

A counsellor must be able to identify physical, emotional and behavioural signs of neglect. Whether intentional or unintentional, neglect occurs when the person is not provided with basic necessities.



Here is further information about neglect:

Examples of neglect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not providing sufficient food or drink</li> <li>• Not spending time with the person and leaving them alone for prolonged periods</li> <li>• Inadequate provision of clothing or personal items</li> <li>• Unwillingness to allow for adequate medical, dental or personal care</li> <li>• Inappropriate use of medication; for example, overdosing a person so they sleep for longer periods of the day</li> <li>• Leaving the person in the same continence aid for an entire day</li> </ul>
Indicators of neglect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight loss, dehydration, poor skin quality</li> <li>• Person appears unkempt: the same clothing worn every day of the week; loose or baggy clothing; clothing in poor state; hair unwashed; untrimmed nails; poor hygiene</li> <li>• No dentures, hearing aids, mobility aids or glasses</li> <li>• Skin burns from urine being in contact with the skin for prolonged hours</li> </ul>

## Abuse

### Intentional abuse

When a person deliberately causes harm to another person.

### Unintentional abuse

Abuse that occurs through ignorance or other unintentional reasons, harming the person with care needs.

Abuse can be **intentional** or **unintentional**.

Observation and getting to know the person you are counselling can assist you in identifying indicators of abuse. Abuse is illegal and you have a duty of care to report all forms of abuse as soon as you become aware of it. When you suspect abuse has occurred you must act quickly to ensure action is taken immediately to prevent further abuse from happening or escalating.

Here are some examples of abuse:

<b>Physical abuse</b>	This is when a person is being physically assaulted. This can occur through physical acts of violence and indicators might include physical pain or injuries. Physical acts of violence include hitting, slapping, punching, pulling hair, spitting at the person, pinching, biting, twisting their arm or wrist, physical restraint such as being tied to a bed or chair, confinement to a room and using objects to hurt the person such as throwing rocks or using a strap.
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	Unwanted or uninvited sexual contact, language or exploitative behaviour by another person is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse includes sexual harassment, indecent assault and rape. This abuse needs to be reported. Examples of indicators of sexual abuse are withdrawal, disturbed sleep patterns, nightmares, agitation, fear, difficulty sitting or walking, and unexplained bleeding from the genital areas.



<b>Financial abuse</b>	This form of abuse is not always easy to identify and it can include a person's money, property or assets being mishandled or taken and used without their consent. It can also include situations where a person with impaired cognitive abilities has given consent without truly understanding what their consent means.
<b>Psychological/ emotional abuse</b>	This form of abuse involves ongoing intimidating behaviour that is designed to disempower a person. Psychological and emotional abuse can be both verbal and nonverbal. It can include belittling the person, threats and withdrawal of affection, manipulation and coercive control. Some indicators of this form of abuse are a sense of hopelessness, fearfulness, helplessness, withdrawal and reluctance to make decisions.
<b>Social abuse</b>	This occurs when another person behaves in ways to reduce or restrict a person's social contact with others. It can include stopping a person from being involved in activities with others and/or preventing contact with friends and family, resulting in social isolation. Some indicators of this form of abuse are displays of grieving, low self-esteem, passive behaviour and sadness.

For more information on indicators of abuse and neglect in children, visit:  
[aspirelr.link/child-abuse-indicators](https://aspirelr.link/child-abuse-indicators)

For more information on the abuse and neglect of older people, visit:  
[aspirelr.link/elder-abuse](https://aspirelr.link/elder-abuse)

## Risk of harm

### Identifying and responding to individuals at risk of harm can be challenging and stressful.

There may be a risk of suicide or self-harm, or violence from another source. Furthermore, it can be difficult to assess the risk because the person concerned is reluctant to reveal the true extent of their circumstances.

**Risk of harm** is highest among people who are socially and politically disadvantaged. These groups include:

- people living in poverty
- people who have a mental illness
- First Nations Australians and refugees
- people who are transgender and/or identify as LGBTQI+
- people with disabilities
- rural Australians.

**Risk of harm**  
 When there is a direct risk of physical harm to the person or others.



People in vulnerable groups have poorer physical and mental health and wellbeing, and poorer quality of life indicators. They are at greater risk of being abused and neglected and are in the higher risk category for attempting or dying by suicide.

For more information on risk and protective factors that can help counsellors select appropriate interventions visit: [aspirelr.link/samhsa-risk-protective-factors](https://aspirelr.link/samhsa-risk-protective-factors)

## Risk of self-harm

Self-harm is the act of deliberately causing damage or injury to oneself. For example, this can include cutting, head banging, skin picking or other behaviours.

Sometimes self-harm can be associated with emotional or social turmoil or personal challenges and sometimes it is associated with particular disabilities or conditions. The most serious manifestation of self-harm is suicide.

It is rare for people to immediately disclose any self-harm they are doing in initial counselling appointments, because trust needs to be established first. However, where a person does disclose self-harm, the counsellor can encourage them to participate in the identification and exploration of their issues and discuss the goals of the counselling session with them. In order to identify their issues and determine their needs, the following techniques may be used:

How to identify a person's needs and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine how often the self-harm is occurring. If it is only occurring periodically, such as once a month as opposed to many times a day, risk needs to be determined for the client.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask direct questions about their immediate needs, such as: "What do you need now to make you feel safer?"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine their support network; for example, ask if they have anyone among their friends or family who can provide immediate support.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information about services and sources of support they can access.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a safety plan together so the person knows what to do if they start to become overwhelmed by a situation or their thoughts and feelings.</li> </ul>

### Video: Counselling clients who self-harm

Watch the following video on counselling clients who self-harm: [aspirelr.link/yt-counselling-self-harm](https://aspirelr.link/yt-counselling-self-harm)\*



*\* Please note that this video clip about counselling is from the USA. The USA has a very different accreditation process for counsellors, licenced therapists and psychologists. Here in Australia, counsellors are 'not accredited or allowed' to diagnose mental health disorders or use formal psychological treatment plans. However, the information is a good overview for Australian counsellors about self-harm, suicide and associated issues.*

## Urgent physical issues such as sickness or deteriorating medical conditions

### **Pay attention to a client's physical health, not just their mental health, when attending an appointment.**

If a client who attends an appointment is visibly sick or has a medical condition which has deteriorated, it is important for the counsellor to suggest they see their treating GP. Some clients might be worried or scared about receiving bad news about their medical condition so avoid regular check-ups and reviews with their doctor.

Signs that a person requires medical attention due to sickness can include:

- fever, body aches and chills
- sudden or unexplained weight loss or gain
- shortness of breath
- severe chest, abdominal or pelvic pain
- experiencing confusion or changes in mood
- loss of balance or blurry vision.

### **Mental health disorders which have deteriorated**

Being able to identify whether a client's mental health disorder has deteriorated is vital to ensuring their ongoing health and wellbeing. Indications that a person with a mental health disorder requires an urgent review of symptoms and psychiatric medications include:

- signs that a disorder is getting worse. For example; hearing voices, dissociating (zoning out), disengaging with social supports and work, staying in bed for longer, more disturbed sleep and nightmares
- the person's usual medications not working as well as before
- the person experiencing more emotional distress and crisis than previously.

You can assist clients with the above issues by suggesting they see their GP, treating psychiatrist and/or psychologist. Counsellors are trained to address basic mental health concerns and issues around mental health wellbeing. However, clients with severe and ongoing mental health disorders – such as bipolar, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – require complex and medical interventions to assist with their recovery. These can only be provided by doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists.

## Homelessness

It is common for clients who are experiencing housing and family instability to suddenly become homeless. These clients need urgent assistance from a homelessness service. You can assist by providing them with a phone number for the service in your local area which can best help their immediate needs.

## Family violence

Family and domestic violence can potentially affect any type of family regardless of socioeconomic status, geographical location, race or ethnicity of family members or education level. Family violence includes:

- physical assaults
- threats – threats to harm children and pets are common
- manipulation and coercive control
- emotional and psychological abuse
- gaslighting and verbal abuse
- financial abuse
- sexual assault.

The Duluth Wheel of Violence further outlines different types of family violence an individual may experience, including physical, sexual and non-contact violence.



The Duluth Wheel of Violence is sourced from [www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Duluth\\_Wheel\\_of\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Duluth_Wheel_of_Violence.pdf)



Here are some examples for each type of violence shown in the Duluth Wheel of Violence.

<b>Using coercion and threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt you</li> <li>• Threatening to leave you, to suicide, to report you to welfare</li> <li>• Making you drop charges</li> <li>• Making you do illegal things</li> </ul>
<b>Using intimidation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making you afraid by using looks, gestures</li> <li>• Smashing things</li> <li>• Destroying your property</li> <li>• Abusing pets</li> <li>• Displaying weapons</li> </ul>
<b>Using emotional abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting you down</li> <li>• Making you feel bad about yourself</li> <li>• Calling you names</li> <li>• Making you think you are crazy</li> <li>• Playing mind games</li> <li>• Humiliating you</li> <li>• Making you feel guilty</li> </ul>
<b>Using isolation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling what you do, who you see and talk to, what you read, where you go</li> <li>• Limiting your outside involvement</li> <li>• Using jealousy to justify actions</li> <li>• Not letting you see your family or friends</li> </ul>
<b>Minimising, denying and blaming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making light of the abuse and not taking your concerns about it seriously</li> <li>• Saying the abuse did not happen</li> <li>• Shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour</li> <li>• Saying you caused it</li> </ul>
<b>Using children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making you feel guilty about the children</li> <li>• Using the children to relay messages</li> <li>• Using visitation to harass you</li> <li>• Threatening to take the children away</li> <li>• Threatening to harm children</li> </ul>
<b>Using privilege</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating you like a servant</li> <li>• Making all the big decisions</li> <li>• Acting like the 'master of the castle'</li> <li>• Being the one to define men's and women's roles</li> </ul>



<b>Use economic abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing you from getting or keeping a job</li> <li>• Making you ask for money</li> <li>• Giving you an allowance</li> <li>• Taking your money</li> <li>• Not letting you know about or have access to family income</li> </ul>
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Sourced from [www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Duluth\\_Wheel\\_of\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Duluth_Wheel_of_Violence.pdf)

Statistically, most family violence perpetrators are men. It can take around seven occurrences (instances of abuse) for a woman to be ready to leave her male partner/husband. One reason for this is because of the **ambivalence** that victims wrestle with.

**Ambivalence**

Both good and bad feelings and thoughts about the situation and the perpetrator.

Many women who are experiencing family violence have both negative and positive feelings for their partner/perpetrator of family violence. This is important to know when you work with them, because you will hear contrasting feelings and thoughts about their partner and situation. Another barrier to family violence victims leaving perpetrators is fear of the unknown, especially in relation to:

- where they will go
- what access to money they will have
- issues of stability for children
- threats from the perpetrator to children, pets and property if they do attempt to leave
- what social supports they will have access to
- who can help them in the short, medium and long term
- navigating court systems
- being stalked or abused by perpetrator/s.

<b>Tips for working respectfully with a person experiencing family violence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always believe any disclosure of family violence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't interrogate them with too many questions; allow them to speak about it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use family violence risk assessment tools if your organisation has them. You can also search the internet for these tools to give you and the victim information about the risks to their safety.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a safety plan which addresses staying in the home as well as leaving the home.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer the client to a local women's or domestic violence service, if they are ready to explore options around leaving.</li> </ul>

To help you know what to plan for with the person, you can visit:

[aspirelr.link/safesteps-safety-planning](https://aspirelr.link/safesteps-safety-planning)

The following websites are resources for counsellors and community service workers responding to family violence:

- [aspirelr.link/working-in-family-violence](https://aspirelr.link/working-in-family-violence)
- [aspirelr.link/identify-respond-family-violence](https://aspirelr.link/identify-respond-family-violence)

## Example

### Identify and promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action

Simon presents with severe emotional distress and, when telling Thomas his story, he shares information about life events that have contributed to a history of self-harm. Simon displays signs of agitation and anxiety and expresses a fear that if he becomes overwhelmed by a situation, he may self-harm again.

Thomas recognises that Simon's personal safety is his first concern and asks him if he has friends or family who can provide immediate support if it is needed. Together they develop a safety plan so that Simon will know what to do if he becomes overwhelmed by a situation or his feelings. Thomas then outlines a counselling plan to address Simon's self-harm issues.

## Practice Task 3

### Question 1

Identify five indicators that a person is in a situation that requires immediate attention.



**Question 2**

Provide at least two examples of neglect.

**Question 3**

Briefly outline at least two techniques that can be used to manage this stage of the counselling session.

# 1D

## Support clients to identify their primary concerns in relation to the presenting issues and to prioritise concerns

**The fourth stage in the counselling session process is when primary concerns are prioritised, goals are set and a plan for change is developed.**

Once situations requiring immediate attention have been addressed, the counsellor can support the person to identify their primary concerns in relation to their presenting issues.

### Identify primary concerns

**Primary concerns may be abuse, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, family relationships or grief.**

A person may seek counselling for issues of anger management, self-harm behaviours, emotional issues, grief and loss, or family difficulties. As a counsellor, you need to be able to look for underpinning concerns that contribute to the issue. For example, a person presenting with emotional difficulties may have a difficult family situation which is contributing to the emotional issues they are facing.

To identify the primary concerns, you need to reflect on the person's story. Make sure you have understood the context of their story and, if not, clarify it with the person. The context of the story will give you insight into the issues that contribute to the primary concerns.

When supporting a person to identify the primary concerns you may need to use a variety of techniques to draw out information. Two of these are outlined below:

#### Lists of goals, needs and preferences

When people tell their story they will usually outline some needs, wants, goals, desires and preferences they wish to have addressed in the counselling relationship. You can use questioning techniques such as closed and open-ended questions to more clearly identify their goals, needs and preferences.

### Advanced empathy

Advanced empathy can be used to:

- identify concerns that may only be hinted at
- identify key words or sentences in the person's story that may indicate a concern
- identify themes. For example, a person may not explicitly say they would like more social support from friends or family; however, you may be hearing a lot of words and topics which infer they are struggling with loneliness or social struggles.

Using advanced empathy means reading between the lines.

Visit the following website for information on using advanced empathy to support people experiencing psychosis: [aspirelr.link/advanced-empathy](https://aspirelr.link/advanced-empathy)

### Video: Advanced empathy

Watch this video to learn more about advanced empathy and listening skills: [aspirelr.link/yt-advanced-empathy](https://aspirelr.link/yt-advanced-empathy)



## Options and planning for change

Once the primary concerns are identified, clarified and prioritised, it is necessary to set goals and build strategies that can address the concerns.

This step requires collaboration between the counsellor and the person and may include:

- reflecting on the person's goals, needs, preferences and desires
- rephrasing and clarifying the person's statements
- encouraging the person to see the bigger picture
- defining steps required to meet a goal
- exploring options for reaching a goal
- encouraging the person to take responsibility for achieving a goal.

It is important in this stage that people are supported appropriately and effectively to fully understand the link between their presenting issues and their primary concerns.

Here are some techniques that can be used to manage this stage.

**To manage the fourth counselling stage, ensure:**

- concerns are clearly defined
- concerns are prioritised
- goals are defined and manageable
- goals are linked to the bigger picture
- objectives are clearly outlined.

## Example

### Identifying primary concerns in relation to presenting issues and prioritising concerns

Jason comes to Zahra for counselling about his feelings of being overwhelmed and worthless. He tells Zahra that he feels tired all the time and is slowly withdrawing from his friends and family. Zahra asks Jason, “If you could change or improve something in your life, what would it be?” Jason thinks about this for a while and tells Zahra that he wishes he had a steady job so he could afford a permanent place to live. At the moment he only gets bits and pieces of work, and sometimes ends up sleeping rough. Zahra talks with him about his situation and realises that the issues he has presented with are linked to the primary concern of homelessness. Zahra prioritises Jason’s concern and works with him to secure affordable housing. Zahra also contacts an agency that can provide Jason with steady financial support which will enable him to afford a permanent place to live.

## Practice Task 4

### Question 1

Provide two techniques you could use to identify a person’s primary concern.



**Question 2**

Identify two ways you could set goals and build strategies to address the person's concerns.

# 1E

## Recognise indicators of client issues requiring referral and report or refer

**At this time, the counsellor may make the decision to refer the person for more appropriate support, or ask the client when they would like an appointment for another session.**

In any case, there are legal, ethical and organisational requirements and obligations that must be upheld.

The processes and protocols of all service organisations must be in line with relevant legislation and meet basic ethical requirements. Counsellors should be familiar with legislation that relates to their work and be guided by these in their work.

Counsellors should also be familiar with ethical guidelines and codes of practice and how these impact areas of work such as communication, confidentiality and work role boundaries.

### Legal responsibilities

**There are various legal and ethical responsibilities that must be upheld in a counselling service.**

Many of these legal responsibilities were explained to the client at the commencement of the counselling session. However, depending on how the session progressed, various legal responsibilities may need to be highlighted to the client once again.

The following legal responsibilities and obligations may require further action:

#### Legal responsibilities and obligations include:

- abiding by codes of conduct
- preventing any form of discrimination
- meeting duty-of-care requirements
- mandatory reporting
- maintaining clear practitioner–client boundaries
- upholding a person’s right to privacy, confidentiality and disclosure
- discussing rights and responsibilities of workers, employers and client



Legal responsibilities and obligations include:
• upholding the person’s human rights
• ensuring appropriate records management
• explaining work role responsibilities and limitations
• ensuring workplace health and safety.

### Codes of conduct

**Code of conduct**  
A set of rules that informs employees how to act in a workplace.

A **code of conduct** should promote the welfare of all clients by protecting their rights and ensuring ethical practices are followed.

Codes of conduct may vary between community services workplaces; however, most community services will have a code of conduct that promotes ethical behaviour, accountability, transparent sharing of information, bestowing dignity and respect, and upholding confidentiality.

All actions taken by the counsellor must adhere to the organisation’s code of conduct.

### Discrimination

It is a legal and ethical requirement that you do not discriminate against any client for any reason.

It is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of:

- age
- disability or impairment
- political beliefs
- gender
- marital status
- religious beliefs.
- ethnicity
- sexual preference

To do so can mean that you are breaching codes of conduct and codes of ethics. Your organisation should investigate any alleged act of direct or indirect discrimination and you could face disciplinary measures from the organisation. If you abide by codes of conduct and ethics, it means you are working within the scope of your role.

### Duty of care

**Duty of care**  
A moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other persons.

**Duty of care** describes the legal obligation that individuals and organisations have to anticipate and act on possible causes of injury and illness that may exist in their work environment or as a result of their actions.

A person or organisation must do everything they can to remove or minimise the possible cause of harm. Harm can encompass physical harm, injury or illness and also psychological harm or injury.



As a counsellor, it is your legal duty to take reasonable care to predict any harm that may be caused by your actions or inactions.

**At the close of the session, it is critical to assess:**

- the person's level of distress and degree of risk to themselves or someone else
- the person's safety when returning to their environment
- if information needs to be shared or reported
- if emergency services are required
- if you need to share the client's information with your supervisor for further advice.

**Video: Contracting and ending a first counselling session**

Watch the second part (from 10:06) of the following video which role-plays a first counselling session: [aspirelr.link/yt-ending-initial-session](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aspirelr.link/yt-ending-initial-session)

Pay particular attention to how the session is ended.



## Human rights

All your practice as a counsellor must align with promoting and protecting the human rights of the person. You can do this by being familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth).

It is important to understand that some client groups are more vulnerable to human rights abuses than others, such as:

- First Nations Australians
- people with disabilities
- asylum seekers
- people experiencing poverty.
- migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds

If you have any concerns that your client may be experiencing human rights violations, it is worth bringing this up with your supervisor. You may also need to refer or contact external services and agencies, with your client's consent, to ensure their human rights are being upheld. For example:

- advocacy services
- the Australian Human Rights Commission.

If you work with high legal and ethical standards in your practice, this will also mean that you are protecting and honouring the human rights of your clients.

## Mandatory reporting

Where required, mandatory reporting responsibilities must be addressed at the conclusion of the session. At the beginning of the counselling session, the person was informed of instances when you, as the counsellor, are mandated to file a report to a government agency. If there are concerns that must be reported, you should inform the person at the end of the session what these concerns are, why they must be reported and who they need to be reported to.

## Practitioner–client boundaries

It is important that the distinction between being a professional and a friend is not blurred. For example, the person may ask you to do something that is outside of your role or might suggest social contact. Breaching boundaries is also a breach of trust and causes a conflict of interest between you and the client. It can damage the counselling relationship and undermine the effectiveness of the counselling service.

At the end of the session, the practitioner–client relationship and the boundaries that must be respected need to be clearly explained. It can be helpful to provide clear examples to illustrate boundaries, such as you cannot connect online or be ‘friends’ on social media.

## Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure

**Sometimes, issues around privacy and disclosure need to be discussed at the end of the counselling session.**

At the beginning of the counselling session, the person must be informed of the privacy, confidentiality and information disclosure obligations that apply to them.

However, if at the end of the session you, as the counsellor, deem that a portion of information must be disclosed, you must explain your legal obligations for disclosure. If there is information you would like to share, but are not legally obliged to share, you must at this time obtain consent from the person for disclosure.

## Records management

As a counsellor, you have a responsibility to document information gathered in the session. It must be collated in an accurate and secure manner to ensure all records are managed according to organisational procedures and guidelines. Policies and procedures for maintaining accurate and up-to-date counselling notes are based on legislative requirements of privacy and confidentiality. Session notes should be written as soon as possible after the end of the session to ensure accuracy.

Further information for general guidelines on documentation can be found below:



<b>Accuracy and clarity</b>	Session records must be accurate and written in a way that can be clearly understood by others. Always check what has been written to make sure it is clear and that the report includes the name, signature, and the date and time it was written.
<b>Objectivity</b>	Write only facts about what is seen, heard or done. Avoid personal opinions and feelings, and illustrate points with factual descriptions of behaviour. If all the facts about a situation are not clear, then make sure this is stated and do not infer that more is known than really is. If reporting what someone else has said, use direct quotes as much as possible.
<b>Language</b>	Use bias-free language and a neutral tone as far as possible. Make suggestions, rather than absolute statements. Avoid using clichéd or emotive language and slang. Remember that the person may read the report.
<b>Completeness</b>	Session reports should only contain relevant information. This may include both positive and negative information and include notes about behavioural changes or observed indicators of risk.
<b>Timeliness</b>	You should write your reports as soon as possible after the session to ensure accuracy and to make sure the person's records are kept as up to date as possible. Record the date you are making the entry first and then the date of the event, if it differs from the date of writing the notes.
<b>Alterations</b>	Any alterations made to your records should be done neatly and initialled. Do not conceal them with liquid paper. Never change what someone else has written.

## Rights and responsibilities

### **When concluding the counselling session, clients need to be made aware of your obligations and of their rights and responsibilities.**

Clients have the right to choose any counsellor or practitioner who may be available to them. They have the right to choose which therapeutic intervention they feel will help them. They have the right to choose goals the therapeutic relationship will focus on, and they have the right to change them without notice.

Clients also have the right to understand the organisation's complaints processes if they are unsatisfied with any part of the counselling they have received. Clients have a right to withdraw any informed consent they have given for the counselling process at any stage of therapy.

They have a right to work with a counselling professional who has a suitable level of training to meet their needs in the professional therapeutic space. Therefore, if you do not have the training to meet their needs you must state that to them and offer referral to an appropriate professional who can meet those needs.



## Work role responsibilities and limitations

If you step outside these boundaries you may cause harm to people who receive services and you may also risk legal action for damages against you and your employer. Understanding legal and ethical responsibilities and limitations protects the people you provide support services to and protects yourself, your employer and your colleagues.

The key source of information that sets out your role and responsibilities is your job description. When a job description is developed for a particular role or position in community services, the employing organisation will check relevant legislation and service standards, as well as organisational policies, to make sure that the role description meets these requirements. Your employer has a responsibility to ensure that you have all the skills, knowledge, training and qualifications required to carry out your role competently.

Organisational policies and procedures are also sources of information about the responsibilities and limitations of your role, which must be followed.

## Workplace health and safety

Work health and safety (WHS) laws are based on duty-of-care principles applied specifically to places of work.

When counselling, depending on where the service is delivered, WHS obligations may apply to the service where you work, the home of the person receiving counselling, offices, residential facilities and other buildings owned or rented by your service.

As a counsellor, you have legal responsibilities to workplace health and safety and obligations to promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action. When counselling, it is important to always consider the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the person.

## Make a referral

At the end of the session, it may become clear that the counselling service is unable to provide all the assistance a person requires.

In these situations, a referral to another service or agency may be necessary.

Indicators that a referral is required
• The boundaries of the counsellor's role may restrict the actions that are required.
• The counsellor does not have the expertise or competence to provide the assistance required.
• The qualification level of the counsellor does not allow them to offer the service.
• The person would benefit from the advice of another health professional.



## Example

### Making a referral

Prisha is a counsellor who specialises in couples' counselling and helping families with parenting issues. Today, Hans has come to see Prisha to discuss his relationship issues with his ex-partner, who is the mother of his seven-year-old child. Hans outlines the difficulties he has been having recently with his ex-partner. One of the issues between them is whether their child has autism. Hans says he would like to get their child tested to determine if they have autism or not, and he asks if Prisha knows of a psychologist who could do this. Prisha explains that she could refer him to a clinical psychologist who works with children, and who also shares Prisha's office with her. She gives Hans the details for him to contact the clinical psychologist.

## Techniques for managing this stage

When concluding a counselling session, there are several techniques that can be used. They may include paraphrasing and reflection as described below.

### Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves summarising what you have heard in your own words. This is done to check your understanding of what has been said, and confirms that the message was received as intended. When paraphrasing, you restate what the person has just said in fewer words, by choosing the most important details.

### Reflecting

Reflecting on counselling skills and the person's requirements can determine whether a referral to another health professional or service is needed.

### Observing

Observing a person's body language and behaviour can help assess WHS risk indicators relating to the level of a person's emotional, physical or psychological distress.

## Video: Basic counselling skills – paraphrasing and summarising

Watch the following video on encouraging, paraphrasing and summarising:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-paraphrasing-summarising](https://aspirelr.link/yt-paraphrasing-summarising)





## Example

### Recognise indicators of client issues requiring referral and report or refer

Jennifer has been counselling Robert, who has come to her regarding issues that stem from an abusive home environment. He feels ashamed and guilty that he has not come to counselling before now and is worried that Jennifer may think he is weak. Jennifer reassures Robert that she will uphold her legal obligation to treat Robert without judgment or discrimination and observes that Robert appears relieved and more at ease.

However, because of the nature of Robert's abuse, Jennifer does not feel competent to continue counselling him. She discusses her concerns with Robert and they decide that he should be referred to another service more suited to his needs.

Jennifer asks Robert for permission to share his story and details with the new service and Robert signs the consent form. Before Robert leaves the session, Jennifer upholds her duty-of-care obligations by assessing Robert to ensure that the session has not caused him psychological harm. Jennifer is confident that any distress that Robert displayed while sharing his story has been managed and Robert is emotionally safe to leave the session.

## Practice Task 5

### Question 1

Suggest two ways duty of care can be demonstrated at the end of a counselling session.



### Question 2

List two aspects of the person that need to be taken into consideration when upholding WHS obligations while closing a counselling session.

### Question 3

Provide two examples of situations that a person may need a referral.

### Question 4

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Stepping outside your work role boundaries may cause harm to people who receive services.	Yes / No
b. Once informed consent is given, clients cannot refuse to participate in selected therapeutic interventions.	Yes / No
c. Employers are responsible for ensuring that you have all the skills, knowledge, training and qualifications required to carry out your role competently.	Yes / No
d. Connecting on social media as 'friends' is acceptable in the client-practitioner relationship.	Yes / No
e. Alterations to client records should be done with liquid paper to ensure neatness and clarity.	Yes / No



**Question 5**

List two actions you can take to ensure any human rights violations or discrimination being experienced by a client are overcome.

**Question 6**

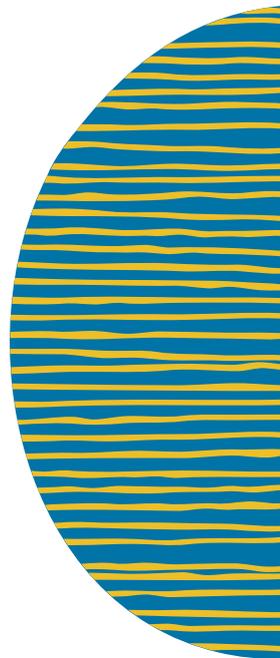
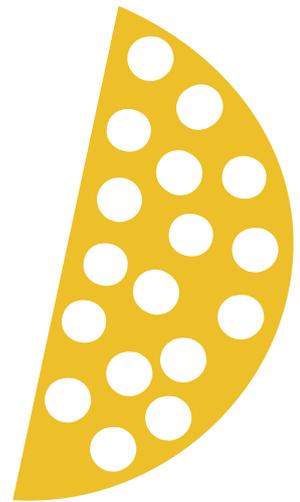
Which of the following actions demonstrate adherence to a code of conduct? Tick all that apply.

- Insisting on therapeutic interventions for clients.
- Showing accountability for own actions.
- Sharing information with other service providers without informed consent.
- Treating clients with dignity and respect.
- Keeping client information confidential.



## Summary

- Build a trusting relationship with the person to encourage them to tell their story in an environment that is comfortable and safe.
- The counselling relationship must be underpinned by legal and ethical considerations that must be upheld and demonstrated in the counselling session.
- To determine the nature and depth of the underlying concerns, you must be aware of interconnections between the concerns and the presenting issue and build a more complete and in-depth picture of the person's story.
- The person's safety is the primary concern and, as a counsellor, it is critical that you recognise when a person's issue or situation is one that requires immediate action.
- Once situations requiring immediate attention have been addressed, the counsellor can support the person to identify their primary concerns.
- The processes and protocols of all service organisations must be in line with relevant legislation and meet basic ethical requirements. Counsellors should be familiar with legislation that relates to their work and be guided by these in their work.
- Consider the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the person.
- It may become clear that the counselling service is unable to provide all the assistance the person requires, which indicates a referral is required.





# Learning Checkpoint 1

## Support clients to identify concerns

### Part A

1. List two techniques for managing stage one of the counselling session: introduction and establishment of relationship.

2. Match each of the following rights and responsibilities to the person.

To expect certain levels of performance of employees
To be involved in the decision-making process
To notify the services of changes in support requirements
Complying with a duty of care and following instructions carefully
Wages in accordance with the award rates
To provide a safe workplace

Worker rights
Worker responsibilities
Employer rights
Employer responsibilities
Rights of individual receiving support
Responsibilities of individual receiving support



**3.** Provide two examples of how you would uphold a client's human rights when establishing the counselling relationship.

**4.** Suggest at least two types of information that is protected by privacy legislation.

**5.** List two ways of ensuring client records are kept confidential.



**6.** Briefly outline two examples of when you are required to disclose confidential information.

**7.** A person you support presents with indicators of abuse. Briefly outline your duty of care and mandatory reporting responsibilities in this situation.

**8.** Provide two examples of how a counsellor can build trust and rapport when listening to a client's story.



**9.** Which of the following are examples of discrimination? Tick all that apply.

- Refusing to accept someone as a client because of their sexual orientation.
- Not being able to find a morning appointment for a client who works afternoon shifts.
- Not referring older people to other services because of their age.
- Using derogatory language towards another member of staff who is of a different race.
- Not catering for particular religious dietary requirements.

**10.** List two indicators that can help you identify the possibility of underlying issues when listening to a person's story.

**11.** Identify two techniques for managing the second stage of the counselling session: getting the person's story.



**12.** Briefly outline two indicators that may suggest immediate attention is required and describe how you would respond in each scenario.

**13.** Briefly outline two legal and ethical reasons why practitioner–client boundaries must be upheld.



## Part B

### Case study

Cindy comes to Priya for counselling regarding her battle with anxiety. She tells Priya she feels worthless and empty and is slowly withdrawing from her friends and family. Priya asks Cindy, “What is one thing you would change in your life, if given the chance?” Cindy tells Priya that she wishes she had a permanent job so she could afford to rent a permanent place to live. Cindy is currently sleeping on a friend’s couch as she can only find odd jobs here and there. Priya discusses Cindy’s situation with her and realises that the anxiety she is presenting is linked to the primary concern of homelessness.

Priya prioritises Cindy’s concern and works with Cindy to secure affordable housing. Priya also contacts an agency that can provide Cindy with steady financial support, which will enable her to afford a permanent place to live.

1. List three ways Priya can help Cindy prioritise concerns and explore options and a plan for change.

2. Suggest two indicators that suggest Cindy requires a referral.



- 3. Identify how Priya can ensure she meets work health and safety (WHS) requirements when providing counselling to Cindy.**

- 4. List two actions Priya might take when counselling Cindy which reflect a community services code of conduct.**



## Topic 2: Support clients to work through concerns

- 2A Identify and work with uncertainty and ambivalence of clients
- 2B Support clients to experience and process difficulties and discuss parallels and links in the client's experience
- 2C Identify and implement interventions that have meaning for the client's immediate situation
- 2D Support the client to identify and use known and previously unknown strengths
- 2E Explore perceptions of the client's feelings by reflecting back, clarification and review
- 2F Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues and begin to identify ways of dealing with them
- 2G Acknowledge and work with changes in the client's life as appropriate



# 2A Identify and work with uncertainty and ambivalence of clients

**Clients may experience ambivalence – have mixed feelings about it – throughout the counselling process.**

It is not the counsellor's responsibility to resolve the person's ambivalence to change. However, the counselling process should help the person to identify and clarify factors that are contributing to their uncertainty and ambivalence.

If the areas and causes of uncertainty and ambivalence are not recognised they may not be resolved. Here are some indicators to be aware of:

Behaviours that may indicate uncertainty and ambivalence
• Avoiding making decisions about goals
• Reluctance to commit to goals
• Reluctance to share story and/or feelings
• Displaying cognitive dissonance
• Displaying fear response inhibiting decision-making ability
• Unsure of the steps to reach goals
• Having both negative and positive feelings about a situation in their life which is causing issues

## Video: Feeling, observing and experiencing ambivalence

Watch this video to learn about motivational interviewing and its use in overcoming feelings of ambivalence: [aspirelr.link/yt-overcome-ambivalence](https://aspirelr.link/yt-overcome-ambivalence)

Note the definitions of ambivalence, and the author's examples of ambivalence observed or experienced as part of the counselling relationship.



For more information on coping with ambivalence and decision-making, visit: [aspirelr.link/cope-with-ambivalence](https://aspirelr.link/cope-with-ambivalence)



## Work with issues of uncertainty and ambivalence

### Issues of uncertainty and ambivalence can be overcome by the use of motivational interviewing techniques.

**Motivational interviewing** helps the person see where they are now and where they want to be. It also helps the person to acknowledge their feelings of uncertainty and resolve their ambivalence.

Motivational interviewing requires four basic skills:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Using reflective listening
- Making affirming statements
- Using summary statements

#### Motivational interviewing

A method that encourages a person to identify their own motivations for change and strengthen their commitment to a specific goal.

#### Video: What is motivational interviewing?

Watch this video to learn about motivational interviewing:

[aspirelr.link/yt-motivational-interviewing](https://aspirelr.link/yt-motivational-interviewing)

Pay attention to the different stages of motivational interviewing.



Motivational interviewing has five central principles, which are outlined below:

#### 1. Develop discrepancy

This principle relates to making the person aware of where they currently are and where they would like to be. This assists the person to become aware that their current behaviour is not leading them towards their goals. The objective of this principle is to help the person to bridge the gap between where they are at that time and the goal they want to achieve.

#### 2. Express empathy

This principle relates to the counsellor putting themselves in the place of the person receiving counselling and understanding the concerns from their perspective. Empathetic listening can help minimise resistance to change and have a positive effect on a person's willingness and ability to change.

#### 3. Amplify ambivalence

This principle relates to the counsellor recognising when a person becomes 'stuck' in behaviour and helping them to work through it. By verbalising ambivalence, the uncertainty is brought into the open and the conflicting sides that the person is dealing with can be discussed and explored.

#### 4. Roll with resistance

Resistance is a normal behaviour when a person is considering change. This principle relates to the counsellor encouraging the person to come up with their own solutions and enabling them to have control over issues contributing to ambivalence.



### 5. Support self-efficacy

This principle relates to increasing the confidence of the person, which will enhance their belief that they can achieve their goal. When the person takes responsibility for their own decisions, they are more likely to believe the change is possible and make it happen.

## Example

### Identify and work with uncertainty and ambivalence of clients

Laura is counselling Jonah regarding a gambling issue. Jonah has expressed a desire to change his behaviour but is showing a lack of confidence about his ability to change. Laura observes that Jonah is in a state of uncertainty and ambivalence and appears unable to move forward. Laura asks Jonah what his life was like before he started having problems with gambling and they discuss what factors are contributing to his uncertainty about achieving his goals. Laura engages Jonah in an honest discussion about the consequences of not changing, as well as of changing, and the steps that need to be taken to bridge the gap between where Jonah is now and where he wants to be.

Laura tells Jonah that even though he is struggling to meet his goals he has had some success at making small changes and, even though the changes may seem small, they are significant. Jonah feels more confident to move forward because Laura has helped him identify that he really wants to make changes, and he now feels motivated to do so.



## Practice Task 6

### Question 1

Provide examples of two basic techniques of motivational interviewing that may be used to identify uncertainty and ambivalence.

### Question 2

Briefly outline two aspects involved in developing discrepancy.

# 2B

## Support clients to experience and process difficulties and discuss parallels and links in the client's experience

**Some experiences affect people more significantly than others.**

Past experiences may influence the grief process, how relationships are formed and maintained, how children are parented and a person's predisposition to substance misuse. A counsellor needs to consider the parallels and links between the person's concerns and their personal experience.

Once the difficulty has been identified, the counsellor must support the person to experience, explore and process it. This may include using therapy to deconstruct the difficulty to make it more manageable and specific. A counsellor should demonstrate self-awareness when supporting a person to experience and process difficulties.

### Video: How to process your emotions

Watch this video to learn about essential skills to resolve depression, anxiety and other intense emotions: [aspirelr.link/yt-process-emotions](https://aspirelr.link/yt-process-emotions)



## Experience, explore and process difficulties

**When a difficulty presents, it may be hard for the person to process the cause, effect and impact of the difficulty and understand how it has become a concern.**

Sometimes exploring the difficulty can be overwhelming and confronting for the person. A counsellor must be able to support the person to look at the contributing feelings, circumstances and events. This may involve helping the person to:

- understand their coping mechanisms
- make sense of what happened to them
- understand their defence mechanisms.

### Video: Coping mechanisms

Watch this video to learn about healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms people use: [aspirelr.link/yt-coping-mechanisms](https://aspirelr.link/yt-coping-mechanisms)





### Video: Defence mechanisms

Watch this video to learn about different types of defence mechanisms people use: [aspirelr.link/yt-defence-mechanisms](https://aspirelr.link/yt-defence-mechanisms)

Pay attention to the problems that defence mechanisms may cause.



## Demonstrate self-awareness

Being self-aware helps you to change your thoughts, emotions and behaviours. It also makes you aware of thought and behavioural patterns. A counsellor must demonstrate **self-awareness** when supporting a person to explore and process concerns and difficulties.

Aspects of self-awareness are outlined below:

#### Self-awareness

Knowledge about your own character, behaviours and feelings.

<p><b>Role in organisation</b></p>	<p>All counsellors will have a position description document that clearly defines their role and responsibilities. The organisation's policies and procedures will also set out what counsellors should and should not do. A clear understanding of the limits and responsibilities of your job role reduces the risk of misunderstandings and supports empowerment for the people you counsel because it also acknowledges their role and responsibilities within the organisation.</p>
<p><b>Competence and responsibility</b></p>	<p>Working within the limitations and competence of your role is essential. If you step outside these boundaries, you may cause harm to people who receive services and you may also risk legal action for damages against you and your employer. The key source of information setting out the competence required and the responsibilities of your work role is a duty statement.</p>
<p><b>Strengths and limitations</b></p>	<p>Every counsellor has their own set of strengths and limitations. Limitations might be that the counsellor does not have the expertise that is needed, does not have a rapport with the person or that the counsellor is approaching burnout.</p> <p>Some counsellors have strengths and experience in an area that others may not. Strengths may be inherent personal qualities, or personal experience and knowledge.</p>
<p><b>Support and supervision</b></p>	<p>It is important for a counsellor to demonstrate self-awareness regarding when there is a need to receive support and supervision. Support may be required if a person has concerns that are outside the expertise of the counsellor. It might also be required to avoid burnout or relieve stress. Supervision is a valuable tool in identifying beliefs, bias and attitudes that may impact the counselling process.</p>
<p><b>Beliefs and values</b></p>	<p>It is important that the counsellor is aware of their own beliefs and values. If a counsellor's internal beliefs and values are imposed on a person they are counselling, it may be a demonstration of judgment and disrespect. A counsellor must accept the person, provide guidance and not offer personal opinions, no matter what the person's beliefs or values are.</p>



**Video: Self-concept in counselling**

Watch this video to learn about self-concept in counselling:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-self-concept-counselling](https://aspirelr.link/yt-self-concept-counselling)



## Identify parallels and links in the person’s experiences

**When the history and experiences of the person are examined, indicators may appear which will shed light on the issue of concern.**

Helping the person to understand and identify parallels and links between their experience and the concern or issue can give them a deeper understanding and clarification of contributors to the issue.

The following table outlines possible links between a person’s past experiences and their current presenting issue.

Past experiences and anxiety
A person may seek counselling regarding anxiety attacks, presenting with feelings of dread, restlessness and apprehension. The counsellor needs to attempt to determine an event or events in the person’s past history that contributed to these feelings, establishing a link from the past experience to the present condition.
Past experiences and substance misuse
A person may seek counselling regarding substance misuse when their personal life and relationships are being impacted. The counsellor may explore the person’s history and experiences to determine contributing factors which link to the present concern.
Past experiences and depression
A person may seek counselling regarding feelings of being overwhelmed, hopelessness and helplessness. The counsellor may explore the person’s history and experiences to determine parallels between life events and depressive episodes.
Past experiences and grief/loss
A person may have experienced previous issues with grief or loss. Issues with grief and loss might come from losing a loved one, pet, job, lifestyle, home, friendships or important relationships. Grief and loss can affect future perspectives, current relationships, insight into current behaviour and feelings, and lead to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression.

## Discuss parallels and links appropriately

When discussing parallels and links within a person’s life the person may feel vulnerable, fragile or uncomfortable. Effective communication with the person must



be underpinned by tolerance, respect and acceptance. An ability to read, interpret and respond to nonverbal communication is vital.

Other skills that underpin appropriate communication are outlined below:

<b>Tact and diplomacy</b>	Tact and diplomacy skills are demonstrated when a counsellor is sensitive to the person's opinions, beliefs, ideas and feelings, and vulnerability. When discussing a person's experiences, communicating with tact and diplomacy shows respect for the person.
<b>Active listening</b>	Active listening is not just hearing the words that are being spoken but is about listening attentively to how something is being said, hearing what is not being said and hearing what needs to be said. This may be demonstrated by listening to the pain or anxiety in the person's voice, noticing what remains unsaid and listening for cues that tell the counsellor what needs to be said.
<b>Empathetic understanding</b>	Empathetic understanding involves putting yourself in the person's position. Listen without judgment, and acknowledge the person's pain and feelings.
<b>Patience</b>	Understand the power of patience. Demonstrating patience does not mean listening passively; it means waiting and using intuition to know when to continue the discussion. Give the person time to reflect on past experiences and the links to the current issue. Demonstrate the ability to wait in silence to give the person time to think and respond.
<b>Cultural competency</b>	Cultural competence is needed to allow a counsellor to think outside their own cultural perspective. Demonstrating cultural competence will assist the person to resolve their problems within their own context – whether it be religious, spiritual, ethnic or sexual orientation.
<b>Sense of appropriateness</b>	A counsellor must develop a sense of knowing when something is appropriate and when it isn't. This sense may be demonstrated by being aware of appropriate use of language, allowing the person to finish their sentences and by upholding professional boundaries. It also includes knowing when the person needs a break and knowing when to 'back off' in the discussion.
<b>Authenticity and humility</b>	Demonstrating authenticity and humility means being able to genuinely relate to the person. The person needs to know that counsellors make mistakes and may not have all the answers. It is critical that demonstrating humility is not confused with demonstrating condescension.

For more information on addressing diversity in counselling, visit:

[aspirelr.link/managing-client-diversity](https://aspirelr.link/managing-client-diversity)



### Video: Diversity in counselling

Watch this video to learn about diversity in counselling:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-diversity-in-counselling](https://aspirelr.link/yt-diversity-in-counselling)



Pay attention to the importance of self-awareness when interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.

## Example

### Support clients to experience and process difficulties and discuss parallels and links in the client's experience

Annette has been undergoing counselling for substance misuse. She is struggling to come to terms with her dependence on a substance and finds it overwhelming that the casual use has grown into something she can no longer control. Annette's counsellor, John, encourages her to reflect on factors and circumstances that may have contributed to her first use of the substance. Annette tells John about a painful event that led to her first using the substance. John supports Annette to understand the event and why it impacted on her life so significantly. They discuss Annette's coping mechanisms for dealing with the trauma and realise that Annette abuses the substance as a defence mechanism whenever something triggers her memory of the event. They work together to explore and process the cause and effect of the difficulty, and how it has become a concern.

## Practice Task 7

### Question 1

Suggest at least two ways a counsellor can support the person to process the cause, effect and impact of their difficulty.



### Question 2

Provide two aspects a counsellor should consider when discussing parallels and links within a person's life.

### Question 3

List two communication techniques a counsellor can use when identifying and exploring client concerns and issues.

### Question 4

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. A counsellor learns about their role, responsibilities and limitations through trial and error or by asking a colleague.	Yes / No
b. A duty statement sets out the competence requirements and responsibilities of a counsellor.	Yes / No
c. The only limitations a counsellor has are those imposed by the rules and boundaries of the client-practitioner relationship.	Yes / No
d. Counsellors need to be self-aware in regard to knowing when they need to receive support and supervision.	Yes / No
e. Counsellors must be aware of their own beliefs and values to avoid unintentionally imposing these on the person they are counselling, through either guidance or personal opinion.	Yes / No

# 2C

## Identify and implement interventions that have meaning for the client's immediate situation

**When supporting a person to work through their concerns, a counsellor must identify the most appropriate intervention to use.**

The intervention must be meaningful, facilitate the person's understanding of the concern and provide a way forward. Some organisations provide specific counselling, such as behaviour modification or cognitive therapy. A counsellor must be able to identify the most appropriate counselling technique to use for the person's concerns.

### Organisational models of counselling and intervention

#### Interdisciplinary team

Includes professionals from many different disciplines or professions, working together to help meet a range of physical and other needs.

#### Multidisciplinary team

A group of allied health professionals working with the same client but addressing their differing needs.

Some community service organisations may offer services from an **interdisciplinary team** framework or a **multidisciplinary team** framework.

For example, an interdisciplinary team may help a person to overcome addictions and safely escape a family violence situation. Whereas with a multidisciplinary team framework, a social worker will work to increase a client's support network and a psychologist will work to address the mental health disorder needs of the same client.

The service delivery that your organisation provides is dependent on the state/territory, federal and local government funding it receives. This impacts on what services can be provided, the eligibility criteria for clients to access services and counselling, and even the scope of your role.

The situation of the person seeking counselling, and the type of agency that the person is referred to, will influence the type of intervention and service model that is used. For example, if the person has been referred to an alcohol and other drugs (AOD) agency, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), narrative and solution-focused counselling models may be used.

The following are various models of counselling and intervention that may be used in an agency or organisation.



<b>Cognitive behaviour therapy</b>	Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is where the person learns strategies to change thoughts and behaviours. This therapy may be used by AOD agencies, where the person learns to change their thoughts and behaviours towards substances they are misusing.
<b>Behaviour therapy</b>	Behaviour therapy focuses on the behaviour, not the reason for the behaviour. This therapy may be used by an agency that assists people who need a structured intervention that includes self-monitoring, activities and rewards for behaviour modification.
<b>Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy</b>	Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy incorporates aspects of CBT with meditation strategies. This therapy model may be used by an organisation that supports people with major depressive disorders to help prevent the recurrence of depression.
<b>Acceptance and commitment therapy</b>	The acceptance and commitment model of therapy is based on six principles that work together to manage painful thoughts and experiences and thereby create a meaningful life. This model of therapy may be used by an agency assisting people with anxiety, low self-esteem or grief.
<b>Solution-focused therapy</b>	Solution-focused therapy centres on helping the person identify their goals and work towards a solution to their issue or concern. This therapy may be used by a domestic violence agency whereby the person seeking assistance is empowered to use their resourcefulness to achieve their goals and construct solution patterns.
<b>Narrative therapy</b>	Narrative therapy is used to help the person to understand the story of their life and adopt a new perspective thereby writing a new story for their future. Narrative therapy explores the strengths and positive aspects of the person, consequently reducing the influence of problems in their lives. This therapy may be used by an agency helping people requiring couples or family counselling.
<b>Emotion-focused therapy</b>	Emotion-focused therapy or emotionally focused therapy is used to assist people to identify their experiences more effectively and explore their emotions that are prompted by the experiences. This therapy may be used by an agency that provides relationship counselling.
<b>Motivational interviewing</b>	Motivational interviewing is a form of solution-focused therapy in that it aims to help the client to identify their own solutions to their concerns and issues. It specifically deals with ambivalence around a client's relationships and, most commonly, addiction problems.



## Identify and implement the appropriate intervention

**Before an intervention strategy can be implemented, the appropriate therapeutic method must be identified.**

A counsellor may use one method, a combination of approaches or a tailored approach depending on the person’s immediate situation. No matter what approach the counsellor chooses, the aim is to facilitate the person’s understanding of their concern and clarify actions to be taken. The counselling approach must have meaning for the person, engage the person and help them to develop insight into themselves. For example, a CBT approach will have meaning for a person who is trying to change thoughts and behaviours.

The approach should resonate with the person. If the person can connect with the approach, it is more likely that they will be motivated to achieve their goals.

### Aspects of counselling and interventions

The counselling process exists within the wider context of the ‘helping services’. Here are some aspects of counselling and intervention that contribute to the counselling process:

<p><b>The person’s expectations</b></p>	<p>A person receiving counselling has the right to expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information regarding their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• counselling be provided with respect</li> <li>• personal information be kept confidential</li> <li>• their needs to be addressed with consideration of social, cultural, mental health or disability issues</li> <li>• information about available services and options</li> <li>• consultation and participation in decision-making</li> <li>• the right to choose which counselling intervention they feel will help them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Person-centred practice</b></p>	<p>Counselling using the principles of person-centred practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on the whole of the person</li> <li>• uses empowering language that promotes dignity</li> <li>• includes people in decision-making regarding the services they are receiving</li> <li>• involves people in discussions about service delivery options and issues</li> <li>• obtains the person’s consent to work with them</li> <li>• involves listening to and addressing complaints and issues.</li> </ul>



<b>The purpose</b>	<p>Counselling encourages the person to increase the awareness of their thinking, feelings and behaviour, and to develop alternative coping strategies for difficult situations. It is a process that encourages the person to look at their emotions, experiences and behaviours with the aim of facilitating positive change. It should provide a safe place for clients to explore their feelings, issues and concerns.</p>
<b>The 'helping relationship'</b>	<p>Counselling has existed for hundreds of years. Carl Rogers first introduced the humanistic theory in the 1970s. He believed that humans have a desire to achieve higher functioning. Also during the 1970s, Gerard Egan used the term 'skilled helper' to describe the role of a counsellor. The counsellor as a skilled helper guides the person, who will eventually determine their own best way forward.</p>
<b>The counselling role</b>	<p>Counselling plays a vital role in providing support and guidance to enhance the physical, mental and social wellbeing of people. Counselling plays a part in a wide range of helping services areas such as social work, child protection, juvenile justice, drugs and alcohol and youth work.</p>
<b>Scope and nature of the counselling relationship</b>	<p>The scope and nature of a counselling relationship is underpinned by legislation, practice guidelines, work role boundaries and professional limitations. Professional boundaries are the limits set between professionals and the people being supported. Boundaries also help maintain respect, and ensure that the person understands the role as being a provider of support services.</p>

To learn more about person-centred practices, visit:

[aspirelr.link/health-nsw-person-centred](https://aspirelr.link/health-nsw-person-centred)

## Example

### Identify and implement interventions that have meaning for the client's immediate situation

Zach is attending counselling for issues of uncontrolled anger. Initially his counsellor, Brad, concentrated on the violent behaviour that Zach displays. The counselling sessions were structured and focused on behaviour modification and not on the reason for the behaviour. When monitoring Zach's lack of progress, Brad considers using a CBT strategy.



This would help Zach to modify his behaviour by addressing the reasons for his anger and changing his thought processes. Brad discusses the new approach with Zach and finds that he connects with this approach. Zach is eager to explore strategies to change his thought patterns and responses to events that trigger his uncontrolled anger.

## Practice Task 8

### Question 1

List at least three principles of person-centred practice that can be used in the counselling process.

### Question 2

Provide two ways a counsellor can identify the most appropriate method of intervention for a person.



**Question 3**

Identify the difference between an interdisciplinary and a multidisciplinary team framework of counselling and intervention.

**Question 4**

Explain the purpose of counselling and its place within the helping services.

**Question 5**

Briefly outline why counselling is viewed as a ‘helping relationship’.

# 2D

## Support the client to identify and use known and previously unknown strengths

### Strengths-based approach

Recognises that all individuals are resourceful and resilient experts in their lives, and can progress in a way that enhances their quality of life.

**A strengths-based approach to counselling concentrates on the skills, capacity and potential of a person to enhance their wellbeing.**

Focusing on the person's strengths does not mean that challenges are ignored, but that they are approached in collaboration with the person to empower them to make their own choices and decisions.

### Identify strengths

**The central aspect of strengths-based counselling is working with the person to identify their known and unknown strengths.**

Strengths-based counselling shifts the focus from the challenges of the concern to the strengths of the person.

Some of their strengths may be obvious to the person, but there will be others that they are unaware of. A counsellor needs to support the person to explore and find all their strengths. To do this, a counsellor can:

- acknowledge that the person is the expert on themselves
- teach clients what 'strengths' and 'resources' are
- ask questions that get the person thinking about their strengths, for example:
  - What things are easy for you?
  - What things do others say you do well?
  - What do you love doing?

When their strengths are discovered, the person will be empowered to work through their concerns. However, uncovering a person's strengths may not always be easy or straightforward.

Here are some examples of types of strengths and resources:

#### Biological

The biological strengths of a person may include rest, state of health and the ability to have leisure time.



<p><b>Psychological</b></p> <p>Psychological strengths may include problem-solving abilities, self-esteem, self-reliance and good coping skills.</p>
<p><b>Social</b></p> <p>Social strengths may include family support, support networks and sense of belonging.</p>
<p><b>Cultural</b></p> <p>Cultural strengths include having a belief system, traditions, sense of community and ethnic identity.</p>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <p>Economic strengths include being employed and having sufficient money and adequate housing.</p>
<p><b>Spiritual</b></p> <p>Spiritual beliefs help connect people to positive and adaptive resilience and coping skills.</p>

**Video: What is a strengths-based approach?**

Watch this video to learn about the processes and key elements to consider when using a strengths-based approach:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-strengths-based-approach](https://aspirelr.link/yt-strengths-based-approach)



When a person becomes aware of their strengths, they are more likely to be motivated to use them. There are various actions a counsellor can take to encourage and support the person to use their strengths.

Ways a counsellor can support the person to use their strengths
• Tapping into the person’s intrinsic goals
• Providing encouragement
• Consciously and intentionally honouring the person’s efforts
• Providing positive reinforcement for behavioural and attitudinal changes
• Providing hope, respect and optimism
• Working with the person to convert strengths into realistic actions
• Nurturing a sense of focus and purpose
• Reframing what the client feels is a negative into a positive



## Example

### Support the client to identify and use known and previously unknown strengths

Jackie has been attending counselling for depression. Marny, her counsellor, has implemented a strengths-based approach in Jackie's counselling plan and assists Jackie to explore the strengths that she is already aware of. Marny then works with Jackie to identify additional strengths by discussing her problem-solving abilities and the self-reliance that has helped her get this far. Jackie is surprised as she hadn't realised that despite the issues contributing to her depression she is good at solving the problems she has been faced with. She also realises she has a strong sense of self-reliance that has enabled her to be independent and self-sufficient, even when dealing with the issues contributing to her depression.

When her unknown strengths are discovered and discussed, Jackie feels empowered and is confident that she can resolve her issues.

## Practice Task 9

### Question 1

Provide two techniques a counsellor can use to help a client identify their strengths.



**Question 2**

Give two reasons why a strengths-based approach to counselling is beneficial for the person receiving counselling.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their answer to the question.

# 2 E

## Explore perceptions of the client's feelings by reflecting back, clarification and review

**A perception is the way something is understood. In counselling, the perceptions of a person's feelings are the way they are interpreted or regarded.**

A counsellor can use the techniques of reflection, clarification and review to ensure the person's feelings are not being misinterpreted.

### Reflective listening

A counsellor can use reflection to confirm their understanding of the person's feelings. This may be achieved by putting their feelings and emotions into words. For example, a sentence such as, "It sounds like you are feeling anxious", demonstrates that you perceive the person is feeling anxious. The person may confirm your perception or may clarify it. Using reflection as a clarification technique will lessen the chance of the counsellor making misplaced assumptions about the emotional or physiological state of the person.

### Clarification

Clarification of a person's feelings may be determined by paraphrasing. This may be achieved by rewording the emotions and feelings contained in the person's disclosure. Paraphrasing is usually one or two short sentences. Paraphrasing and summarising may need to be done periodically, depending on the length of the disclosure.

### Review

To be certain the counsellor's perception of the person's feelings is accurate, it is necessary to review the disclosure with the person. This may be done by summarising the disclosure and confirming the feelings and emotions of the person have been correctly understood.

### Video: Exploring feelings

Watch this video to learn about how you can explore a client's feelings during counselling: [aspirelr.link/yt-exploring-feelings](https://aspirelr.link/yt-exploring-feelings)





## Example

### Explore perceptions of the client's feelings by reflecting back, clarification and review

Sam is sharing his story with his counsellor, Jessie, and she is unsure of what Sam means when he says, "I just want this counselling process to be over". Jessie thinks that Sam does not want to be in counselling and says to him, "So you are angry that you are here today?" Sam looks surprised and says, "Oh no, I just mean that I want my issues fixed so I don't have to deal with them anymore". Jessie realises that she made an inaccurate assumption about Sam's feelings. Jessie paraphrases what Sam has said and says, "Ah, so you mean that you are anxious to get started on the counselling process so your issues can be resolved?" She smiles at Sam and says, "That's good! I am glad I confirmed how you were feeling before we went any further".

Sam and Jessie start working out the strategy for addressing Sam's issues.

## Practice Task 10

### Question 1

Suggest two benefits of using reflective listening when counselling a person.

### Question 2

List two ways that a counsellor can clarify what the person has shared with them.

# 2 F

## Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues and begin to identify ways of dealing with them

**When supporting a person to work through their concerns, a counsellor requires skills to assist the person to become aware of underlying issues contributing to these concerns.**

Once the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to deal with and prioritise them, provide support and develop strategies to assist the person to move forward.

Often concerns are not easily defined as a single issue. Combinations of life experiences, relationship issues or family background factors can impact and contribute to a concern. Being aware of the underlying issues can help clarify and define the counselling method and focus. It may be necessary to examine behavioural patterns, triggering events, lifestyle choices, family dynamics, or destabilisers in the person's life. Other aspects such as the person's social, medical and emotional history may be considered to identify factors that may be contributing to the person's concern.

### Deal with underlying issues

Once the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to begin to deal with them. This will involve a combination of the following:

- providing emotional support using counselling techniques
- encouraging engagement with self-care activities
- encouraging engagement with positive coping skills
- encouraging the client to develop their own solutions to their issues and concerns
- using the appropriate counselling approach
- prioritising support from different professionals and from those within the client's support network
- referring the person to a different agency to address issues and concerns the counsellor is not competent to deal with.



## Video: Three psychotherapy techniques that identify your client's real problem

Watch this video to learn about three techniques you can use to identify your client's real issue: [aspirelr.link/yt-underlying-issues](https://aspirelr.link/yt-underlying-issues)



### Example

#### Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues and begin to identify ways of dealing with them

Frank is having difficulty making progress in his counselling sessions. His counsellor, Fay, works with Frank to explore underlying issues that may be contributing to his lack of progress. In the discussion, it is apparent that there are several contributing factors that have affected Frank's ability to commit to the changes that are required to resolve his issue. When Frank understands the impact of these factors, he is able to work together with Fay to find an approach to deal with the underlying issues.

## Practice Task 11

### Question 1

Identify why it is important to assist the person to become aware of underlying issues that contribute to their concern.



**Question 2**

Provide two ways you can help a person receiving support to deal with underlying issues.

# 2G

## Acknowledge and work with changes in the client's life as appropriate

**When the person has become aware of their underlying issues, it is important that the issues are acknowledged by the counsellor and that they work together to facilitate the changes required to address the issues.**

The intervention must be conducted appropriately and sensitively with consideration and respect for the person and their concern.

When supporting a person who is working towards making changes, it is critical that the person's concerns are acknowledged and validated. Demonstration of validation and acknowledgment towards a person is a powerful part of counselling and intervention. Acknowledgment indicates to the person that they have been heard and validation reinforces the feelings that they are not being judged and they have the right to feel the way they do. The combination of acknowledgment and validation empowers the person to believe that they are capable of making changes.

### Work with changes

When the person has made a conscious decision to change, they must believe in their capacity to implement the steps to bring about change.

This is called self-efficacy. The more a client can be self-efficacious, the more likely it is they will be able to change the thoughts, feelings and behaviours which are concerning them. Change is stressful and confronting and it may be very difficult to change patterns and thinking that is well-established.

When working with a person in the process of change, the counsellor needs to keep the person:

- engaged in the change process
- committed to a sustained effort of overcoming challenges
- supported to maintain self-esteem and the courage to change
- supported to manage anticipated and unanticipated challenges
- supported to keep them engaged in self-care and positive coping skills
- supported to have realistic expectations about the changes they are making



When working with a person in the process of change, the counsellor needs to keep the person:

- supported to deal with obstacles or relapses
- supported to break steps of change into realistic goals.

For more information on adjusting to change or life transitions, visit: [aspirelr.link/adjusting-to-change](https://aspirelr.link/adjusting-to-change)

## Example

### Acknowledge and work with changes in the client's life as appropriate

Terry is attending counselling and is working towards making changes in his life regarding the relationship he has with his partner. He is finding it challenging, as the changes he is making affect their future. He has a feeling of dependency on his partner and is finding it difficult to continue with the change process. His counsellor, Raymond, attempts to keep Terry engaged in the change process by assisting him to commit to the change while supporting his self-esteem. Together they discuss challenges that Terry can expect to face and issues that may appear unexpectedly. They work out strategies for dealing with obstacles and barriers that may threaten the changes that Terry needs to make.



## Practice Task 12

### Question 1

Briefly outline two reasons why it is beneficial for a counsellor to acknowledge the concerns of the person they are counselling.

### Question 2

List two techniques a counsellor can use to support the client to work with changes in their life.



## Summary

- Supporting a person to work through their concerns can be complex and requires identification of a person's main concern, and of the issues that contribute to the concern.
- People may be unsure of their capability to change and so they need support to identify the area of uncertainty and to clarify factors contributing to their uncertainty and ambivalence.
- Once the difficulty, concern or challenge has been identified, the counsellor must support the person to experience, explore and process the difficulty.
- Past experiences can influence the grief process, how relationships are formed and maintained, how children are parented, and a person's predisposition to substance misuse.
- The intervention must be meaningful, facilitate the person's understanding of the concern and provide a way forward.
- A strengths-based approach to counselling concentrates on the skills, capacity and potential of a person to enhance their wellbeing. Strengths-based counselling shifts the focus from the challenges of the concern to the person's strengths.
- A counsellor can use reflection, clarification and review to ensure the person's feelings are not being misinterpreted.
- Once the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to deal with and prioritise them, provide support and develop strategies to assist the person to move forward.
- When supporting a person who is working towards making changes, it is critical that the person's concerns are acknowledged and validated. Demonstration of validation and acknowledgment towards a person is a powerful part of counselling and intervention.



## Learning Checkpoint 2

### Support clients to work through concerns

#### Part A

1. Briefly explain how counsellors can use motivational interviewing to work with client issues of uncertainty and ambivalence.

2. List three behaviours that may indicate a person is uncertain and ambivalent.

3. Which of the following strategies can help a person process their difficulty? Tick all that apply.

- Assisting the person to identify and understand their coping mechanisms.
- Helping the person create new coping mechanisms.
- Helping the person make sense of what happened to them.
- Discussing defence mechanisms that will help them overcome challenges with the person.
- Helping the person identify and understand their defence mechanisms.



- 4.** Suggest two ways that you, as a counsellor, can demonstrate self-awareness regarding your role in the organisation.

- 5.** Briefly outline how a duty statement can help counsellors understand their limits of competence and responsibility.

- 6.** Use examples to explain the relationship between demonstrating self-awareness regarding your own strengths and limitations, and recognising the need for support and supervision as a counsellor.



**7. Suggest how you can acknowledge the impact of your own beliefs and attitudes on your capacity to be non-judgmental.**

**8. Match each model of counselling and intervention to its definition/description.**

Narrative therapy	Where the person learns strategies to change thoughts and behaviours. This therapy may be used by AOD agencies, where the person learns to change their thoughts and behaviours towards substances they are misusing.
Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy	Focuses on the behaviour, not the reason for the behaviour. This therapy may be used by an agency that assists people who need a structured intervention that includes self-monitoring, activities, and gives rewards for behaviour modification.
Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT)	Incorporates aspects of CBT with meditation strategies. This therapy model may be used by an organisation that supports people with major depressive disorders to help prevent the recurrence of depression.
Behaviour therapy	Helps the person to understand the story of their life, adopt a new perspective and write a new story for their future. This therapy explores the strengths and positive aspects of the person, thereby reducing the influence of problems in their lives.



**9.** List five principles of person-centred practice.

**10.** Briefly describe the evolution of the ‘helping relationship’.

**11.** Outline the role counselling plays within the helping services.



## Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow:

### Case study

Dion is receiving counselling for a gambling addiction. Not only is it negatively impacting his family life but his job and ability to concentrate is now affected. He is struggling to come to terms with his addiction and finds it overwhelming that he can no longer control this habit. Dion's counsellor, Jaquez, encourages him to think about the factors and circumstances that may have contributed to him first starting to gamble. Dion tells Jaquez about his early financial problems which he thought he could solve by making some quick money.

With Jaquez's support, Dion begins to understand this circumstance and how it impacted on his life in such a significant way. They discuss Dion's ways of dealing with stress brought on by his financial situation and realise that Dion uses gambling as a coping mechanism whenever something in life causes him stress. They work together to explore and process the cause and effect of the difficulty, and how it has become a concern.

1. Explain why it is beneficial for Jaquez to assist Dion in understanding and identifying parallels and links between his past experiences and current concern of gambling addiction.



**2.** Provide two reasons why it is important for Jaquez to implement an intervention that is appropriate for Dion.

**3.** Briefly describe the purpose of counselling in this context.

**4.** Briefly outline the scope and nature of the counselling relationship between Jaquez and Dion.



**5.** Identify at least one strength that Jaquez can help Dion recognise about himself.

**6.** Identify three ways that Jaquez can support Dion to use his strengths.

**7.** Briefly outline how Jaquez can use reflective listening, clarification and review to ensure he perceives Dion's feelings correctly.



**8.** Briefly describe two ways Jaquez can assist Dion to identify underlying issues.

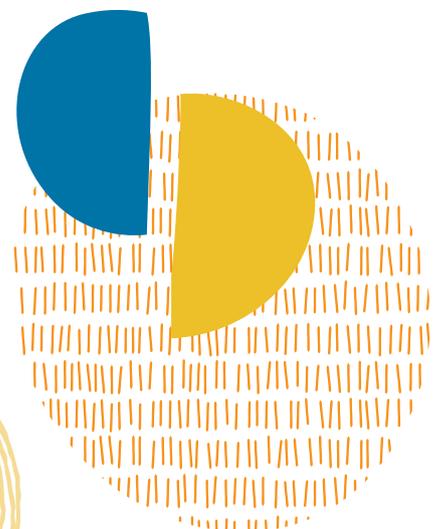
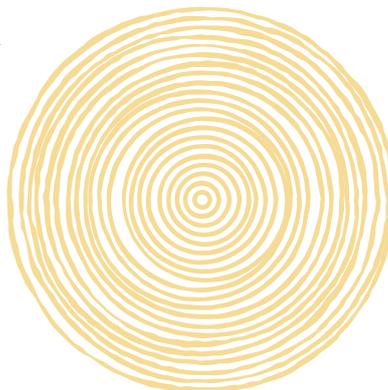
**9.** Identify two ways Jaquez can help Dion deal with underlying issues once they are identified.

**10.** Suggest why it is important for Jaquez to acknowledge Dion's concern and outline how he can work with him during this process of change.



## Topic 3: Monitor the counselling process

- 3A Monitor and review the value of the counselling process with clients and work on threats and disruptions
- 3B Review your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between their hopes, expectations and reality
- 3C Facilitate change at a pace the client can tolerate and assimilate
- 3D Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending the current counselling
- 3E Acknowledge value and work with individual uncertainty in the counselling relationship
- 3F Apply ethical codes of conduct in addressing counselling dilemmas



# 3A

## Monitor and review the value of the counselling process with clients and work on threats and disruptions

**Monitoring is a continuous process of gathering information. Reviewing involves analysing the information and drawing conclusions from it.**

Continuous monitoring and review is needed over the full course of the counselling intervention. This is to ensure the changing needs of the person receiving counselling are met and be certain the approach is still of value to them. The counsellor must listen for indications of how the person perceives their goals and their capacity to achieve these goals. This enables the counsellor to proactively identify obstacles and barriers to achievement and highlights areas that might need revision. By proactively identifying threats to the counselling process, the counsellor can create a contingency plan and provide options; thereby minimising threats, obstacles or barriers.

The counselling process will need to be adjusted over time in relation to goals, achievements and the person's needs and preferences. Monitoring and reviewing provides an opportunity for the counsellor and the person to share what is working and what is not. By discussing and reviewing the counselling process with the person, you can modify or remove goals, add or alter time frames and refine the process to ensure the approach remains of value and benefit.

### Obstacles to the counselling process

When monitoring and reviewing the counselling process with the person, the counsellor may discover barriers and obstacles. These are threats and can cause disruptions to the person's progress.

Some obstacles that may be a threat and may disrupt the counselling process are discussed below:



<p><b>Psychological</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust is one of the most valuable aspects of the counselling relationship. The trusting relationship may take a long time to develop but it can easily be destroyed. It is vital that the counsellor acts proactively to ensure the person fully understands when disclosure of information is mandatory and what situations mandate personal information to be shared.</li> <li>• Shame is one of the most crippling obstacles to counselling because it adds to the issue or concern. The counsellor must ensure that the person's concern is acknowledged and validated.</li> <li>• Fear may disrupt the counselling process if the person is afraid of repercussions relating to information that has been disclosed, or of the outcome of deciding to change behaviours.</li> <li>• Denial is a defence mechanism which purposely stops the person from acknowledging what needs to change and from taking responsibility for the changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information can be a barrier to the counselling process if the person does not understand the ethical, skilled and caring nature of the counsellor.</li> <li>• The physical location of the counselling session may be an obstacle if the person relocates.</li> <li>• Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many counselling services have shifted to using online tools such as Zoom or special telehealth programs. These methods of communication can create barriers for both the counsellor and client. For example, being in a client's home can be disruptive for the counselling process if there are distractions such as children, pets or other noise. It can be difficult to perceive many emotions displayed in body language such as anger, disgust and fear, and just relying on facial emotions can limit the counselling experience. Additionally, internet connections can suddenly drop out, which can disrupt sessions, and online tools/telehealth programs can suddenly crash or stop working.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost is a common barrier to the counselling process. The person may be unable to maintain the financial cost of counselling sessions. Other costs that may be incurred include transport to the physical location of the counselling session, and child-minding.</li> </ul>

### Video: Barriers to communication in counselling and psychotherapy

Watch this video to learn about how you can address barriers to effective communication in counselling:

[aspirelr.link/yt-barriers-communication-counselling](https://aspirelr.link/yt-barriers-communication-counselling)

Pay attention to the different types of barriers that may exist and how they can be overcome.



## Work on threats and disruptions

The circumstances of the person attending counselling may influence the type of threats and disruptions that present during the sessions. For example, counselling may be court-directed where the person is required to attend counselling as a result of a court directive, rather than by choice. In this case, the counsellor may need to work with the person to acknowledge the concern and to reduce denial and reluctance which would threaten the counselling process.

A counsellor may need to work collaboratively with a person to create a plan of action to avoid disruption to counselling because of financial obstacles. Working collaboratively with the person to reset goals will reduce the likelihood of the person disengaging in the counselling process.

Disruption to the counselling process may happen if the person feels the process is invasive, confronting or is not working for them. The counsellor needs to explore these disruptions with the client to ensure disruption does not continue, or cause negative impacts to the counselling process or therapeutic relationship.

For more information on strategies for working with involuntary clients, visit: [aspirelr.link/working-with-involuntary-clients](https://aspirelr.link/working-with-involuntary-clients)

### Video: Working with resistant clients

Watch this video to learn about how you can work with resisting clients: [aspirelr.link/yt-work-with-resistant-clients](https://aspirelr.link/yt-work-with-resistant-clients)

Pay attention to the strategies used to transform resistance into a force for change.



## Example

### Review the counselling process to work on threats and disruptions

Jennifer is concerned about Sarah, a person she is counselling. Sarah missed her last counselling session and, when speaking on the phone with Jennifer, sounded reluctant to continue with counselling. Sarah agrees to another counselling session and Jennifer reviews the counselling process with her.



When reviewing the process, Sarah expresses shame regarding her reluctance to change her current living situation and says she is afraid of what will happen if legal action is taken. Jennifer recognises Sarah's feelings of shame and fear as psychological threats to the counselling process. Together they work on a strategy to address this potential disruption to Sarah's counselling process.

## Practice Task 13

### Question 1

Which of the following are obstacles that may be a threat and disruption to the counselling process? Tick all that apply.

- Psychological – trust, shame, fear
- Physical – lack of information, location, online
- Economic – cost
- Biological – rest, ability to have leisure time
- Social – sense of belonging

### Question 2

Provide two examples of how the counsellor can protect the trust of a person to minimise trust issues becoming a threat to the counselling process.



**Question 3**

Explain how a counsellor can monitor the counselling process to ensure it remains of value to the person.

# 3B

## Review your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between their hopes, expectations and reality

**It is important, as part of the monitoring process, that the counsellor and the person receiving support share their perceptions and understanding of the counselling process.**

Sharing and comparing their views, goals and objectives will ensure that the **perceptions** of the counsellor and the person are aligned.

If there are **discrepancies** between the counsellor and the person receiving counselling's understanding of the counselling process, these inconsistencies must be addressed to avoid tension and discord.

The expectations of the person refers to what they anticipate will happen or what they expect the outcome of the counselling process to be.

If the counsellor and the person are not in agreement, tension or strain may occur in the counselling relationship.

### Compare perceptions

Any discrepancies between the perceptions of the person and the counsellor regarding the counselling process must be clarified and addressed.

The counsellor's approach to a person's concern may not be understood by the person, leading to misconceptions of the counselling process. Each person who receives counselling is unique, so it is important that the counsellor understands the individual perceptions that the person may have about their concern.

Misperceptions that may occur during the counselling process include:

- the counsellor's role in addressing the concern
- the person's commitment in working towards a favourable outcome
- how realistic the goals are
- time frames regarding meeting goals.

#### Perception

The way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted.

#### Discrepancies

The differences between two things that should be equal or the same.



## Manage misperceptions

If there are discrepancies between the perceptions of the person and of the counsellor, it may be necessary for the counsellor to provide suggestions of how to address these discrepancies.

This may involve a discussion that clarifies and redefines:

- the concern
- the counselling relationship
- boundaries that provide the framework for the relationship
- expectations of resolving the concern.

### Video: Connecting your expectations to the experience

Watch this video to learn about expectations and how they connect to the experience: [aspirelr.link/yt-connect-expectation-experience](https://aspirelr.link/yt-connect-expectation-experience)



## Address tension and stress

It is important to address and resolve misunderstandings and misperceptions between the counsellor and the person.

Tension and stress caused by a mismatch of hopes and expectations may be reduced or alleviated by discussing modifications and clarifying areas of misunderstanding. If tension and stress are handled in the right way it can strengthen the counselling relationship instead of weakening it.

Here are some tips for reducing tension and stress in a person receiving counselling.

Ways to reduce tension and stress
• Address indications of tension and stress as soon as possible.
• Do not leave the 'elephant in the room' unaddressed.
• Respect the person's viewpoint and perspective of the concern.
• Help the person to see the concern from an impartial perspective.
• Allow the person time and space to state their case.
• Work collaboratively with the person to make sure the goals are realistic.
• Ask for your client's perspective on what may be perceived as tension or stress. They may perceive it in a completely different way to you.



## Resource limitations

The resources that are required to address the person's concern will depend on the unique nature of the person's issue.

Here are some situations where resource limitations may affect the person's counselling process.

### Cultural requirements

There may be cultural requirements that need to be considered. A person may, at first, request a female counsellor or a person of their own culture, but it is possible their preference will not be available. However, the counsellor will attempt to find human resources that are suited to the person's preference.

### Role limitations

A person may expect support from a counsellor that is beyond the limitations of that counsellor's role. Their concern may need to be referred to a more suitable service.

### Funding

A person may be supported by a service that provides funding for a set period of time. After this time has passed, alternative support options may need to be found.

## Example

### Review and compare your own and the client's perceptions

Sharon has been counselling Jeremy for a few months. She notices that he is not meeting some of the goals that are set out in the counselling plan. She discusses this with Jeremy and discovers that his perception of the issue is different from hers. He does not feel the goals are realistic and he no longer has the interest and motivation to try to achieve them. Together they review the counselling process and discover that Sharon's perception and expectations of achieving the goals is very different to Jeremy's. To address the tension and stress of the mismatched hopes and expectations, Sarah shows Jeremy respect by allowing him time and space to state his position. She works collaboratively with him to make sure achieving the goals is realistic.



## Practice Task 14

### Question 1

Suggest two ways that a counsellor can address a discrepancy in perceptions.

### Question 2

List two ways that a counsellor can address resource limitations.

# 3C

## Facilitate change at a pace the client can tolerate and assimilate

**When facilitating change it is important that it is planned and conducted in accordance with the person's abilities and capabilities.**

Each person will have a unique set of emotional, physiological and physical contributors to their concern, and all aspects of the person must be considered when facilitating change.

Depending on the person's issue or concern, the pace at which change is expected and facilitated must be tailored to their unique abilities and capabilities. For example, a person undergoing counselling for trauma-related concerns may require change at a different pace than someone undergoing counselling for cognitive behavioural changes. It is critical that the counsellor uses advanced communication skills to pick up on cues that indicate when the pace is not appropriate or that the person has reached their level of tolerance.

### Video: Pacing a therapy session

Watch this video to learn about using pacing and timing in counselling:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-pacing-therapy-session](https://aspirelr.link/yt-pacing-therapy-session)



## Indicators of tolerance and assimilation level

**The pace that the person is able to tolerate, assimilate and understand change will vary.**

The counsellor must be aware of indicators that suggest distress, anxiety, discomfort and unease. Indicators may not be obvious, and may appear to be insignificant, but any sign of discomfort with change or inability to understand aspects of the change must be addressed.

Here are some examples that may impact the person's tolerance and assimilation level:

#### Nature of the concern

The nature of the concern has a big impact on the pace at which change will occur and the tolerance the person will have when undergoing change. If the concern is a significant lifestyle change the person may need a slower, more measured approach to change.



<b>Mental health</b>	The emotional and mental health of the person may impact the pace of change. It is important to understand that some people take longer than others to embrace and address change and they may be overwhelmed by the overall picture. Depending on the mental health of the person, they may require additional time to assimilate the changes into their life.
<b>Physical capability</b>	The physical capacity of the person may influence the tolerance and assimilation level of the person. A person undergoing counselling for substance misuse may need a regulated and structured pace of change with high regard to the tolerance level of the person. A person with a physical dependency may need time to assimilate and come to terms with lifestyle choices and changes.
<b>Cognitive capacity</b>	The cognitive capacity of a person receiving counselling can have a huge impact on their tolerance and assimilation level. A person undergoing cognitive therapy may only be able to tolerate short periods of stimulation. A slow and patient pace of counselling may be required. Additional time may be needed to ensure that aspects of the change are assimilated and understood by the person.

## Example

### Facilitate change at a pace the client can tolerate and assimilate

Erica has been undergoing CBT in response to an acquired brain injury. She has trouble concentrating for long periods of time so her counsellor, Noel, facilitates Erica's limitation by providing a slower, more measured approach to changes Erica needs to make. Noel accommodates Erica's reduced cognitive capacity by providing a slow and patient pace of counselling and provides extra time to ensure that aspects of the change are assimilated and understood by Erica.



## Practice Task 15

### Question 1

Provide two aspects that contribute to the pace the person can tolerate and assimilate change.

### Question 2

Provide a brief description of how the mental health of the person can impact the pace at which they tolerate and assimilate change.

# 3D

## Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending the current counselling

**The time needed to end current counselling may vary according to how long the person has been undergoing counselling.**

If person has reached their goal and they are satisfied with the outcomes, the counsellor will assess the appropriateness of ending counselling.

A counsellor needs to recognise and assess when it is appropriate to end counselling. The process of ending the counselling relationship may fall into two categories: planned and unplanned, as outlined below.

### Unplanned

The person receiving counselling may cause an unplanned ending to the counselling process by dropping out of counselling, having an adverse event that prevents them from coming to the sessions, or by demonstrating behaviour that is incompatible with the intervention.

A counsellor may cause an unplanned ending to the counselling process by having an adverse event that prevents them from counselling, by being dismissed from the service or being transferred to another service.

### Planned

A planned ending to counselling may occur when goals are achieved or not achieved. Other reasons may include when the counsellor or person is not happy with the counselling relationship, when the person is not progressing, or if the person does not abide by the requirements of the intervention. It may also be appropriate to end counselling if the counsellor does not demonstrate competence in addressing the person's needs.

### Video: How to end therapy with your clients

Watch this video to learn about how to conclude therapy:  
[aspirelr.link/yt-concluding-therapy](https://aspirelr.link/yt-concluding-therapy)

Pay attention to the ways in which you can signal the end of therapy with your clients and the reasons why it is important to do so.



For more information on ending therapy, visit: [aspirelr.link/ending-therapy](https://aspirelr.link/ending-therapy)



## Example

### Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending therapy

Lara has been undergoing counselling for anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Clare has been providing counselling to assist Lara with strategies to manage and reduce her episodes of anxiety. Lara has made good progress and has met all the goals they set out at the beginning of the counselling process. Triggers and events that affect Lara have been identified and she has developed coping skills to help with managing her PTSD. Clare and Lara have come to an agreement that it is appropriate to conclude the counselling process. Clare tells Lara that even though the formal counselling process is winding down, there will be follow-up sessions to ensure that Lara is still managing well.

## Practice Task 16

### Question 1

Identify two reasons why the person receiving support may end the counselling process in an unplanned manner.

### Question 2

Provide two reasons why the counsellor may end the counselling process in a planned manner.

# 3 E

## Acknowledge, value and work with individual uncertainty in the counselling relationship

**A person undergoing counselling may have feelings of uncertainty and misgivings regarding the counselling relationship.**

It is important that the counsellor be aware of these feelings so they can be acknowledged when monitoring the counselling process. If feelings of uncertainty are identified, they must be addressed to reassure the person that best practice counselling will be provided for them.

Depending on the person's concern and personality, situations may arise that cause feelings of uncertainty. For example, the person may be concerned that they will be judged, or that the counsellor does not see the concern from their perspective. They may be concerned that their culture and values will not be considered and feel uncertain about being able to achieve their goals. It is important that the person's feelings are monitored and addressed.

### Areas of uncertainty

Counsellors need to acknowledge and value feelings of uncertainty demonstrated by the client.

Here are some ways that a counsellor can demonstrate they acknowledge and value uncertain feelings regarding the counselling relationship:

#### Acknowledge uncertainty

A counsellor may acknowledge a person's uncertainty by:

- allowing the person time to articulate their uncertainty
- listening to them with empathetic understanding
- normalising their feelings of uncertainty and affirming them for their courage in attending counselling.

#### Value a person's feelings

A counsellor may demonstrate that they value the person's feelings by:

- validating the person's feelings
- listening without judgment.



## Work with uncertainty

When uncertainty has been identified, it may be necessary to restate and confirm the underpinning qualities of the trusting relationship. Reassure the person that these qualities will be upheld and demonstrated throughout the counselling process.

You may need to reassure the person you are counselling that you:

- can be trusted
- are non-judgmental
- enjoy your work and view listening to their story as a privilege
- understand their values and culture
- are listening to them attentively.

For more information and a video on dealing with uncertainty in clients, visit:

[aspirelr.link/managing-uncertainty](https://aspirelr.link/managing-uncertainty)

### Video: Dealing with uncertainty

Watch this video to learn about the concept of uncertainty in the human experience: [aspirelr.link/yt-dealing-with-uncertainty](https://aspirelr.link/yt-dealing-with-uncertainty)

Pay attention to the strategies used to manage feelings of uncertainty.



## Example

### Acknowledge, value and work with individual uncertainty in the counselling relationship

Lisa is feeling disappointed and ashamed that she has been unable to meet the goals that she and her counsellor, Nola, agreed upon earlier in the counselling process. She feels reluctant to continue with counselling because she feels as if she is not making any gains. She is also afraid that Nola does not understand why it has been so difficult for her. In the counselling session Nola senses that Lisa is feeling uncertain. She encourages Lisa to take her time and try to articulate why she has misgivings about the process. As Lisa talks, Nola listens, using empathetic understanding and making a note to monitor Lisa's feelings in future sessions.



## Practice Task 17

### Question 1

Suggest at least two ways to acknowledge a person's uncertainty about the counselling process.

### Question 2

Identify two ways that a counsellor can demonstrate that they value the person's feelings.

# 3F

## Apply ethical codes of conduct in addressing counselling dilemmas

**A code of conduct is a set of rules that outlines responsibilities and behaviours that are required to perform a particular work role.**

In Australia, counselling ethical codes of conduct are explained in the Australian Counselling Association – Code of Ethics and Practice. The code of ethics provides guidelines that must be upheld to ensure that ethical responsibilities are demonstrated. When addressing counselling dilemmas, ethical codes of conduct can provide a framework to help the counsellor decide on the appropriate course of action.

Guidelines included in ethical codes of conduct and practice	
• Issues of responsibility	• Record management
• Anti-discriminatory practice	• Contracts
• Confidentiality	• Boundaries
• Settings	• Committees
• Exceptional circumstances	• Equal opportunities

### Ethical dilemmas

An ethical dilemma presents when a counsellor must decide on a course of action when there are several options to choose from, all of which compromise some ethical principle. For example, a counsellor may experience an ethical dilemma when the legal requirement to report a situation conflicts with the desire to respect the person's confidentiality. In counselling, situations that may involve ethical dilemmas include mandatory reporting and the relationship between the counsellor and the person receiving counselling.

An ethical dilemma is a situation where there is no clear or perfect solution.

### Relationships

There are restrictions and limitations on the counselling relationship that aim to keep it within professional boundaries. An ethical code of conduct can be used to address boundaries between the practitioner and the person receiving support. Relationships that include sexual or financial involvement are a clear violation of the professional relationship. An ethical dilemma may arise if the counsellor accepts gifts from the person, engages in social interactions with the person or their family, or there are emotional attachments that compromise the counselling goals or outcomes.



### Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting refers to aspects of a person's story that must legally and ethically be reported. This can create an ethical dilemma for the counsellor because mandatory reporting overrides the confidentiality agreement. A common ground for reporting the person is the immediacy and likelihood of danger.

Mandatory reporting applies to situations when:

- the person's or the community's safety is threatened
- the person is a threat to themselves or others
- the laws of the community are threatened.

#### Video: Introduction to ethical problem solving

Watch this video to learn about ethical problem solving when faced with an ethical dilemma: [aspirelr.link/yt-ethical-problem-solving](https://aspirelr.link/yt-ethical-problem-solving)



For more information on ethical situations in counselling, visit:

[aspirelr.link/ethical-situations-in-counselling](https://aspirelr.link/ethical-situations-in-counselling)

## Example

### Apply ethical codes of conduct in addressing counselling dilemmas

Shayla is counselling Ashley, who has come to her regarding a traumatic incident that occurred recently. The nature of the incident mandates that Shayla must report it. She feels torn because she knows that when the report is filed there may be custodial restrictions placed on Ashley to protect the safety of her children. Ashley pleads with Shayla not to file a report, but Shayla explains to Ashley that she is compelled by law to report a situation where a person's safety is threatened and feels this applies to Ashley's children. Shayla is conflicted between upholding her ethical responsibility and the desire to provide the outcome Ashley wants.



## Practice Task 18

### Question 1

Provide three examples of how counsellors can apply an ethical code of conduct in their practice.

### Question 2

Suggest two aspects of the counselling process that may involve an ethical dilemma.



## Summary

- Continuous monitoring and review is needed over the full course of the intervention.
- When monitoring and reviewing the counselling process with the person, the counsellor may discover barriers and obstacles. These are threats and can cause disruptions to the person's progress.
- It is important that the counsellor and the person share their perceptions and understanding of the counselling process to confirm that their perceptions are aligned.
- If there are discrepancies between the counsellor and the person's understanding of the counselling process, these inconsistencies must be addressed to avoid tension and discord between the counsellor and the person.
- It is important when facilitating change that it is planned and conducted in accordance with the person's abilities and capabilities.
- The time needed to end current counselling may vary according to how long the person has been undergoing counselling. A counsellor needs to recognise and assess when it is appropriate to end counselling.
- A person undergoing counselling may have feelings of uncertainty and misgivings regarding the counselling relationship. The counsellor must be aware of these feelings so they can be acknowledged when monitoring the counselling process.
- When addressing counselling dilemmas, ethical codes of conduct can provide a framework to help the counsellor decide on the appropriate course of action.



# Learning Checkpoint 3

## Monitor the counselling process

### Part A

1. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. The location of the counselling session may be a physical obstacle if the person relocates.	Yes / No
b. Being unable to afford childminding is an economic obstacle to the counselling process.	Yes / No
c. Self-awareness can be a psychological obstacle to the counselling process.	Yes / No
d. By working collaboratively with the person you can create a plan of action that avoids disruption to counselling because of financial obstacles.	Yes / No
e. Threats and disruptions to the counselling process can be worked on by providing culturally appropriate methods of intervention.	Yes / No

2. Briefly explain how monitoring and reviewing the counselling process can ensure it remains of value to clients.



**3.** Provide two reasons why it is important to include the person in the monitoring and reviewing process.

**4.** Which of the following are examples of when misperceptions are likely to occur in the counselling process? Tick all that apply.

- The counsellor's role in addressing the concern.
- The person's role in telling their story.
- The person's commitment in working towards a favourable outcome.
- How realistic the goals are.
- Time frames regarding meeting goals.

**5.** List two ways that misperceptions can be managed if they occur.

**6.** Identify three ways to reduce tension and stress in the counselling process.



7. Briefly describe two situations in which resource limitations may affect the person's counselling experience.

8. Match each situation of change to the correct approach.

A person undergoing cognitive therapy	The person may need a slower, more measured approach to change.
A person undergoing counselling for substance misuse	The person may take longer than others to embrace change and may be overwhelmed by the overall picture. They may require additional time to assimilate the changes into their life.
A person undergoing a significant lifestyle change	The person may need a regulated and structured pace of change with high regard to the tolerance level of the person.
The emotional and mental health of the person	The person may only be able to tolerate short periods of stimulation. A slow and steady pace of counselling may be required.

## Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Rasha has been undergoing counselling for depression. Halifa has been providing counselling to assist Rasha with strategies to manage and reduce depressive episodes. Rasha has made some really good progress, meeting all the goals that they established at the beginning of the counselling process.



Rasha has demonstrated the ability to apply new skills and techniques to help her manage her depression so Rasha and Halifa have now come to an agreement that it is appropriate to conclude the counselling process. Halifa tells Rasha that even though the formal counselling process is winding down, there will be follow-up sessions to ensure that Rasha is still managing well.

- 1. Rasha’s counselling is ending because her goals have been achieved. Briefly describe two other situations when a planned ending to counselling may be appropriate.

- 2. In the beginning of the counselling relationship Rasha expressed uncertainty about continuing with the process. List two techniques Halifa may have used to acknowledge Rasha’s uncertainty about the counselling relationship.



- 3.** List two techniques Halifa might have used to address Rasha's feelings of uncertainty regarding the counselling process.

- 4.** Briefly outline at least two examples of ethical code of conduct guidelines that Halifa would have upheld when counselling Rasha.

- 5.** Outline two situations in which an ethical code of conduct can be used to resolve an ethical dilemma.





## Topic 4: Bring the counselling process to an end

- 4A Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge change
- 4B Use the ending process to enable the client to understand the nature of earlier issues
- 4C Use boundaries to plan the structure and contract endings appropriately and support the client's autonomy
- 4D Inform clients about any opportunities for further support and complete documentation



# 4A

## Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge change

**The aim of counselling is to support people to identify their concerns and assist them to work through them.**

The counsellor should enable the person to identify when the counselling process is nearing the end and should discuss termination. The approaching conclusion of a counselling process should be discussed several sessions before termination to prepare the person for the end of the counselling relationship.

To help the person identify when the counselling process is nearing the end, the counsellor may discuss whether the person feels ready for closure, whether the frequency of the counselling sessions should be reduced and what should be included in the person's maintenance plan.

### How to know when your client is ready to conclude counselling

There are certain signs or achievements that can indicate the client is ready to conclude counselling.

#### Your client is ready to begin concluding counselling if:

- They have reached all of their goals for counselling.
- They are independently using all the strategies and coping skills you have discussed.
- They are generally coping well with all their life situations, issues and concerns.
- Signs and symptoms of mental health issues have been being eased by the process of counselling.
- They have seen positive changes and shifts in their life due to the strategies you have assisted them to use.
- They are starting to talk about not seeing you anymore.
- They have new positive perspectives on things in their life.
- They are doing all of the above and may begin to cancel or postpone sessions with you.

#### Your client is NOT ready to conclude counselling if:

- They are not coping with periods of distress.



- They are not coping with strong emotions such as anger, disgust, shock or sadness.
- They are suicidal and there have been suicide attempts.
- They have recently experienced a mental health crisis.
- They have recently been discharged from a psychiatric ward.
- Mental health signs and symptoms are intensifying.
- Self-harming behaviours have increased.
- Drug and alcohol abuse is getting worse.
- Their living situation has deteriorated or changed significantly. For example; they have become homeless, they are experiencing family violence, they have become a carer to a loved one.
- They are suddenly having to deal with grief and loss. For example; they have lost a loved one or a job.
- They have suddenly become disabled. For example; they have had a car accident and have become paraplegic; they have received an acquired brain injury.
- They have no social support in their life. To be adequately socially supported a person requires a minimum of five important relationships across the domains of work, family and friendships.

## Concluding the counselling process

When the counselling relationship is nearing the end, the person may experience feelings of discomfort, uncertainty or loss.

It is important at this time to acknowledge and reflect on the progress that the person has made. It may be easy for the person to forget how far they have come and acknowledging their progress can foster confidence and increase self-esteem. Reviewing what the person has learnt can provide a positive and affirmative perspective.

It is important that the counsellor facilitates the person's ability to identify the positive aspects of concluding the relationship. This can be done by assisting the person to identify:

- what has been learnt
- what has been gained
- areas of resilience
- potential areas for continued growth and development
- that the symptoms, issues or concerns that brought them to counselling are now diminished.

For more information on concluding the counselling process, visit:  
[aspirelr.link/concluding-therapy](https://aspirelr.link/concluding-therapy)



## Evaluate the counselling process

**When winding down the counselling process, it is important to evaluate what goals were met and what goals were not achieved.**

Ideally, the counselling process ends when goals have been met and the concern that the person came to counselling for has been managed or resolved. However, there may be concerns that have remained unresolved. It may be the case that the person has not achieved all the goals or completely resolved the concern. The counsellor may need to discuss contributing factors and barriers to reaching goals. It is important that the person does not feel judged, and that the discussion takes place in a safe environment.

Contributing factors and barriers may include:
• financial issues
• time constraints
• geographical challenges.

Evaluation should include what is changing and what is not changing. For example, a financial situation may change temporarily, but if the person moves to another geographical location the change may be permanent. A person may be unable to change circumstances in their lives but be able to change their perspective towards the concern. As a counsellor, it is important to acknowledge both aspects of change.

### **Video: Stages of change – counselling assessment**

Watch this video to learn about how you can evaluate changes in a client's life: [aspirelr.link/yt-stages-of-change](https://aspirelr.link/yt-stages-of-change)





## Example

### Concluding the counselling sessions and evaluating change

Byron is counselling Greg, who has come to counselling regarding relationship difficulties. Greg has used strategies during the counselling that have resulted in him resolving the relationship concern. Byron discusses winding down the counselling process and asks Greg how he feels about bringing the counselling relationship to a close. Greg expresses feelings of uncertainty and says that he is going to miss having another male he can talk to about relationship issues. Greg tells Byron that while there are parts of the relationship issues he cannot change, his perspective of the problem has shifted. Byron talks to him about how far he has come and the progress that he has made. This discussion helps Greg to feel confident that he can go forward and conclude the counselling relationship.

## Practice Task 19

### Question 1

List two aspects of the person's counselling experience that can be acknowledged at the conclusion of the process.



**Question 2**

List three examples of circumstances that would indicate a client is approaching the conclusion of counselling.

**Question 3**

Provide two contributing factors that could prevent the person from achieving their goals.

# 4B

## Use the ending process to enable the client to understand the nature of earlier issues

**When the counselling relationship is drawing to a close, it is important that the person has a clear understanding of the nature and impact of earlier issues.**

Clarifying the person's understanding reinforces why they sought counselling and why it is important to use what they have learnt in the counselling process to manage the issue going forward.

Clarifying the nature of the issue may involve revisiting it again from the person's perspective, deconstructing it into the types of impacts that it had, who it impacted and how the nature of the concern affected the person themselves. Discussing this with the person and separating it into defined components as part of the ending process may help to remove any emotional attachments the person has to the concern.

### **Clarify the nature and impact of earlier issues**

Reflecting on the nature and impact of the issues and concerns that initiated the counselling process can help clarify certain matters.

Reflecting on how counselling was initiated can clarify the reason/s for:

- why the person came to counselling
- why counselling was required
- which intervention strategies were chosen
- how a strategy was monitored
- the relationship between the client's areas of strengths and resilience and how these have impacted the areas of issues and concerns
- what goals were reached.



## Example

### Use the ending process to clarify the nature and impact of earlier issues

Darby has come to the end of the counselling process for issues relating to alcohol misuse. Patrick has been providing counselling and senses that Darby is feeling unsure about ending the counselling process. Patrick uses the session to allow Darby to reflect on the nature and impact of his issue. The issue is resolved, but Patrick feels it would be useful for Darby to deconstruct the issue to reinforce how far he has come and how important it is to value and honour the progress he has made. Together they reflect on why Darby came to counselling, why counselling was needed and the intervention strategies that were successful. This discussion helps Darby to see that his emotional response of feeling unsure is unfounded. He now feels confident to leave the counselling relationship.

## Practice Task 20

### Question 1

Provide two ways that the nature and impact of an issue can be clarified.

### Question 2

Briefly describe why it is important to clarify the person's understanding of their earlier issue.

# 4C

## Use boundaries to plan the structure and contract endings appropriately and support the client's autonomy

**When ending the counselling process, it is very important to stay within the ethical boundaries of the counselling relationship.**

This involves planning the structure and contract endings appropriately with the person. This may include giving the person time to process and express any feelings of grief, loss or anxiety about the ending of the relationship. It is important to acknowledge the person's achievements and encourage their sense of ownership of the goals they have reached.

It is important that boundary lines are very clear when counselling is ending. Counselling may have taken place over a long period of time with intimate feelings and thoughts shared with the counsellor. This is essentially the ending of the counselling alliance and all ethical and legal boundaries must be respected and considered in the planning and structure of the contract. If there are external circumstances that lead to the sudden or unforeseen ending of the relationship, the counsellor must take care of the immediate needs of the person appropriately.

### The ending structure may include:

- strategies the person can use to sustain changes or setbacks over time
- strategies to manage the natural tendency to revert back to familiar behaviours
- strategies to withstand peer pressures.

### Implement follow-up sessions

Follow-up sessions form a part of the structure of the ending phase of the counselling relationship.

There are no set number of follow-up sessions a client may require. Follow-up sessions may consist of a single appointment or may include a series of appointments spread out over weeks or months. It will be up to the counsellor and client to discuss what is most useful and appropriate.



Follow-up sessions:
• provide an opportunity for the counsellor to validate changes the person has made
• provide guidance for any issues that are still present
• reduce the impact of the counselling alliance ending
• provide additional information for evaluation of the counselling process
• provide an opportunity to initiate further assistance if required
• provide an opportunity to monitor short- and long-term changes the person has made.

### Use boundaries to assist the ending process

When ending the counselling relationship, outlining ethical boundaries may assist the ending process. For example, over time the person receiving counselling may have formed a bond of trust that they may perceive as friendship. It is important when ending the counselling relationship that ethical boundaries are clarified and understood so the counselling relationship can be ended appropriately. Ethical boundaries that may need clarifying are as follows:

- The counselling process was a formal and contracted relationship and nothing else.
- A relationship cannot be initiated, developed or pursued within two years of the end of the last counselling session.

**Video: Boundaries in the counselling relationship**  
Watch this video from a trainer from the UK discussing issues around boundaries with clients: [aspirelr.link/yt-counselling-relationship-boundaries](https://aspirelr.link/yt-counselling-relationship-boundaries)  
How does the author define boundaries?



### Support the person’s autonomy

Independence, autonomy and self-determination can be reinforced by ensuring that the person has an active role in making choices about how to maintain the changes they have made.

The motivation to maintain changes must come from the person, but the counsellor can provide autonomy, support and empowerment. This may be done by:

- validating the person’s achievements
- recognising that the choices made are a result of the person’s decision-making
- not influencing the person’s decisions.



## Example

### Use boundaries to plan the structure and contract endings appropriately

Micah is attending the last session with his counsellor Raol. They have had a counselling relationship for over six months and Raol has provided support for Micah's concern. Micah is feeling sad and reluctant to end the relationship. He asks Raol if he can see him at the local club for a drink to celebrate the end of counselling. Raol explains to Micah that while he provided support for Micah, it was within the professional boundaries of a counselling relationship and it should not be confused with a friendship. Micah apologises and says he totally understands and thanks him for his support over the past months. Raol supports Micah's feelings of autonomy by reminding him of and validating his progress and achievements.

## Practice Task 21

### Question 1

Provide at least two examples of what a follow-up session may include.



**Question 2**

Identify two ways that you can support a person's autonomy during the ending process.

**Question 3**

Explain how the boundaries of the counselling relationship can be used to close the counselling process.

# 4D

## Inform clients about any opportunities for further support and complete documentation

**It is important at this time to identify any unresolved issues and discuss further support that may be needed.**

If the termination of the counselling process is due to the counsellor being unable to provide further support, a referral to another service may be required. When closing the counselling process, it may be necessary to have the person check in with the counsellor after a period of time, for a follow-up on their wellbeing.

### Further support

Depending on the nature and complexity of the concern or issue, further support may be required.

Support agencies or support groups the person may benefit from include:

- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement: [aspirelr.link/acgb](https://aspirelr.link/acgb)
- Eating Disorders Victoria: [aspirelr.link/eating-disorders-support-groups](https://aspirelr.link/eating-disorders-support-groups)
- Family Drug Support Australia: [aspirelr.link/fdsa](https://aspirelr.link/fdsa)
- Support services for LGBTQIA+: [aspirelr.link/lgbtqi-support-services](https://aspirelr.link/lgbtqi-support-services)
- Support services for culturally and linguistically diverse clients: [aspirelr.link/cald-clients](https://aspirelr.link/cald-clients)
- Support services for carers: [aspirelr.link/carergateway](https://aspirelr.link/carergateway)
- Support services for First Nations Australians: [aspirelr.link/first-nation-australians-support](https://aspirelr.link/first-nation-australians-support)

### Unresolved issues

The aim of the counselling process is to support a person to work through concerns and issues; however, sometimes there are issues that are still unresolved at the end of the counselling relationship.

There are various reasons for this, such as incompatibility between the counsellor and the person, a change in circumstances, or reluctance to continue the counselling



process. When this happens, it is important to identify unresolved issues and discuss the barriers to resolving them. The counsellor may discuss ways to go forward to resolution and determine the person’s commitment or motivation to work towards resolution.

## Counselling documentation

**When the counselling process has concluded, it is very important that all documentation and reporting is completed according to organisational requirements.**

Organisational requirements are underpinned by laws and ethical guidelines and recommendations.

Counselling documentation must be kept for a minimum of seven years after the person has ceased counselling. Counselling documentation of children’s records must be kept for three years after the child reaches eighteen years old.

Counselling documentation may include:	
• contact details and nature of concern	• session notes
• assessment notes	• reports
• counselling case plan	• referrals.

Government and counselling agencies require accurate and appropriate documentation and records for people who undergo counselling. It is important that the person understands that counselling records may be legally accessed by courts, lawyers, coroners and ethics committees.

Completing and maintaining documentation requirements assist in:	
• service accountability	• continuity of care
• making referrals	• legal situations.
• reporting risk	

## Reporting requirements

Counselling reports may need to be submitted to bodies such as the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal to support an application for an award of financial assistance for counselling expenses.

If the person is being referred to a medical practitioner to receive assistance for a government-funded service, the counsellor's report may need to include:

- assessments carried out
- treatment provided
- recommendations for managing the person's issue.

## Example

### Inform clients about any opportunities for further support and complete documentation and reporting

Hannah is attending her last counselling session with Sarah. Together they reflect on the counselling process and discuss any issues or concerns that have not been resolved. Hannah has met all her goals but expresses concern that she may not be able to withstand peer pressure regarding her history of substance misuse. Sarah provides Hannah with details of support groups that can help should she feel like she is going to relapse and reminds her of the safety plan that she can refer to and use. She also provides Hannah with details of two youth groups that do bushwalking excursions, which Hannah is interested in, and suggests that she may make new friends there. Sarah tells Hannah that if she feels like she is under pressure to take the substance of concern that she needs to remember the commitment, strength and motivation that enabled her to meet her goals. After the discussion Hannah feels confident that she can resolve her fear of relapsing.

After Hannah has left, Sarah completes her session notes, which include the recommendation for Hannah to join a youth group. She checks that all the information included in Hannah's documentation is up to date and accurate, in case it needs to be referred to in the future.



## Practice Task 22

### Question 1

List two factors that may need to be considered when informing the person about further support options.

### Question 2

Which of the following need to be considered when discussing unresolved issues? Tick all that apply.

- Documentation requirements
- The complexity of the unresolved issues
- Barriers to unresolved issues
- Ways to move forward with resolution
- The person's commitment or motivation to work towards resolution

### Question 3

List three types of information that may be contained in counselling documentation.



**Question 4**

Provide two situations that could be aided by completing and maintaining documentation.



## Summary

- The ending of a counselling process should be discussed several sessions before the conclusion to prepare the person for the end of the counselling relationship.
- When you are beginning to conclude the counselling process, evaluate the goals that were achieved and the goals that were not.
- Clarifying the nature of the issue may involve revisiting it from the person's perspective, deconstructing it into the types of impacts it had, who it impacted and how the nature of the concern affected the person.
- When ending the counselling process, stay within the ethical boundaries of the counselling relationship.
- At the end of the counselling process, acknowledge the person's achievements and encourage their sense of ownership of the goals they have reached.
- Identify any unresolved issues and discuss further support that may be needed depending on the nature and complexity of the concern or issue.
- Government and counselling agencies require accurate and appropriate documentation and records for people who undergo counselling.



# Learning Checkpoint 4

## Bring the counselling process to an end

### Part A

1. Which of the following facilitates the person's ability to identify the positive nature of concluding the relationship? Tick all that apply.

- Identify what has been learnt.
- Focus on what has been gained.
- Summarise their counselling journey.
- Advise about potential areas for continued growth and development.
- Acknowledge that the symptoms that brought them to counselling are now diminished.

2. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. A client can still be ready to conclude the counselling process even if they do not have social supports.	Yes / No
b. A client can be ready to conclude the counselling process when signs and symptoms of mental health issues have been eased by the process of counselling.	Yes / No
c. Evaluation should include what is changing and what is not changing in the person's life and in the counselling process.	Yes / No
d. Changes in the person's situation that may impact the conclusion of the counselling process include financial limitations and geographical relocation.	Yes / No

3. List three ways the ending process can assist the person to understand the nature and impact of earlier issues.



- 4.** Provide two ethical boundaries that may need to be clarified in order to end the counselling process appropriately.

- 5.** Identify at least three ways follow-up sessions can assist the ending process.

- 6.** Provide two ways a counsellor can support a person's autonomy when ending the counselling relationship.



7. Which of the following apply to counselling documentation requirements? Tick all that apply.
- Counselling documentation must be kept for a minimum of three years after the person has ceased counselling.
  - Counselling documentation of children's records must be kept for three years after the child reaches eighteen years old.
  - If the person is being referred to a GP to receive assistance for a government-funded service, the counsellor's report may include information about assessments carried out.
  - Counselling reports may need to be submitted to bodies such as the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal.
  - Counselling documentation will contain information about a person's criminal history, even if not related to the client's concern.
8. Provide two examples of information that need to be included as part of reporting requirements to enable the person to receive funding assistance.

## Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Today is Satta's last counselling session with David. Her living situation has changed. She is now living with her partner and she thinks that having a female therapist may be more beneficial moving forward.



To end the session, Satta and David reflect on the counselling process and discuss any issues or concerns that have not been resolved. Satta has achieved all her goals but is still concerned that as the festive season approaches, she will be required to attend social events that may put her in a compromising position in relation to her history of alcohol misuse. David gives Satta details of support groups that can help should she feel like she is going to relapse and reminds her of the safety plan that she can refer to and use.

David reminds Satta of the strength and motivation she demonstrated which enabled her to meet her goals. After hearing this from David, Satta feels more confident heading into the festive season.

1. Explain why David needed to provide information to Satta for further support.

2. Provide two reasons why Satta's issues might be unresolved at the end of the counselling process.



# Glossary

## **Ambivalence**

Both good and bad feelings and thoughts about the situation and the perpetrator.

## **Code of conduct**

A set of rules that informs employees how to act in a workplace.

## **Discrepancies**

The differences between two things that should be equal or the same.

## **Discrimination**

The act of excluding or treating a person differently based solely on an attribute such as disability, age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

## **Duty of care**

A moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other persons.

## **Empathy**

The ability to understand, share and identify the feelings of others.

## **Intentional abuse**

When a person deliberately causes harm to another person.

## **Interconnection**

A link between two or more things that are related to each other.

## **Interdisciplinary team**

Includes professionals from many different disciplines or professions, working together to help meet a range of physical and other needs.

## **Motivational interviewing**

A method that encourages a person to identify their own motivations for change and strengthen their commitment to a specific goal.

## **Multidisciplinary team**

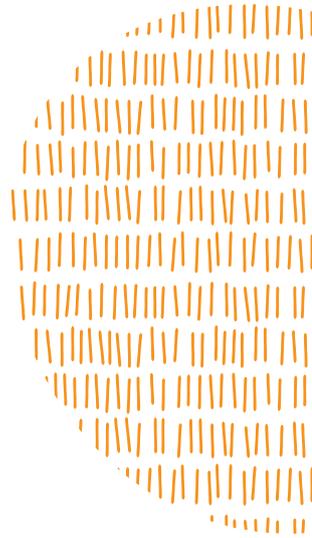
A group of allied health professionals working with the same client but addressing their differing needs.

## **Perception**

The way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted.

## **Positive regard**

Demonstrating value and respect towards a person regardless of their circumstances, behaviour or appearance.





**Risk of harm**

When there is a direct risk of physical harm to the person or others.

**Self-awareness**

Knowledge about your own character, behaviours and feelings.

**Strengths-based approach**

Recognises that all individuals are resourceful and resilient experts in their lives, and can progress in a way that enhances their quality of life.

**Unintentional abuse**

Abuse that occurs through ignorance or other unintentional reasons, harming the person with care needs.