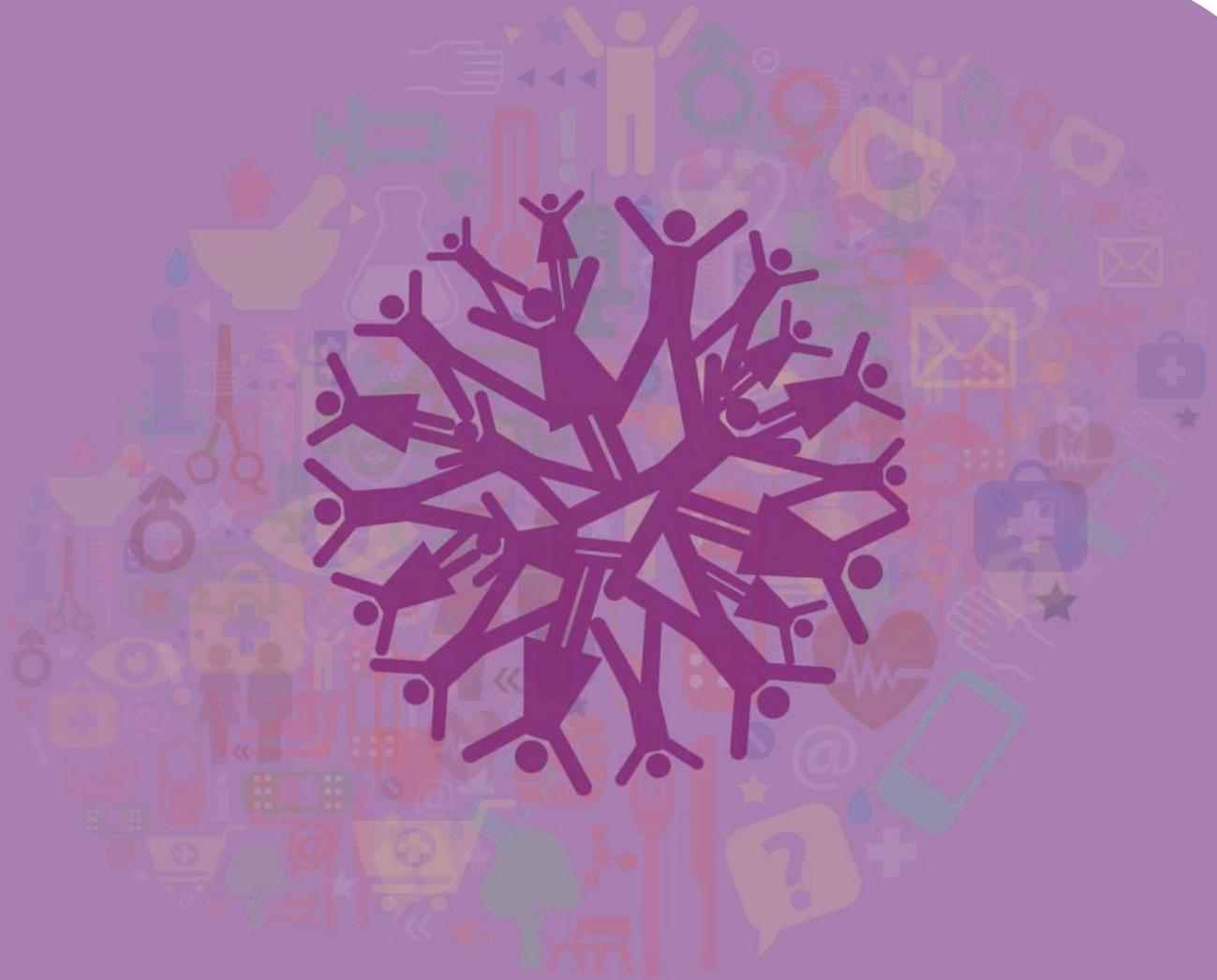


CHCCSL003

Facilitate the counselling relationship and process

Release 1



Learner guide

CHCCSL003

Facilitate the counselling relationship and process

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Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.2



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Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 1, version 1.1	April 2017	First release
Release 1, version 1.2	February 2019	Minor corrections as part of our ongoing improvement program. Updated broken URL links.

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CHCCSL003 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. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

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. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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 and case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. ▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help 
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

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.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

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

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Technology and digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely ▶ Accessing, organising and presenting information ▶ Using equipment correctly and safely

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 outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Support clients to identify concerns	1A Follow the client's story and stay with their perspective to assist them 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 appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
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

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
	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, where appropriate, 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 3 Monitor the counselling process	3A Monitor and review the counselling process with clients to ensure it remains of value and work on threats and disruptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Review and compare your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between the client's 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 what is and is not changing	<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 and impact 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 and reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Follow the client's story and stay with their perspective to assist them 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 appropriately**

Support clients to identify concerns

The purpose of a counselling process is to provide an opportunity for individuals to identify and work through their concerns. This process may require several counselling sessions depending on the needs of the person requiring counselling. The structure of a counselling session includes five key stages. These stages form the basis for what occurs in a counselling session.

1A Follow the client's story and stay with their perspective to assist them to feel comfortable and express their concerns freely

In order to support and assist a person to identify their concerns, a relationship of trust needs to be fostered whereby the person feels they can speak freely and be listened to without judgment. An environment must be created that encourages the person to tell their story, enabling the identification of underlying and primary issues that must be addressed. 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 and how they underpin their own rights and the rights and responsibilities of the counsellor during the counselling process.

The five stages of a counselling session are as follows.

The stages of counselling sessions

1. Introduction and establishment of 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. Closing 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 the 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 that the counsellor stays 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.



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 that at this stage, the person is informed of and understands their rights as it 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, what they think or what they believe, will be respected. They should be informed that human rights are based on principles of equality and respect, shared across cultures, religions and philosophies and will be demonstrated by you by providing fair treatment to them, and enabling them to make choices about the counselling process they receive. When advising the person that their human rights will be upheld, it 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 to another person. The person needs to know that privacy of their story protects written, verbal, recorded or computer-stored material.

You can read more about privacy, confidentiality and disclosure at: <http://aspirelr.link/aacqa-privacy-policy> and <http://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 to do so. Confidentiality applies to any personal information pertaining to the counselling process. The person needs to know that confidentiality applies to all written, verbal, recorded or computer-stored material.

Disclosure of information

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

- ▶ The person has a reportable disease or 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.

Discrimination

'Discriminate' means to treat someone unfairly or favour others. Discrimination is never acceptable behaviour and is against the law. It is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, disability or impairment, marital status, sexual preference, 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.

Mandatory reporting

When encouraging the person to share their story, it is very important 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 it is at risk.

Rights and responsibilities of workers, employers and clients

In every service, the employer or service provider is responsible for the successful operation of the organisation and 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
▶ A safe workplace	▶ Follow policies and procedures to work in a safe manner at all times.
▶ A workplace free from harassment and discrimination	▶ Comply with a duty of care and follow instructions carefully.
▶ Access to a grievance (complaint) process	▶ Be competent and work within their level of training.
▶ Wages in accordance with the award rates	▶ Be willing to learn and train in new skills.
▶ Clear direction of their duties	▶ Be punctual, courteous and respect cultural and social diversity.

Employer's rights and responsibilities

Here are some rights and responsibilities of an employer or service provider.

Rights and responsibilities of an employer are:

- ▶ To provide a safe workplace
- ▶ To ensure that you have all the skills, knowledge, training and qualifications required to carry out your role competently
- ▶ To expect certain levels and standards of performance from employees
- ▶ To expect employees to uphold all ethical and legal obligations that apply to their role

Individual's rights and responsibilities

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

- ▶ To be treated with respect and dignity
- ▶ To be consulted
- ▶ To be involved in the decision-making process
- ▶ To have privacy and confidentiality respected
- ▶ To have the right to a complaints process

Responsibilities

- ▶ To supply the service with information needed to provide appropriate support
- ▶ To respect the rights of the person providing support
- ▶ To respect the privacy and dignity of the person providing support
- ▶ To notify the services of changes in support requirements
- ▶ To ensure their home is safe for support staff

Communication techniques to build trust and rapport

To ensure that the person feels comfortable sharing their story, it is critical to create a safe psychological 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 whilst allowing the person to choose where they sit.

Here are additional qualities of a counsellor that must be demonstrated in order to build trust and rapport.

Empathy

To demonstrate empathy 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 whereby the person is encouraged to share their story.

Positive regard

Positive regard means demonstrating value and respect towards a person no matter what their circumstances or behaviour or appearance. In order to encourage the person to share their story, there must be a foundation of warmth and understanding.

Respect

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 feeling without interruption.

Stay with the person's perspective

It is vital at this stage when listening to a person's story to stay with the person's perspective and context. The perspective and context are the conditions, circumstances and/or the setting, which provide the perspective or viewpoint from which the story is told. 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

Follow the client’s story and stay with their perspective to assist them to feel comfortable and 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 would like to. 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 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 may need to breach confidentiality. Sarah explains the circumstances to him and ensures that he understands them and tells 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 street for some time and tells Sarah about 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.

Practice task 1

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

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

3. List two examples of the context of a person’s story.

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 1

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 involves the art of listening. It involves listening without judgment and being aware of other dimensions of the story, apart from 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 listening to the person's story, there may be mention of relationship conflicts, substance misuse or traumatic events that may indicate deeper underlying concerns are 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.



Techniques for managing this stage

To ensure that you explore the nature and depth of presenting issues, you need to use techniques such as 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.

Example

Explore the client’s presenting issues and establish their nature and depth



Beth comes 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 like 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

1. Provide two aspects of the information that can help you to identify the possibility of underlying issues.

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

Click to complete Practice task 2

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. Issues requiring immediate action may indicate that crisis intervention is needed. Immediate action may be required to ensure the person's safety and/or ensure 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.

Neglect

A counsellor must be able to identify physical, emotional and behavioural signs of neglect. This is when the person is neglected either through intentional or unintentional acts that result in them not being provided with basic necessities.

Here is further information about neglect.

Examples of neglect

- ▶ Not providing enough food or drinks
- ▶ Not spending time with the person – leaving them alone for prolonged periods
- ▶ Inadequate provision of clothing or personal items
- ▶ Unwillingness to allow for adequate medical, dental or personal care
- ▶ Inappropriate use of medication; for example, overdosing a person so they sleep for longer periods of the day
- ▶ Leaving the person in the same continence aid for the whole day

Indicators of neglect

- ▶ Weight loss, dehydration, poor skin quality
- ▶ Person appears unkempt – same clothing worn every day of the week; loose or baggy clothing; clothing in poor state; hair unwashed; untrimmed nails; poor hygiene
- ▶ No dentures, hearing aids, mobility aids or glasses
- ▶ Skin burns from urine being in contact with the skin for prolonged hours

Abuse

Abuse can be intentional or unintentional. Intentional abuse is when a person deliberately causes harm to the other person by depriving and/or hurting the other person. Unintentional abuse can occur when another person doesn't realise, through ignorance or other reasons, that their behaviour towards the person with care needs is abusive. The importance of observation and getting to know the person you are counselling can assist 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.

Physical abuse

This is when a person is being physically assaulted. This can occur through physical acts of violence. 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 (throwing rocks, using a strap).

Sexual abuse

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.

Financial abuse

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.

Psychological/emotional abuse

This form of abuse is an ongoing intimidating behaviour that is designed to disempower a person. Psychological and emotional abuse can be both verbal and nonverbal. It can include belittling, threats and withdrawal of affection. Some indicators of this form of abuse are sense of hopelessness, fearfulness, helplessness, withdrawal and reluctance to make decisions.

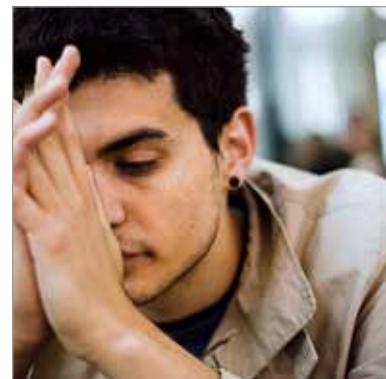
Social abuse

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.

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. In addition, assessing the risk can be made more difficult because the person concerned is reluctant to reveal the true extent of their circumstances.

People who are experiencing disadvantage such as those living in poverty, those with a mental illness, Indigenous people and refugees are at a higher risk of harm either from other people or from self-harm. In addition, some groups are at higher risk of suicide. These include males, Indigenous Australians and people living in rural communities. Some studies also include same-sex attracted people and those with chronic or painful illness in high-risk categories.



Risk of self-harm

Self-harm is the act of deliberately causing damage or injury to oneself; for example, by 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.

Techniques for managing this stage

In this stage, the counsellor works closely with the person, encouraging them to participate in the identification and exploration of their issues and discusses the goals of the counselling session with them. In order to identify their issues and determine their needs, some techniques may be used.

How to identify a person’s needs and support

- ▶ Asking direct questions about what their immediate needs are such as, ‘What do you need now to make you feel safer?’
- ▶ Determining their support network; for example, ask if they have anyone among their friends or family who can provide immediate support
- ▶ Providing information about services and sources of support that can be used
- ▶ Developing a safety plan together so the person knows what to do if they start to become overwhelmed by a situation or their own thoughts and feelings

Example

Identify and promptly deal with situations requiring immediate action

Simon has come to Thomas for counselling sessions. Simon presents with severe emotional turmoil 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 Simon about 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

1. Provide two indicators that a person is in a situation requiring immediate attention.
.....
2. Provide two examples of neglect.
.....
3. Provide two techniques that can be used to manage this stage of the counselling session.
.....

Click to complete Practice task 3

1D Support clients to identify their primary concerns in relation to the presenting issues and to prioritise concerns

The fourth stage of the counselling session is when there is a prioritisation of primary concerns, 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. Primary concerns may be abuse, homelessness, drugs and alcohol misuse, family relationships or grief.



Identify primary concerns

A person may seek counselling for issues of anger management, self-harm behaviours or grief. As a counsellor, you need to be able to look for underpinning concerns that contribute to the issue. For example, a person presenting with an issue of self-harming behaviour may be linked to a primary concern of child abuse, bullying or neglect.

To identify the primary concern, 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 insight into the issues that contribute to the primary concern.

When supporting a person to identify the primary concerns you may need to use a variety of techniques to draw out information – two of which are outlined below.

Wish lists

A wish list can help identify what the person would like changed or improved in their life, therefore highlighting a concern. For example, a person may express that they wish they were in a respectful relationship. This may indicate a primary concern of domestic violence.

Advanced empathy

Using advanced empathy means to read between the lines. Using advanced empathy can be used to:

- ▶ identify concerns that may be only hinted at
- ▶ Identify key words or sentences in the person's story that may indicate a concern.

Options and plan for change

Once 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 wish list
- ▶ rephrasing and clarifying of the person's statements
- ▶ encouraging the person to see the bigger picture
- ▶ defining steps required to meet the goal
- ▶ exploring options for reaching the goal
- ▶ encouraging the person to take responsibility for achieving the goal.



Techniques for managing this stage

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

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

Jason comes to Zahra for counselling regarding feelings of being overwhelmed and worthlessness. He tells Zahra that he feels tired all of 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 that he had a steady job so that he could afford a permanent place to live. At the moment he only gets bits and pieces of work, and sometimes ends up sleeping on the street. 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 Jason 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

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

.....

2. Provide two ways you could set goals and build strategies that can address the concerns.

.....

[Click to complete Practice task 4](#)

1E Recognise indicators of client issues requiring referral and report or refer appropriately

The fifth stage of the counselling session is when the session is closed. At this time, the counsellor makes the decision to refer the person for more-appropriate support, or identifies a date for another session, in collaboration with the person receiving counselling. 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.

Workers should also be familiar with ethical guidelines and codes of practice and how they 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 and it is important that you are aware of these. These responsibilities are described in detail throughout this section.

Legal responsibilities and obligations include:

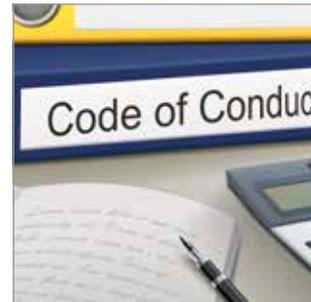
- ▶ codes of conduct
- ▶ discrimination
- ▶ duty of care
- ▶ human rights
- ▶ mandatory reporting
- ▶ practitioner–client boundaries
- ▶ privacy, confidentiality and disclosure
- ▶ records management
- ▶ rights and responsibilities of workers, employers and clients
- ▶ work role responsibilities and limitations
- ▶ workplace health and safety.

Codes of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of principles, standards or rules of behaviour that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of work in a workplace. A code of conduct should promote the welfare of people 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.

It is important when closing a session that it is conducted according to the code of conduct of your service. It is also important that the person receiving counselling understands that you are committed to upholding the service code of conduct and it will not be breached.



Discrimination

At the beginning of the session, as a counsellor, you have explained to the person that they will not be discriminated against in any way by what they disclose to you. At the end of the session, it is good to reiterate this again to the person, to set them at ease and to strengthen the counselling relationship.



Duty of care

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. Injury, illness or harm encompasses physical aspects of the person but also psychological harm or injury.

As a counsellor, you must uphold duty-of-care obligations and 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
- ▶ the person's safety when returning to their environment
- ▶ if information needs to be shared or reported
- ▶ if emergency services are required.

Human rights

At the beginning of the session, as a counsellor you explained the person's human rights to the person. To strengthen the counselling relationship and assure the person that their story and information shared will be treated fairly, at the end of the session, remind them that you are bound to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) and you will do so.



Mandatory reporting

At the beginning of the counselling session, the person was informed of instances when you as the counsellor are mandated to file a report. If there are concerns that must be reported, you should inform the person at the end of the session what concerns must be reported, why they must be reported and who they need to be reported to.



Practitioner-client boundaries

As a counsellor, when closing the session, it is important to explain boundaries that need to be upheld. 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 suggest social contact. Breaching boundaries is also a breach of trust. It can damage the counselling relationship and undermine the effectiveness of the counselling service.



Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure

At the beginning of the counselling session, the person was informed of the privacy, confidentiality and information disclosure obligations that applied to them. At the end of the session, to reinforce the counselling relationship, the person may be reassured that all information and details included in their story are protected by law.

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 does not fall under legal obligations 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.

You can read more about privacy, confidentiality and disclosure at:

- ▶ <http://aspirelr.link/aacqa-privacy-policy>

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

Accuracy and clarity

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, date and time it was written.

Objectivity

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.

Language

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.

Completeness

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.

Timeliness

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, then the date of the event if it differs from the date of writing the notes.

Alterations

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 of workers, employers and clients

At the beginning of the counselling session, the person was informed of their rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers. When closing the session, you as the counsellor may reassure the person that the rights and responsibilities of all involved in the counselling session will be upheld. For example, they and their story will be treated with respect and dignity, and they will be consulted and involved in any decision-making. They may also be reminded that they have a right to a complaints process.



Work role responsibilities and limitations

Working within the legal responsibilities and limitations of your role as a counsellor 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. Understanding legal responsibilities and limitations protects the people you provide support services to, yourself, your employer and your colleagues.

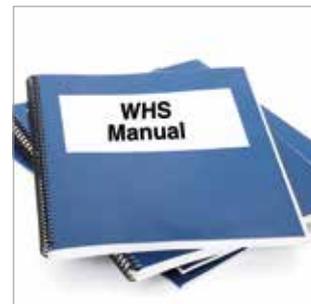


The key source of information setting out your role and responsibilities is your job description or duty statement. When a job description or duty statement is developed for a particular role or position in community services, the employing organisation will check relevant legislation and service standards 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 closing a counselling session, it is important to consider the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the person



According to the Explanatory Memorandum – Model Work Health and Safety Bill (Safe Work Australia, 2010), the harmonisation of WHS laws through a model framework is to:

- ▶ protect the health and safety of workers
- ▶ improve safety outcomes in workplaces
- ▶ reduce compliance costs for business
- ▶ improve efficiency for regulatory agencies.

Make a referral

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.

Techniques for managing this stage

When closing 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 has been heard in your own words. This is done to check your understanding of what has been said, and shows that the message was received in the way it was intended. When paraphrasing, you restate what the person has just said in fewer words, by choosing the most important details.

Assessing

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.

Example

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

Jennifer has been counselling Robert, who has come to her regarding issues that stem from an abusive home environment. He feels shamed and guilty that he has not come to counselling before now, and is concerned 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 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 also 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

1. Provide two ways that duty of care can be demonstrated at the end of a counselling session.

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2. In order to uphold WHS obligations when closing a counselling session, provide two aspects of the person to consider.

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3. Provide two indications that a person may need a referral.

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Click to complete Practice task 5

Summary

1. It is important to build a trusting relationship with the person to encourage them to tell their story in an environment that is comfortable and safe.
2. The counselling relationship must be underpinned by legal and ethical considerations that must be upheld and demonstrated in the counselling session.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Once situations requiring immediate attention have been addressed, the counsellor can support the person to identify their primary concerns which are the presenting issues.
6. 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.
7. It is important to consider the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the person.
8. 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

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in supporting clients to identify concerns.

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

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2. Provide two aspects of human rights that should be communicated to the person when establishing the counselling relationship.

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3. What type of information is protected by privacy legislation?

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4. Describe how confidentiality applies to counselling.

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5. Provide two examples of when you are required to disclose confidential information.

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6. Provide two situations in which you are obligated comply with mandatory reporting requirements.

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7. Provide two rights of a worker.

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8. Provide two examples of worker responsibilities.

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9. Provide two rights of an employer.

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10. Provide two responsibilities of an employer.

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11. Provide two rights of a person receiving counselling.

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12. Provide two responsibilities of a person receiving counselling.

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13. Provide two examples of how a counsellor can build trust and rapport with a person to establish the counselling relationship.

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14. Provide two reasons why it is important to stay with the person's perspective when listening to them as a counsellor.

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15. Provide two examples of unlawful discrimination.

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

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17. Describe two techniques for managing the second stage of the counselling session: getting the person's story.

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18. Provide two indicators that may suggest immediate attention is required.

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19. Describe how you should deal with a person who presents with indicators of abuse.

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20. Describe two techniques you could use for managing the third stage of the counselling process: identifying issues of immediate concern.

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21. Provide two ways a counsellor can set goals and build strategies to address the person's concern.

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22. Provide two techniques for managing the fourth stage of the counselling session: prioritising concerns and exploring options and a plan for change.

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23. Provide two principles that a community services code of conduct may promote.

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24. Provide a brief description of how duty of care applies to counselling.

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25. Provide two examples, relating to duty of care, of what needs to be assessed at the closure of a counselling session.

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26. Provide two reasons why practitioner-client boundaries must be upheld.

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27. Describe two legislative requirements that policies and procedures of records management are based on.

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28. Provide two reasons why it is important to understand your work role responsibilities and limitations.

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29. Provide two aspects of work health and safety (WHS) that you must consider when providing counselling.

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30. Provide two indicators that would suggest a person requires a referral.

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31. Describe two techniques for managing the fifth stage of the counselling session: session closure.

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 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, where appropriate, and begin to identify ways of dealing with them**
- 2G Acknowledge and work with changes in the client's life as appropriate**

Support clients to work through concerns

Supporting a person to work through their concerns can be complex and requires identification of a person's main concern, and the issues that contribute to the concern. People may be unsure of their capability to change and need support to identify how their concern is linked to underlying issues in their lives. A counsellor requires the skills to determine the appropriate intervention for the person and to support the person to use their strengths to find a way to work through their issues and concerns. Advanced communication skills need to be used by the counsellor to empower the person to make changes in their lives.

2A Identify and work with uncertainty and ambivalence of clients

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

When you are counselling a person, it is important to identify uncertainty and ambivalence so that it can be resolved. Here are some indicators to be aware of.

Behaviours that may indicate uncertainty and ambivalence

- ▶ Avoidance of 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

Work with issues of uncertainty and ambivalence

Motivational interviewing is a person-centred style of counselling that encourages behaviour change by helping people examine their uncertainty and indecision regarding making changes. Motivational interviewing helps the person see where they are now and where they want to be. It also helps the person acknowledge their feelings of uncertainty and resolve their ambivalence.

Motivational interviewing requires four basic skills, which are:

- ▶ asking open-ended questions
- ▶ making affirming statements
- ▶ using reflective listening
- ▶ using summary statements.

Principles 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 toward their goals. The objective of this principle is to assist the person to bridge the gap between where they are 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 can 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 help them to work through it. By verbalising ambivalence, the uncertainty is brought out into the open and the two 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 the person 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 the change.

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 displays 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 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 some small changes and that, even though the changes are small, they are significant. Jonah feels more confident and motivated to move forward because Laura has helped him identify that he really wants to make changes, and now feels motivated to do so.

Practice task 6

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

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2. Provide two aspects of developing discrepancy.

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[Click to complete Practice task 6](#)

2B Support clients to experience and process difficulties and discuss parallels and links in the client's experience

Who we are today is due in part to our experiences from birth until now. Some experiences form and affect people more significantly than others. 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. A counsellor needs to take into account 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 the difficulty. This may include using therapy to deconstruct the concern to make it more manageable and specific. A counsellor should demonstrate self-awareness when supporting a person to experience and process concerns.

Experience, exploring and processing difficulties

When a difficulty presents, it may be hard for the person to process the cause, effect and impact of the difficulty and 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 feelings, circumstances and events that contributed to the difficulty. This may involve helping the person to:

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

Demonstrate self-awareness

Self-awareness is having a sense of your own strengths, weaknesses, beliefs and emotions. Being self-aware helps you to make changes in your thoughts, emotions and behaviour. 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.

Role in organisation

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.

Competence and responsibility

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.

Strengths and limitations

Every counsellor has their own set of strengths and limitations. Limitations may be that the counsellor does not have the expertise that is needed, the counsellor does not have a rapport with the person or that the counsellor is approaching burnout.

Some counsellors have strengths and experience in an area that another's may not. Strengths may be inherent personal qualities, or personal experience and knowledge.

Support and supervision

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 is outside the expertise of the counsellor. It may also be required to avoid burnout or undo stress. Supervision is a valuable tool in identifying beliefs, bias and attitudes that may impact the counselling process.

Beliefs and values

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 is a demonstration of judgment and disrespect. No matter what the person's beliefs or values are, a counsellor must accept the person as they are and provide guidance.

Identify parallels and links in person's experience

Assisting the person to understand and identify parallels and links between their experience and the concern can give them deeper understanding and clarification of contributors to the issue. When the history and experiences of the person are examined, indicators may appear which will shed light on the issue of concern.

Past experience and anxiety

A person may seek counselling regarding anxiety attacks whereby feelings of dread, restlessness and apprehension present. The counsellor will attempt to determine an event or events in the person's past history that contributed to these feelings, thereby establishing a link from the past experience to the present condition.

Past experience and substance misuse

A person may seek counselling regarding substance misuse when their personal lives 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 experience 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.

Discuss parallels and links appropriately

When discussing parallels and links within a person's life, the person may feel vulnerable, fragile or uncomfortable. Understanding the complexity of communication is critical. 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.

Tact and diplomacy

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, proceeding with tact and diplomacy shows respect for the person.

Attentive listening

Listening is not just hearing what is being said. Attentive listening is about how something is being said, about hearing what is not being said and about 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.

Empathetic understanding

Empathetic understanding involves putting yourself in the person's place. Listen without judgment, and acknowledge the person's pain and feelings.

Patience

Understand the power of patience. Demonstrating patience does not mean listening passively, but it means waiting and using intuition to know when to continue the discussion. Give the person time to reflect on experiences and links to the current issue. Demonstrate the ability to wait in silence to give the person time to think and respond.

Cultural competency

Cultural competence is needed to allow a counsellor to think outside of 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.

Sense of appropriateness

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 own 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.

Authenticity and humility

Demonstrating authenticity and humility is 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.

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 causal 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 the 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 in such a strong way. They discuss Annette's coping mechanism for dealing with the trauma and realise that Annette uses the abusive 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

1. Provide two ways that a counsellor can support the person to process the cause, effect and impact of their difficulty.

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

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3. List two abilities that a counsellor must have that underpin communication skills.

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Click to complete Practice task 7

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 and 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

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.

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

<p>Cognitive behaviour therapy</p>	<p>Cognitive behaviour therapy 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.</p>
<p>Behaviour therapy</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy</p>	<p>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 disorder to help prevent the relapse of depression.</p>

Acceptance and commitment therapy	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.
Solution-focused therapy	Solution-focused therapy centres on the person identifying their goals and working 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.
Narrative therapy	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 the 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 providing assistance to people requiring couple or family counselling.
Emotion-focused therapy	Emotion-focused therapy or emotionally focused therapy (EFT) is used to assist people to identify their experience more effectively and explore their emotions that are prompted by the experience. This therapy may be used by an agency that provides relationship counselling.

Identify and implement 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 which 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. 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

Here are some aspects of counselling and intervention that contribute to the counselling process.

What the person has the right to expect

A person receiving counselling has the right to expect:

- ▶ information regarding their rights and responsibilities
- ▶ counselling provided with respect
- ▶ personal information to be kept confidential
- ▶ their needs addressed with consideration of social, cultural, mental health or disability issues
- ▶ information about available services and options
- ▶ consultation and participation in decision-making.

Person-centred practice

Person-centred practice:

- ▶ focuses on the whole of the person or the community
- ▶ uses empowering language that promotes dignity
- ▶ includes people in decision-making relating to the services they are receiving
- ▶ involves people in discussions about service delivery options and issues
- ▶ obtains the person's consent to work with them
- ▶ involves listening to and addressing complaints.

The purpose of counselling

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 a goal to facilitating positive change.

The evolution of the 'helping relationship'

Counselling has existed for hundreds of years. During the 1970s, Carl Rogers first introduced the humanistic theory. He believed that humans had a desire to achieve higher functioning. 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 the best way forward.

The role of counselling

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.

Scope and nature of counselling relationship

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 a provider of support services.

The impact of values on counselling relationship

Values are the rules and beliefs by which our lives and behaviours are guided. A counsellor must suspend all judgments and assumptions about the person's values. A counsellor must treat everyone with respect and without judgment of the person's beliefs or expectations arising from their values. Our own values may affect our ability to provide counselling effectively.

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 displayed. The counselling sessions were structured and focused on behaviour modification and not the reason for the behaviour. When monitoring Zach's lack of progress, Brad considers using a cognitive behaviour therapy strategy to help Zach modify behaviour by addressing the reasons for his anger and changing his thought processes.

Brad discusses the new approach with Zach and finds that Zach connects with this approach and is engaged to explore strategies to change his thought patterns and responses to events that trigger his uncontrolled anger.



Practice task 8

1. Provide two principles of person-centred practice.

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

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[Click to complete Practice task 8](#)

2D Support the client to identify and use known and previously unknown strengths

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 they are instead approached in collaboration with the person to empower them to make their own choices and decisions.



Identify strengths

The most 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 the person has. Some strengths may be obvious to the person, but there will be strengths that they are unaware of. A counsellor needs to support the person to explore and find their strengths. When strengths are discovered, the person will be empowered to work through their concerns. Uncovering a person's strengths may not be easy.

Here are some examples of types of strengths.

Biological

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

Psychological

Psychological strengths may include problem-solving abilities, self-esteem, self-reliance and good coping skills.

Social

Social strengths may include family support and sense of belonging.

Cultural

Cultural strengths include having a belief system, traditions, sense of community and ethnic identity.

Economic

Economic strengths include being employed and having sufficient money and adequate housing.

Use strengths

When a person becomes aware of their strengths, they are more likely to be motivated to use them.

A counsellor can support the person to use their strengths by:

- ▶ 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.

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 knows she has. Marny works with Jackie to identify additional strengths by discussing her problem-solving abilities and self-reliance that has helped Jackie to get this far. Jackie is surprised and didn’t realise that in spite of the issues contributing to her depression that she is good at solving problems that she has been faced with. She also realises that she has a strong sense of self-reliance that has enabled her to be independent and self-sufficient in the face of the issues contributing to her depression.

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



Practice task 9

1. Provide two aspects of a strengths-based approach to counselling.

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2. Describe two reasons that a strengths-based approach to counselling is beneficial for the person receiving counselling.

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[Click to complete Practice task 9](#)

2E 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 reflection, clarification and review to ensure the person's feelings are not being misinterpreted.

Consider the following techniques.

Reflective listening

A counsellor can use reflection to confirm their understanding of the person's feelings. This may be achieved by putting words to the person's feelings and emotions. For example, a sentence such as, 'It sounds like you are feeling anxious' demonstrates that you perceive the person to be feeling anxious. The person may confirm your perception or may clarify it. Using reflection as a technique of clarification will lessen the chance of the counsellor making 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 information using all the emotions and feelings that have been 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 make sure 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.

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

Jessie is a counsellor working with Sam. When Sam is sharing his story with Jessie, she is unsure of what Sam means when he says he just wants 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, 'Oh! That is good, 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 issue.

Practice task 10

1. Provide two benefits of using reflective listening when counselling a person.

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

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Click to complete Practice task 10

2F Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues, where appropriate, 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 that contribute to the concerns. Once the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to deal with them and prioritise issues, provide support and develop strategies to assist the person to go forward.



Often concerns are not easily defined by a single issue. Combinations of life experiences, relationship issues or family background factors can impact and contribute to a concern. By increasing awareness of the underlying issues, it 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 looked at in an attempt to identify factors that may be contributing to the person's concern.

Deal with underlying issues

When the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to begin to deal with them. This may involve:

- ▶ planning the appropriate counselling approach
- ▶ prioritising support
- ▶ referring the person to a different agency.

Example

Assist clients to become aware of underlying issues, where appropriate, 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 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

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

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

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Click to complete Practice task 11

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 changes to address the issues. The intervention must be conducted appropriately and sensitively with regard 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 the person has a right to feel as 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 change. Change is stressful and it may be difficult to change patterns and thinking that has been well-established.

When working with a person in a state 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 courage to change
- ▶ supported to manage anticipated and unanticipated challenges
- ▶ supported to deal with obstacles or relapses.

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

Terry is attending counselling and is working toward making changes in his life regarding the relationship he has with his partner. He is finding it challenging, as the changes he is making effect their futures. 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

1. Describe two reasons why it is beneficial for a counsellor to acknowledge the concerns of the person they are counselling.
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2. Provide two aspects that a counsellor should reinforce to assist the person to make changes.
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[Click to complete Practice task 12](#)

Summary

1. Supporting a person to work through their concerns can be complex and requires identification of a person's main concern, and issues that contribute to the concern.
2. 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.
3. Once the difficulty has been identified, the counsellor must support the person to experience, explore and process the difficulty.
4. 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.
5. The intervention must be meaningful and facilitate the person's understanding of the concern and provide a way forward.
6. 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 strengths the person has.
7. A counsellor can use reflection, clarification and review to ensure the person's feelings are not being misinterpreted.
8. Once the underlying issues are identified, the counsellor can assist the person to deal with them and prioritise issues, provide support and develop strategies to assist the person to go forward.
9. 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

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in supporting clients to work through their concerns.

1. Provide two ways that motivational interviewing can be used to work with issues of uncertainty and ambivalence.

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2. Provide two behaviours that may indicate a person is uncertain and ambivalent.

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3. Provide two ways that you can help a person process their difficulty.

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

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5. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can demonstrate self-awareness regarding limits of competence and responsibility.

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6. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can demonstrate self-awareness regarding strengths and limitations.

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7. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can demonstrate self-awareness regarding the need for support and supervision.

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8. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can demonstrate self-awareness regarding beliefs and attitudes.

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9. Provide two reasons why it is beneficial to assist a person to understand and identify parallels and links between their experience and the concern.

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10. Provide two reasons why it is important to implement an intervention that is appropriate to the person.

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11. Briefly describe two types of counselling and intervention.

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12. Provide two aspects of counselling that the person receiving counselling has a right to expect.

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13. Provide two principles of person-centred practice.

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14. Briefly describe the purpose of counselling.

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15. Briefly describe the evolution of the 'helping relationship'.

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16. Provide a description of the role counselling plays.

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17. Briefly describe the scope and nature of the counselling relationship.

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18. Briefly describe two ways you can ensure your own values do not impact the counselling relationship.

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19. Briefly describe an example of a strength that, as a counsellor, you may need to identify.

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20. Provide two ways that a counsellor can support the person to use their strengths.

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21. Briefly describe two ways to ensure you perceive a person's feelings correctly.

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22. Briefly describe two ways that a counsellor can assist a person to identify underlying issues.

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23. Provide two ways a counsellor can help the person deal with underlying issues once they are identified.

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24. Provide two reasons why a counsellor needs to acknowledge the person's concern.

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25. Provide two considerations that the counsellor must remember when working with a person in a state of change.

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Monitor and review the counselling process with clients to ensure it remains of value and work on threats and disruptions**

- 3B Review and compare your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between the client's 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**

Monitor the counselling process

A person's circumstances may change during the course of the counselling process. Changes may also be required if complex or high-risk situations arise, such as life-threatening situations or those involving complex factors such as drug addiction and mental illness. The counsellor needs to monitor the counselling process to make sure it meets the needs of the person, facilitates identified changes and remains appropriate.

3A Monitor and review the counselling process with clients to ensure it remains of value 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 intervention. This is to ensure the changing needs of the person receiving counselling are met and to make sure the approach remains of value to them. The counsellor must listen for indications of how the person perceives their goals and their capacity to achieve the goals. This will enable the counsellor to proactively identify obstacles and barriers to achievement and will highlight areas that need revision. By identifying threats to the counselling process proactively, the counsellor can create a contingency plan and provide options for addressing the threats. By working proactively, it minimises threats, obstacles or barriers to the counselling process.



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 working. 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 to the person.

Obstacles to the counselling process

When monitoring and reviewing the counselling process with the person, the counsellor may discover barriers and obstacles, which are threats, and can cause disruptions to the person's progress. Some obstacles that may be a threat and disruption to the counselling process are discussed below.

Psychological

Trust is one of the most valuable aspects of the counselling relationship. The trusting relationship may take a long time to develop, but is easily destroyed. It is vital that the counsellor acts proactively to ensure the person fully understands when disclosure of information is mandatory and situations that mandate personal information to be shared.

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.

Fear may disrupt the counselling process if the person is afraid of repercussions relating to information that has been disclosed or the outcome of deciding to change behaviours.

Physical

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.

The physical location of the counselling session may be an obstacle if the person relocates.

Economic

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.

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 whereby 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 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 that the process is invasive. A counsellor needs to be proactive in demonstrating cultural and spiritual awareness. The counsellor may need to provide culturally-appropriate methods of intervention.

Example

Monitor and review the counselling process with clients to ensure it remains of value and work on threats and disruptions

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

When reviewing the process, Sarah expresses shame regarding her reluctance to change her current living situation and 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

1. Provide two types of obstacles that may be a threat and disruption to the counselling process.

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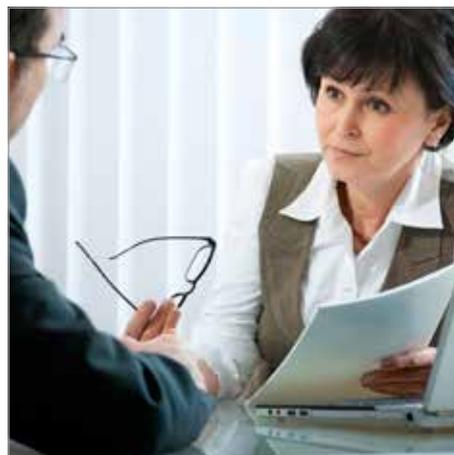
2. Provide two examples of how the counsellor can protect the trust of a person to minimise it becoming a threat to the counselling process.

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Click to complete Practice task 13

3B Review and compare your own and the client's perceptions of the process and address tension between the client's hopes, expectations and reality

It is important that the counsellor and the person receiving support share their perceptions and understanding of the counselling process as part of the monitoring process. Perception refers to the person's understanding of the concern and how it is being addressed. By sharing and comparing their views, goals and objectives can be examined to confirm that the perceptions of the counsellor and person 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 receiving counselling. Expectations of the person refer 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

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. Everyone that receives counselling is unique so it is important that the counsellor understands the 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.

Manage misperceptions

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



Address tension and stress

It is critical to address 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, this can strengthen the counselling relationship instead of weaken 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.
- ▶ Respect the person's viewpoint and perspective to 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.

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 experience.

Cultural requirements

There may be cultural requirements that need to be considered. A person in the first instance may request a female counsellor, or a person of their own culture, but there is the possibility that their preference is not readily available. However, the counsellor will attempt to find appropriate 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 the 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. Once the time frame has been reached, alternative support options may need to be used.

Example

Review and compare your own and the client’s perceptions of the process and address tension between the client’s hopes, expectations and reality

Sharon has been counselling Jeremy for a few months. She notices that he is not meeting some of the goals that have been 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 that the goals are realistic and he no longer has interest and motivation to try to achieve the goals. Together they review the counselling process and discover that Sharon’s perception and expectations of achieving the goals are very different to Jeremy’s. In order to address the tension and stress of mismatched hopes and expectations, Sarah respects Jeremy’s viewpoint of the concern by allowing him time and space to state his case. She works collaboratively with him to make sure the goals are realistic.



Practice task 14

1. Provide two ways that a counsellor can address a discrepancy in perceptions.

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2. Provide two ways that a counsellor can address resource limitations.

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Click to complete Practice task 14

3C Facilitate change at a pace the client can tolerate and assimilate

It is important when facilitating change 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 embrace change at a different pace compared to 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.

Indicators of toleration and assimilation level

The pace that the person is able to tolerate change, 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 and 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 that changes 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.

Mental health

The emotional and mental health the person may impact the pace of change. It is important to understand that some people take longer than others to embrace change and 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.

Physical capability

The physical capacity of the person may influence the toleration 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.

Cognitive capacity

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 cognitive therapy in response to an acquired brain injury. Erica 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

1. Provide two aspects that contribute to a person's pace to tolerate and assimilate change.
.....
2. Provide a brief description of how the mental health of the person can impact the pace at which they tolerate and assimilate change.
.....

Click to complete Practice task 15

3D Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending the current counselling

Time allowed 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.

Example

Recognise and assess the appropriateness of ending the current counselling

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 episodes of anxiety. Lara has made good progress and has met all of the goals that were set out at the beginning of the counselling process. Triggers and events that affect Lara have been identified and Lara has developed coping skills to help her manage PTSD. Clare and Lara have come to an agreement that it is appropriate to wind down 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 managing well.



Practice task 16

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

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2. Provide two reasons why the counsellor may end the counselling process in an unplanned manner.

.....

[Click to complete Practice task 16](#)

3E 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 be uncertain about their capabilities to achieve their goals. It is important that the person's feelings are monitored and addressed.

Areas of uncertainty

Here are ways that a counsellor can demonstrate acknowledgment and value of 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 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 listening to them attentively

- ▶ are non-judgmental
- ▶ understand their values and culture
- ▶ enjoy your work and view listening to their story as a privilege

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 like 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 and encourages her to take her time and try to articulate why she has misgivings about the process. As Lisa talks, Nola listens to her using empathetic understanding and makes a note to monitor Lisa’s feelings in future sessions.



Practice task 17

1. Provide two ways to acknowledge a person’s uncertainty about the counselling process.

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2. Provide two ways that a counsellor can demonstrate that they value the person’s feelings.

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Click to complete Practice task 17

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 fulfil 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 framework to help the counsellor decide on the appropriate course of action.

Ethical codes of conduct and practice include guidelines regarding:

- ▶ issues of responsibility
- ▶ anti-discriminatory practice
- ▶ confidentiality
- ▶ settings
- ▶ exceptional circumstances
- ▶ record management
- ▶ contracts
- ▶ boundaries
- ▶ committees
- ▶ equal opportunities.

Ethical dilemmas

An ethical dilemma is a situation where there is no clear or perfect solution. An ethical dilemma presents when a counsellor must make a decision about 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 the relationship between counsellor and the person receiving counselling and mandatory reporting.

Here is some more information.

Relationships

There are restrictions and limitations on the counselling relationship that aim to keep the relationship 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 basis 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.

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 the incident. She feels torn because she knows that when the report is filed that there may be custodial restrictions placed on Ashley to protect the safety of her children. Ashley pleads with Shayla not to file a report. 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 her children. Shayla feels torn between upholding her ethical responsibility and the desire to have the outcome that Ashley wants.



Practice task 18

1. Provide two purposes of an ethical code of conduct.

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

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Click to complete Practice task 18

Summary

1. Continuous monitoring and review is needed over the full course of the intervention.
2. When monitoring and reviewing the counselling process with the person, the counsellor may discover barriers and obstacles, which are threats, and can cause disruptions to the person's progress.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. It is important when facilitating change that it is planned and conducted in accordance with the person's abilities and capabilities.
6. Time allowed 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.
7. 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.
8. 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

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in monitoring the counselling process.

1. Provide two reasons why it is important to monitor and review the counselling process.

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

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3. Provide two benefits of proactively identifying threats and disruptions to the counselling process.

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4. Briefly describe a psychological obstacle to the counselling process that a person may have.

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5. Briefly describe a physical obstacle to the counselling process that a person may have.

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6. Briefly describe an economic obstacle to the counselling process that a person may have.

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7. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can work on threats and disruptions to the counselling process.

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8. Provide two examples of when misperceptions are likely to occur in the counselling process.

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9. Provide two aspects of the counselling process that may be discussed to manage misperceptions if they occur.

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10. Provide two ways to reduce tension and stress in the counselling process.

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

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12. Describe two aspects of the person receiving counselling that may impact their tolerance, assimilation level and understanding of change.

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13. Briefly describe two situations that may contribute to the appropriateness of a planned ending to counselling.

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14. Provide two ways of acknowledging a person's uncertainty about the counselling relationship.

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15. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, might demonstrate value for the person's feelings of uncertainty regarding the counselling process.

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16. Provide two ways a counsellor may work with the person to address feelings of uncertainty regarding the counselling process.

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17. Provide two guidelines that may be included in a counsellor's ethical code of conduct.

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18. Provide two situations in which an ethical code of conduct can be used to resolve an ethical dilemma.

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Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge what is and is not changing**

- 4B Use the ending process to enable the client to understand the nature and impact 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 and reporting**

Bring the counselling process to an end

Bringing the counselling process to an end means being well prepared, and the person receiving counselling must be well aware that the counselling relationship is winding down. During this time, it is important that both the counsellor and the person receiving counselling acknowledge the gains and achievements so the counselling process can conclude on a positive note.

4A Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge what is and is not changing

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 discuss the termination. The approaching conclusion of a counselling process should be discussed several sessions before the conclusion to prepare the person for the end of the counselling relationship.



To help the person identify when the counselling process is coming to a close, 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.

Conclude the counselling process

When the counselling relationship is coming to a close, 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; 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 nature of concluding the relationship. This can be done by assisting the person to identify:

- ▶ what has been learnt
- ▶ what has been gained
- ▶ potential areas for continued growth and development
- ▶ the symptoms that brought them to counselling are now diminished.

Evaluation

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 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 the discussion takes place in a safe environment.

Contributing factors and barriers may include:

- ▶ financial issues
- ▶ time constraints
- ▶ geographical challenges.

Evaluate changes

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 can change their perspective toward the concern. As a counsellor, it is important to acknowledge both aspects of change.

Example

Enable the client to identify when the process is approaching its conclusion and acknowledge what is and is not changing

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 feels that he is going to miss not having a man with whom to talk to about relationship issues. He tells Byron that, while there are parts of the relationship issues he cannot change, his perspective of the problem has changed. 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

1. Provide two aspects of the person’s counselling experience that can be acknowledged at the process conclusion.

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2. Provide two contributing factors that could affect the outcome of the person achieving their goals.

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Click to complete Practice task 19

4B Use the ending process to enable the client to understand the nature and impact of earlier issues

When the counselling relationship is drawing to a close, it is important that the nature and impact of earlier issues are clearly understood by the person. Clarifying the person's understanding reinforces why the person sought counselling and why it is important to use what was learnt in the counselling process to manage the issue.

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 the concern impacted and how the nature of the concern affected the person themselves. By discussing this with the person as part of the ending process, looking at it as defined separate components may help to separate any emotional attachments the person has to the concern.



Clarify nature and impact of earlier issues

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

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

- ▶ why the person came to counselling
- ▶ why counselling was required
- ▶ which intervention strategies were chosen
- ▶ how strategy was monitored.

Example

Use the ending process to enable the client to understand 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 gains he has made. Together they reflect on why he came to counselling, why counselling was needed and the intervention strategies that were successful. This discussion helps Darby to see his emotional response of feeling unsure if unfounded and feels confident leaving the counselling relationship.



Practice task 20

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

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2. Provide two reasons why it is important to clarify the person’s understanding of the issue.

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Click to complete Practice task 20

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 the ending of the relationship, express any feelings of grief, loss or anxiety about the relationship coming to a close. It is important to acknowledge the person's achievements and encourage their sense of ownership of the goals they have reached.



End the process appropriately

Maintaining boundaries is a crucial aspect of the counselling relationship. It is important that boundary lines are 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.

When ending the process, the ending structure may include strategies:

- ▶ the person can use to sustain changes over time
- ▶ to manage the natural tendency to revert back to familiar behaviours
- ▶ 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.

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 counselling process
- ▶ provide an opportunity to initiate further assistance if required.

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 intimated, developed or pursued within two years of the end of the last counselling session.

Support the person's autonomy

Independence, autonomy and self-determination can be reinforced by ensuring that the person has an active role 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 as 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 and support the client's autonomy

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

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

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2. Provide two ways that you can support a person's autonomy.

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[Click to complete Practice task 21](#)

4D Inform clients about any opportunities for further support and complete documentation and reporting

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. The person may benefit from support agencies or support groups such as the following:

- ▶ Support After Suicide: <http://aspirelr.link/support-after-suicide>
- ▶ Australian centre for grief and bereavement: <http://aspirelr.link/acgb>
- ▶ Family Drug Support Australia: <http://aspirelr.link/fdsa>
- ▶ Eating Disorders Victoria: <http://aspirelr.link/eating-disorders-support-groups>

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; for example, 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 the issues. The counsellor may discuss ways to go forward to resolution and determine the person's commitment or motivation to work toward 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 legal and ethical laws and recommendations.

Counselling documentation must be kept for a minimum of three years after the person has ceased counselling. In the case of children, records must be kept for three years after the child reaches eighteen years of age.

Counselling documentation may include:

- ▶ contact details and nature of concern
- ▶ assessment notes
- ▶ counselling case plan
- ▶ session notes
- ▶ reports
- ▶ referrals.

Documentation requirements

Government and counselling agencies required accurate and appropriate documentation and records of 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
- ▶ making referrals
- ▶ reporting risk
- ▶ continuity of care
- ▶ legal situations.

Reporting requirements

Counselling reports 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 of 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 support groups that provide assistance 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 some youth groups that do bush walking 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 abusive substance 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.



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

Practice task 22

1. Provide two things that may need to be considered when informing the person about further support options.

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2. Provide two aspects that should be considered when discussing unresolved issues.

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3. Provide two types of information that may be contained in counselling documentation.

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

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Click to complete Practice task 22

Summary

1. The conclusion of a counselling process should be discussed several sessions before the conclusion to prepare the person for the end of the counselling relationship.
2. When you are winding down the counselling process, it is important to evaluate the goals that were achieved and the goals that were not.
3. Clarifying the nature of the issue may involve revisiting it again from the person's perspective, deconstructing it into the types of impacts it had, who the concern impacted and how the nature of the concern affected the person.
4. When ending the counselling process, it is very important to stay within the ethical boundaries of the counselling relationship.
5. At the end of the counselling process, it is important to acknowledge the person's achievements and encourage their sense of ownership of the goals they have reached.
6. It is important at this time to identify any unresolved issues and discuss further support that may be needed. Depending on the nature and complexity of the concern or issue, further support may be required.
7. Government and counselling agencies require accurate and appropriate documentation and records of people who undergo counselling.

Learning checkpoint 4

Bring the counselling process to an end

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in bringing the counselling process to an end.

1. Provide two ways that you, as a counsellor, can facilitate a person's ability to identify the positive nature of concluding the relationship.

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2. Provide two aspects of the person's counselling experience that need to be evaluated when the counselling process is concluding.

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3. Provide two aspects of a person's life or situation that may affect what is changing and what is not changing at the conclusion of the counselling process.

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4. Provide two ways that you can assist the person to clarify the nature and impact of earlier issues.

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5. In order to end the counselling process appropriately, list two ethical boundaries that may need to be clarified.

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6. List two aspects that follow-up sessions provide in the ending phase of the counselling relationship.

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7. Provide two ways that a counsellor can support a person's autonomy when ending the counselling relationship.

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8. Provide two reasons why a counsellor may need to provide information to a person for further support.

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9. Provide two reasons that a person's issues may be unresolved at the end of the counselling process.

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10. Provide two regulations regarding how long counselling documentation must be kept after a person has ceased counselling.

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11. Provide two examples of information that need to be included as part of reporting requirements to enable the person to receive funding assistance.

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