

Ethical principles in a counseling relationship essay sample



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This essay is about my knowledge, skills and self-awareness of the counselling skills course and the essay focuses on the importance of boundaries and ethical principles in a counselling relationship. In the following essay I intend to explain how boundaries and ethical framework form the backbone of a counselling relationship. I will explain the whole counselling process which starts with the contract between the client and the counsellor which states the basic boundaries of the relationship and what is the importance of these boundaries and why these boundaries need to be stated explicitly before the counselling relationship starts. I will then explain the whole counselling relationship it's beginning, middles and endings. It also explains the skills and techniques required and used by the counsellor in each of these phases of the counselling processes, emphasising on roger's core conditions. It then explains how this whole counselling process needs to be bounded and directed by the ethical framework of counselling.

Then I talk about the Ethical principles laid down by COSCA and the importance of adhering to this ethical framework and possibility of clash with one's own moral and ethical values in the process of counselling. Before concluding I would also explain the importance that self awareness plays in following these boundaries and ethical principles and the role of supervision to ensure this ethical framework is being followed. The process of counselling as I have understood provides a safe environment in which the client can express his views, feelings, and emotions comfortably. The Counsellor and the client then jointly work towards the benefit of the client. But before this relationship starts there are a set of boundaries which form the basic structure of this relationship, These boundaries are communicated clearly in

a contract mutually agreed upon by both the counsellor and the client. This contract states the basic aim of the counselling process taking into account the circumstances and abilities of the client.

The most important part is the confidentiality policy, which basically assures the client that his privacy will be respected unless someone's life is in extreme danger or he reveals some information which can be potentially dangerous for someone. Secondly not having any sort of personal relationship with client, this is really important because if the relationship between the client and the counsellor is also on a personal level it clouds the judgement of the counsellor and the objectivity of the counsellor is lost and that is not beneficial for the client. Another important part of this contract is the time boundaries, this states the time that the counsellor will provide an undivided attention to the client in each session. It is not only important for the counsellor but also for the client because no one can give an undivided attention to a person more than a certain time, not only is it tiring and unfair for the counsellor it is also not beneficial for the client if he is not getting the 100percent from the counsellor.

The next aspect of this contract is the number of sessions agreed upon mutually by client and the counsellor that may be required for the counselling process to come to an end. This can be reviewed depending on the way the process is shaping up, This is really important because it then decides the beginnings, middles and endings of this relationship. These features of the contract not only gives the basic trust to the client but also explicitly specifies the boundaries of this relationship even before the relationship starts which not only makes the client feel safe and serves as

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the starting point of trust between the client and the counsellor but also makes the client realize what to expect out of this relationship and not to have any unrealistic expectation. Once the counselling process starts it is then the job of the counsellor to make sure that these boundaries are not violated, but the process then requires a lot more than just boundaries from the counsellor for the process to be beneficial for the client.

I will now discuss this process of counselling it's beginnings, middles and endings and how it works. The most important part is the beginning of a counselling relationship because that is what establishes a relationship of trust and support between the client and the counsellor, only then will the client be able to talk comfortably about his problems. The following lines sums up how a counsellor should come across to a client in this beginning stage of the counselling relationship. " I welcome you, I accept and value you as a human being, I want to understand you, I want us to be able to be open and honest with each other and there is nothing in me that wants to take anything away from you. And my hope is that we shall be able to work together for as long as you feel it to be helpful and worthwhile." (Mearns and Thorne 1999, p 126)

And to achieve that a counsellor needs to have Carl Rogers three core conditions the first is being non-judgmental which means we should accept a person no matter what or who they are without having any pre conceived notions this gives a confidence to the client that he can talk about anything without being judged, the second being empathy, empathy is being in the shoes of the speaker and understanding the situation from his perspective rather than your own. only if you are on the same page as the speaker you

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would be able to help and explore their situation better and to be able to accept and empathize you need to be genuine. Genuineness is being honest with the client and yourself, only when you are honest you can actually understand someone and not just superficially. Once you have established the relationship based on these core conditions you would need certain skills to be able to help the client. the first and the most important skill is active listening.

Active listening is listening completely to what a client is saying and understanding the situation and the feelings of the client completely by listening to them attentively, apart from listening paying attention on the non verbal communication is also important, non verbal cues like facial expression, body language and tone of the voice also help to understand the underlying feelings of the client better. another technique used in the counselling process is summarizing and paraphrasing, summarizing the client from time to time not only reassures them that they are being listened to it also helps them to focus back on what they were talking about if they go in a tangent. paraphrasing is rewording the clients situation and feeling it help the client to see his problems in a different light and Annalise it objectively. By using all these techniques we establish the relationship with the client and the counselling process moves into it's middles phase The middle phase of counselling is very important from the client's perspective because this is the stage if the client has developed the trust he would start to become more open and willing to express his deepest thoughts, he would also be prepared to take risks and explore negative or unpleasant feelings that he probably was still uncomfortable with sharing.

This stage also brings to focus the main concern of the client. This can be achieved only because of counsellor's complete unconditional acceptance and much deeper levels of empathy than in the beginning phase. Another important aspect of the middle stage of counselling is challenging of the client by the counsellor. A client can sometimes be in conflict with his own self they might be thinking and saying two different things, at this stage a counselor may have to challenge them. In one of my triad session recently I witnessed a speaker saying something's that were worrying him but was constantly smiling, the counselor then challenged him by saying " you feel upset but you are smiling when you tell me that", the speaker then explained that when he says it out it sounds like a scene from a comic film but experience it was difficult. The counsellor reassured the speaker that it was ok to feel upset and though it may seem funny but he gets the emotions of the speaker. That I think changed the way the speaker approached the issue because till then he really did not think that anybody would take his issues seriously but challenging him made him feel ok to be upset about it.

But it can only be achieved if the client believes that the counselor is doing it for their own benefit and it is based on genuine respect for the client. But the most difficult part of the middles is being stuck. Some times clients progress quickly into this middle phase of counselling but sometimes they just beat around the bush and don't get to the main issue I think the only way is for the counsellor to offer the core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and genuineness consistently. I have personally experienced this a lot in my work as a volunteer counsellor with childline. Children are not sure if they could trust me enough to share a serious issue immediately so they

would start with talking about a friend and other random issues to see the response and only when they feel that they would get an unconditional regard they would actually come up with the real issue. Once the process of the middles is started the speaker starts to feel empowered and the need of the counsellor starts to reduce.

The counsellor and the client start to discuss the plan of action. This then leads to the final or the ending stage of counselling process. The ending phase of counselling it is discussed between the client and the counsellor the work done and not done in the process of counselling, it will probably have an action plan that the client and the counsellor mutually decide to be followed by the client. It may sometimes be decided that the client is not yet ready for a change and needs more time. The client would be empowered in this stage and will have a better self- confidence to handle their problems. Apart from the boundaries that were set right from the beginning this whole process of counselling which aims at the benefit of the client needs a certain guidelines to help and direct the counsellor towards the right path. These guidelines are the ethical framework of counseling..

Having an ethical framework creates a transparency that helps create equivalence between counsellor and client. “ The primary role of the counsellor is not one of merely using techniques. It is essentially an ethical task. Simply stated, it is to serve the clients best interests.” (farrells 2006, p 126) Ethics as such is a person’s own unique moral, cultural, and spiritual values but Within the counselling profession however there is a strict ethical framework which must be adhered to and that forms the heart of COSCA’s statement of Ethics and code of practice. This framework has been <https://assignbuster.com/ethical-principles-in-a-counseling-relationship-essay-sample/>

developed to insure integrity, confidentiality, and responsibility on the part of the counsellor. This however sometimes can be really challenging as they can conflict with each other. I will now discuss the Ethical principles laid down by COSCA and my own understanding and in some cases my experienced dilemma in following it :

Beneficence – acting solely in the best interest of the client to the best of one's ability. This is important for genuineness, if a counsellor has something which he cannot handle or does not feel confident handling due to some personal reasons, he should be honest with the client about that or else it will be unfair for the client because the counsellor is not working to the best of his ability and that means it is not for the benefit of the client.. During one of my triads I had a speaker talking about not being able to fit into this country and feels disconnected and me having felt the same emotions it became very difficult to maintain objectivity and not relate it my personal experiences I thought I had started looking at the situation from my own perspective rather than his which I thought was a breach of beneficence, because of my own personal emotions and thoughts coming in the way I was not in the right emotional state to help him, it was only when I started actively listening to his story I realized his life and circumstances are different than mine and I was able to objectively look at his life.

Non-maleficence – This means avoiding harm to the client through any form of sexual, financial or emotional exploitation. This is a very important ethical value that a counsellor must always keep in mind because of the inequality in the client counselor relationship, a client can be sometimes so dependent on the counsellor that the counselor can if he wants take an undue

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advantage financially, sexually or emotionally of the client which can be very harmful for the client. Autonomy – this principle emphasizes the importance of respecting and developing the client's ability to be self-directing. Some times the clients come to counselors for a solution but it is the job of the counsellor to empower the client to make their own decision and not depend on the counsellor for solutions. This is very important for the self esteem of the client. During my work I come across a lot of teenagers wanting to know what they are doing is right or wrong, I have to explain them there is no right or wrong and they should do anything they are comfortable with and think it is right for them.

Once a teenager wanted to ask if it was ok to have sex with her boyfriend, It is so difficult not to give my own opinion and according to my own moral values maintaining autonomy is so difficult in such a situation but I have come to realize it is not my life or my values, I need to respect the person and their decision and to work for the benefit of the client. Justice – treating all clients fairly and valuing differences in cultures or groups is very important for ethical practice of counselling. This is also important for being non judgmental, only if we follow the principle of justice we can not be biased towards a particular culture or group. Confidentiality : This means to respect the privacy of the client unless someone life is in immediate danger. It is one of the most important aspect of ethical frame work which is the first point of trust from the clients perspective.

Sometime our own moral or ethical values can make it really difficult to follow this rule. especially in my role as a volunteer there are cases like

teenage girls discussing about boyfriends much older than them, while you
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know it is illegal to have such a relationship it is a big personal struggle for me to follow the confidentiality. Also written records of case notes or in some cases recorded conversations and other client information is something which the counsellor needs to be aware that it is his responsibility that they do not get in someone else's hands. Veracity : this refers to maintaining truthfulness with oneself and one's clients. This basically means that a good ethical counsellor is one who respects who they are and what they do by applying the above principles to themselves as well this avoids the danger of counsellors using clients to meet their own emotional needs or believing that they are rescuers of some kind and taking control of the situation.

For a counsellor to be able to ethically follow this frame work is very important to be self -aware of his powers, when a client comes to a counsellor he is most of the times in a weak emotional state and there is a definite imbalance of power, and a counsellor needs to be aware of that power imbalance so that he does not misuse it and cross those boundaries knowingly or unknowingly. It is not possible that the counsellor will ever have same value systems to those of his clients, so it is important to have self awareness to realise how the counsellors personal ethics may impact the different stages of counselling process. Sometimes there also might be some feelings towards the clients which may be because of someone in our past they resemble in looks, mannerisms etc these feeling can be positive or negative. Having a healthy self-awareness will ensure that these feelings do not interfere with our judgement.

Sometimes it is a client who would want the boundaries of the relationship being breached because he may be emotionally dependent on the counsellor, but then it is the duty of the counsellor since he is in a powerful position in this imbalance to stop that from happening. So for the counsellor to follow the ethical framework it is important for the counsellor to be self aware and realize his influence on the client. Only if the counsellor is self aware will he be able to take preventive measures to avoid any boundary violation and protect himself and in turn the client. “ self awareness gives the counsellor the appreciation of their own areas of vulnerability “ (mcleod 2007, p75) When a counsellor is self aware and realizes that due to some reasons he would not be able to do complete justice to the client, the counsellor should make a supervisor aware of it so the necessary action can be taken for the benefit of the client. also to keep a check that the ethical framework is being followed the supervision is important.

Even in my personal experience of the tutor supervising during the triads or the supervision in childline I have realized the importance of supervision, it gives me an objective insight of my own performance and skills and helps me to improve them which in turn is beneficial or my speaker. Working within an ethical framework not only protects the client, but also the counsellor. In conclusion As a counselling skills student during the last four modules I have learned about the basic process of counselling the beginning, middles and endings and also about the skills used in each of these phases and got the chance to practice them during my triads It has not only given me a better perspective in life and not only do I listen to people more attentively, it has also made me quite non judgmental as a person and now

even helps me in my voluntary job at childline. but most importantly I feel supported by this ethical framework guidelines set for counsellors as it gives me a minimum set of standards to adhere to in my efforts to offer a safe and trusting environment to my speaker. Without such a framework, I would feel less confident in what the minimum standard should be, which might not be productive to focusing on the client's needs within the process.

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