

# Reflective essay on psychosocial helping skills



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This essay will look at my personal encounter during my psychosocial helping skills class and my experience with being a helper and client. We had to practice being the helper and the client, while doing these there were certain areas which I felt I had a natural ability for and areas where I will continue to learn. For Egan's model of being an effective helper the areas which were included are listening, paraphrasing, empathy, probing, immediacy, and being able to acknowledge how important the helping relationship is (Cooney, 2019).

### *Tuning in*

Tuning in is an extremely important element in the development of a therapeutic relationship. In these classes we learned how to apply tuning in to our sessions, about tuning in and how to apply it into practice. According to M, Cooney (2019) visibly tuning into others has a major impact on the intensity of your presence with your client, it is an expression of empathy. M, Cooney (2019) discusses non-verbal communication which includes bodily behaviour, eye behaviour, facial expressions, voice related behaviour, physical characteristics and space.

While doing my practices I felt that non-verbal tuning in played a major role in how the conversation went. It was an extremely important skill which I was mindful of throughout my time as the helper. All three times where I was the client my helpers tuned in extremely well, which allowed me to feel safe and resulted in myself opening all my vulnerabilities.

The first time I was the helper I tried to mimic this back for my clients, but I was paired with a good friend who laughed when I was trying to do my

role, this me anxious I ended up crossing my legs instead of a straight posture, and had to time out twice. I notice during my first practice I was not picking up on smaller key words, which the client was trying to express and focusing on the bigger words. For my practical I tuned in with my client while they were speaking by using non-verbal gestures, which I was informed how well I used my nonverbal gestures during feedback. I am now confident in my tuning in and listening abilities and try to use it in day to day conversations.

### *Paraphrasing*

M, Cooney (2019), suggests Paraphrasing involves reflecting the content and feelings of what the client is saying in your own words. During my experience I found paraphrasing to be quite easy and felt it came the most naturally to myself. I built up more and more confidence after my first experience, watching videos on paraphrasing really helped me through my practices. While I was the client, I was challenged by my helper which showed me how important paraphrasing can be as it opened my eyes to the issues that I was speaking about.

### *Empathy*

Due to the recent passing of my mom I have become more aware, and empathic towards other feelings which was an area I struggled with previously. Empathy according to M, Cooney (2019), is the helpers respond to their clients by sharing understanding, checking in that they have receive the right message, being able to probe for clarity, summarizing the clients issues. Empathy should flow naturally from the relationship. It was

important to practice my ability to show how empathic of a person I have become. By being able to name the feelings others were having it made me more aware about feelings which arose in myself stress, anxiety, worry, sadness. For my second practice I worked on my ability of reflecting back people's feelings which I was hearing from them. I mostly reflected on key words my client was talking about which was due to her family situation, her little sisters' behaviour and how it was making her feel. During my exam I felt that I could have used more reflective feelings, I felt like I was using the same feelings repeatedly. For my exam I reflected on the feelings my client said to ensure I was picking up the message that was being told to me. In future I know now to try and pick out other key feelings. Reflecting on my exam I now know to try and reflect on client's feelings more an area which has also showing me the importance of reflecting is recently going to a counsellor.

### *Probing*

According to Cooney, M (2019) prompts and probs are 'verbal and sometimes nonverbal tactics' which allows the client talk more freely. This was a major challenge for me during this module, due to having no previous experience it was an area where I was extremely self-conscious. During my first practice as the helper, the client was not engaging well when I asked open ended question I was receiving 'yes' or 'no' answers, the probes I was using seemed to get the conversation nowhere which resulted in myself becoming anxious during the session. It felt like I had probed the most and felt useless compared to my peers. I was really upset that the session did not go, the way I thought it was going to be as I took down notes of examples

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during class and studying them. Even though it was a major struggle for myself I did gain a better understand and knowledge about probing, and how effective it is. This is an area which I will work on while being in a caring profession.

### *Immediacy*

The final skilled which I learned and felt was important to discuss is Immediacy. Immediacy is the ' quality or state of being immediate' (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Regards to practices immediacy is trying to help the client clarify the key issues and challenges which they were going through. This allows the client to discuss any other feelings they may be having regarding an issue and give opportunities to see alternative or solutions.

My experience of being the client, I felt that I benefited greatly from one of my helpers who challenged me around burnout and stress I was having. My helper spoke so softly and was understanding which allowed me to reflect on my issues more and resulting in myself coming up with a solution to my problem, which was to cut down on work. I found immediacy really helped during a period where I was struggling and resulting in myself prioritising my issues and not dropping out of college.

### *Helping relationship*

The Helping process for the relationship according to Cooney, M (2019) is that Egan's key values are Respect, Empathy, Geniuses, Self- Responding, Bias Towards Actions. Cooney, M (2019), states the relationship is the most important feature of an effective counselling and helping. This this not a

correct representation of a helping relationship, as everyone in my group knew one another which resulted in us all already developing relationships outside of the classroom. From observing my peers, the relationship which people had previously did not impact on the standard of the session. Those put in want they wanted from the session and how much information they wanted to give out to their peers. My experience with the helpers who I worked with were extremely positive and supportive even when I talked about my recent bereavement. In result this showed that therapeutic relationships vary between other personality's play a major role in this.

To conclude this essay, it has looked at my own personal experience of the psychosocial helping skills as both the helper and client. In this essay the topics which have been discussed where in regard to my counselling skills are tuning in, paraphrasing, empathy, probing, immediacy, and the therapeutic relationship. Overall in this module I had a lot of personal growth which in turn will help my professional growth in the current and near future. I had many positive experiences and allowed myself to be as open as possible which was a fear of mine for years.

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