

Counselling skills



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Creating a Counselling Skills Professional Framework

There is a difference between a person who uses counselling skills and a qualified counsellor. A person who uses counselling skills may not be bound to an ethical framework or code of practice like a counsellor may be. Counsellors should be accredited to a professional organisation such as the BACP which will ensure that the counsellor is fit to practice, have consultative support and will reinforce the counsellor to remain focused on the client whereas someone working within a different organisation such as a Human Resources company may not. There are many companies that like their managerial teams to attend Counselling skills courses as this enables managers to learn how to handle people in a work environment and also helps them comfort people who have been made redundant. Doctors and Nurses may use counselling skills when speaking to patients. Having the appropriate counselling skills such as, active listening and empathy enables them to connect to their patients and helps the patients to feel valued and listened to. Although the professionals may be using counselling skills in the hospital it does not mean that they are under an accredited governing organisation.

The fact is that people are good, Give people affection and security, and they will give affection and be secure in their feelings and their behaviour.

Abraham Maslow

The BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) has an Ethical Framework for Good Practice. It's important to have a framework in place as it keeps clients safe and enables the Counsellor to provide a high standard of care, personal moral qualities, maintain competence while practicing, and maintain Ethical Principles. The framework creates trust between the Counsellor and the Client.

The main elements that are covered in the Ethical Framework are: Values, Ethical Principles, and Personal Moral Qualities. All these elements are very important and the framework ensures that the appropriate care is given to both Client and Counsellor. Although Counselling and helping doesn't concern itself directly with life and death situations there are ethical dilemmas that counsellors and helpers can find themselves caught up in. This is because counselling concerns itself with damaged, distressed, or otherwise vulnerable people. Pete Sanders (2002) There are other Ethical Frameworks which many professionals work to. These include social workers, doctors, midwives and nurses. When comparing the Standards of Conduct, performance and ethics for Nurses and midwives to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy I found many similarities. It was clear that Trust and a High standard of care played a large part in each framework. Moral qualities, ethical principles, values, Team work, providing clients with adequate information and teaching and training were found in both however, in the Ethical Framework for Nurses and midwives, financial arrangements, Supervision, managing and researching were not referred to. The BACP is big on Confidentiality however Nurses work as a team with shared care so confidentiality is kept within the team. In some cases a person may need to work under different ethical frameworks for example; A woman who is a counsellor and a midwife would have to work under the Standards of Conduct, performance and ethics for Nurses and midwives and the BACP. This could become a problem if the midwife had to speak to one of her colleagues about a patient who has asked her to keep the information given to her confidential. When offering Counselling to

someone it's important that we conduct ourselves professionally. It's vital that we don't have prejudices towards people and that we keep improving ourselves and our skills.

We must check our motives for helping others. After ten years in therapy, my psychologist told me something very touching, he said, "no hablo ingles." Dennis Wolfburg Practitioners have a legal responsibility to understand the implications of their interactions with others. A law of contract should be used with fee paying clients to clarify the nature of the relationship. It's important that boundaries are clearly defined when counselling families and young people and you must be clear that children and young people understand your boundaries so that there is no confusion. You may be asked to act as a witness in court for a client and notes that you have taken may be used. A client could also claim defamation of character if confidentiality is broken. It's also very important that you protect your client by not withholding information from them.

For example: if a client comes to you that has a physical problem but thinks it's a psychological problem and you keep hold of that client when you know that the client needs medical help and you can no longer help, it's called negligence. It's important to have Ethics on your mind every time you counsel someone. Ethical conduct includes trying to act within the law, respecting human rights; respecting people's ability to look after themselves and that we keep the arrangements that we have made. It's important to understand that people have their own rights and beliefs and we cannot push our beliefs or way of doing things onto people. People should be treated fairly and you should always seek to do them good. For example:

if your client is a Muslim and you are a Christian, it would be wrong of you to force your beliefs on him or judge him for being a Muslim. Another example could be you showing up 30 minutes late when you are supposed to be seeing a client, this is breaking an agreement that you have made with the client and is unfair. Respecting client confidentiality is a fundamental requirement for keeping trust.

For counselling to be effective, the client must feel secure in the knowledge that whatever they tell the counsellor must be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality. Gerald (2005) However, on some occasions this confidentiality may have to be broken for example if the client intends to cause harm to themselves or anybody else, raises any child protection issues, participates in any act of criminal activity such as Money Laundering, Acts of Terrorism or drug trafficking. Confidentiality is a virtue of the loyal, as loyalty is the virtue of faithfulness. Edwin Louis Colet??™s important to have clear boundaries in place when counselling as it??™s important for the client to know what to expect and what??™s expected of them. For example if a client comes into a room expecting to be your friend you must make it clear to them that you are there to help them but not to condone anything that they have done or are going through.

It??™s important for us to understand that we are all unique and different. We have different cultures, colours, classes, ages, sexual orientations, languages and emotional needs. People from other cultures may find it very hard to be counselled by someone who is not from their country as they may have different religious views and there may also be a language barrier. We

also need to be mindful of physical disabilities. Reasonable adjustments need to be made for disabled clients and also counsellors.

Failing to follow your procedures when counselling, could result in negligence and clients making a claim. For example, if you do not follow health and safety rules and ensure that all the wires in the counselling room are in the adequate position, you may find yourself being taken to court by a client who came into the room and tripped over the wires. When counselling, the counsellor is responsible for protecting the client from harm. There are three types of dangers that can occur within the counselling room; Physical Safety, Emotional Safety and Psychological Safety.

Physical dangers, although rare, can occur and client's can make claims for negligence. Loose leads, broken chairs or wet floors can be the cause of accidents. It's important to inspect the counselling room thoroughly to look for health and safety issues that could cause harm if left. The Counsellor should ensure that he/she is covered with adequate insurance as this will ease financial burdens if a client decides to take legal action against them. Counsellors should also take into account how many hours they work to ensure they have enough rest.

They should also think about personal physical safety when counselling. In some cases the counsellor may be asked to listen to a mentally ill patient who may be prone to violent outbursts so it's a good idea to think about the positioning of the furniture within the counselling room. Positioning the counsellor's chair near to the exit door may help if a quick get away is needed. A panic button may also be fitted to the inside of the counselling

room to give the therapist peace of mind. Psychological Safety includes; feeling exposed or feeling distressed.

When protecting the client psychologically, you must be aware that you do not force or push them into digging too deep emotionally, but allow them to open up in their own time. Creating trust between the Counsellor and client will create an environment for the client to disclose information without feeling pressured. You must make contracts very clear and understood before the counselling session begins. Both parties should be aware of what they are committing to.

It's important for the counsellor to assess the client's situation and find an appropriate way of working with them. For the Counsellor to keep psychologically safe, he/she must ensure that she has supervision and that he/she is attending regular counselling sessions themselves. They too need to be able to vent their concerns.

It's helpful for a counsellor to be a member of an accredited association such as the BACP as they have regular newsletters with information that Counsellors may find useful when practicing. To be emotionally safe as Counsellor it's important not to take on the problems of the people you are counselling but be aware that you are there to help the client. The client can also feel emotionally attached to a counsellor if he/she acts like a father/mother figure to the client. Counsellors should be mindful to keep a professional relationship between both parties and they should avoid anything that can be emotionally disturbing for the client. The kinds of words that are used in the counselling session such as 'Come on in my darling,

take a seat and tell me all about it???

are not suitable when listening to a client.

Ensure that the environment is private for the client so that they feel safe enough to disclose information. It's important for Counsellors to have support and supervision when practicing. Supervision is formal support for counsellors and it not the same as Managerial Supervision. Case work or Consultative Supervision is an arrangement between a counsellor and a supervisor. The supervisor is not the counsellors manager but he/she is there to support the counsellor with issues that they feel they need to talk about.

Supervisors hold ethical responsibilities and are available to ensure that the counsellor is supported fully. Managerial supervisors such a line manager, are more interested in the development of the companies that they work for. Managerial supervisors concentrate on managing budgets and targets. Their concerns are not about the welfare of a client or counsellor but rather the welfare of the company. Counsellors may have to answer to line managers within their companies who have no Counselling experience whatsoever.

This can lead to disagreements between the Line manager and Counsellor as the manager could be at risk of putting pressure on the Counsellor to perform better.

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