

To be effective as a counsellor sociology essay



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This essay will look into what it means to be effective as a counsellor. The characteristics that could be expected to be found in an effective counsellor will be discussed. Specific reference will be made also to the ways in which a client should feel when they are in the presence of an effective counsellor.

Before a counsellor can be classified as either effective or ineffective, it should be noted that a comprehensive definition of a counsellor, and since a counsellor can best be defined in terms of counselling, then a clear-cut definition of counselling is necessary.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, a counsellor is " a person who has been trained to advise people with problems, especially personal problems"(p. 332). This definition already gives one an idea of how to define counselling- this can be defined as " professional advice about a problem". (p. 332). Another way in which counselling can be defined is accordance with the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary, which says counselling is " professional guidance of the individual by utilizing psychological methods especially in collecting case history data, using various technique of the personal interview, and testing interests and attitudes" (accessed 04/04/2012).

These definitions are quite informative, especially in terms of giving one an idea of what to expect a counsellor to be and what to expect from a counsellor or a counselling session. They offer insight into the type of setting a counsellor would work in, the field of study that a counsellor may have undertaken and such like. But one thing the aforementioned definitions lack is the capacity to broaden ones prospects about counselling and the role of a

counsellor in society. Counselling is merely limited to individual therapy and is taken no further. But a person who is directly involved in counselling- be it a counsellor, a scholar of counselling or even a client who consults with a counsellor can agree that counselling is more than just a “ professional advice” or “ guidance”; “ it’s a professional relationship”(counselling. org) because the counsellors engages in some form of interaction with his clients , which he relates to each client differently from the next. This relationship is multidimensional, it is not only between the counsellor and client (well at least not in all cases), but is one that can lead a client to meet and relate with other professionals; whether it be health professionals or otherwise. The counsellor as well, in some instances, would get to know more people than initially planned...these people would be those that the counsellor would need to work with (referring clients to such people). These would be occupational therapists, psychiatrists, financial advisers, etc. This makes counselling a professional dynamic relationship which aims to help the client who comes needing help of one kind or the other. “ Counselling involves a process, the aim of which is to help others to help themselves by making better choices and becoming better choosers of options” (iona-k-lister. suite101. com). So this relationship is not one that should be confined to personal matters only, because it is such a broad relationship that it has the capacity to “ empower diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals”(counselling. org).

What can a counsellor do to make a client feel safe?

As it has already been established, a counsellor must understand that what he has with the client is more than just “ fee-for-service”...it is “ a special relationship” (sci. csu Hayward. edu). With this in mind, it becomes easier for the helper to make his client feel safe. Even if the client does not understand the nature of the relationship, the helper does and so should guide the client to a knowledge of such information. Like in every relationship, both parties involved have a part to play; a part which is particularly meant to be played by the specific counterpart; so it is with the professional relationship between the counsellor and the client.

So if the client is not aware of the relationship that is there between them, it is the counsellor’s duty to enlighten the client. And this will in fact be what can initiate the process of making the client feel safe. If a client does not know that he is in a relationship with the counsellor, the counsellor’s every effort to make the client feel safe will be virtually futile.

One thing that a counsellor can do to make his client feel safe – especially in individual therapy – is try by all means necessary to eliminate feelings of inferiority on the part of the client. As was mentioned earlier, individuals are all different and unique. So a counsellor might find that employing Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychology in his counselling style might be helpful in eliminating the aforementioned feelings. Inferiority “ takes normal feelings of incompetence and exaggerates them, making the individual feel as if it is impossible to achieve goals and therefore hopeless to try”(Friedman & Schustack, 2012, p. 115). A counsellor can also change his terminology, never calling his clients patients – as some other health professionals do –

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but keep calling them clients, since this sounds “ more egalitarian” and “ less pejorative”(sci. csuhayward. edu).

Making a client feel safe in the counselling setting is not easy, so if a counsellor can do that, this says a lot about his effectiveness as a counsellor. They should be able to show a client that they “ recognize the limits of their own power”(sci. csuhayward. edu) to help clients prevent feeling inferior; show a willingness to learn about their culture, background, etc.

Confidentiality is another factor in making a client feel safe; not only in that, but as well in “ establishing and maintaining a strong therapeutic relationship”(sci. csuhayward. edu). Whenever necessary, the counsellor should inform the client of the limits to confidentiality in the least threatening way possible. There is also the issue of multiple relationships; an effective counsellor knows better than to form a relationship with a client’s family member or anyone else that is close to the client. He also does not form a non-professional relationship with people who already have a professional relationship formed with him, because this is destructive – it can make it difficult for the client to feel safe in the counselling sessions.

What Characteristics Should Effective Counsellors Possess?

The main aim of this essay is to show what it means to be an effective as a counsellor, so it should be no surprise that throughout the essay, this question seems to be answered through the various answers to the previous questions that the assignment raises. Qualities such as confidentiality, the ability to guide clients toward productive goals, and the ability to establish and maintain relationships are seen already in previous sections of the essay.

Other qualities, like empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence are essential to being effective as a counsellor; these will be discussed at a later stage. An important aspect of an effective counsellor is the ability to “facilitate full...expression of the client’s feelings, without diverting any attention to their own feelings”(iona-k-lister. suite101. com). An effective counsellor must be able to listen to a client and have no prejudice. “Although counsellors have their own values, these should not be imposed on the client”(iona-k-lister. suite101. com).

According to iona-k-lister. suite101. com “ a good counsellor is someone who can learn not to make judgements on behalf of the person being helped.” Other traits that one might expect to find in an effective counsellor are patience and acceptance, which help the counsellor to refrain from showing contempt toward those clients that are not likeable. Education is another factor to consider; people tend to think that since they have a Degree and are registered with the counsel, they know everything there is to know. Effective counsellors are willing to learn more about themselves, other counsellor, and even their clients. Social skills should also be looked into by a counsellor that wants to be effective; as a counsellor, one meets many different people from different backgrounds and cultures; so one has to know how to perceive all aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication. Another very important quality to possess is discretion, never revealing what others say or do within the counselling context. Because even if a counsellor does not say the other client’s name; the fact that he reveals a certain client’s situation to another without the consent of that client, he is perceived as unprofessional by the current client.

(iona-k-lister. suite101. com; www. sci. csu Hayward. edu)

How Important are Carl Rogers' Core Conditions in Counselling?

In order to appreciate fully the importance of something, one should first know what exactly the thing is. If that knowledge is not given, the acknowledgement will be but a task carried out to pass the time. Therefore, before the importance of the core conditions can be discussed, a clear definition of these will be given.

According to Cormier & Hackney(2012) empathy is the ability to identify with or understand the feelings and emotions of a client as if you were feeling that way, just “ without losing the ‘ as if’ quality”(p. 23). Unconditional positive regard is expressing to a client the qualities that make him feel that he is special and appreciated as a human being. Congruence is seen as the helper's ability to remain true to himself in the presence of the client. The act of being genuine and not allowing conformity to influence him in any way, especially when conforming to please a client.

As defined by simplypsychology. org “ unconditional positive regard is where parents, significant others(and the humanist therapist) accept and love the person for what he or she is.” Therefore, to be effective as a counsellor, one needs to be fortified with such a quality. Now it should be noted that unconditional positive regard works best when accompanied by empathy and congruence.

Imagine a homosexual client comes for therapy; he got married to some man not long ago, and tells of how he met the man in university. He recently

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found out that the man is cheating with another man, whom he met on their honeymoon while they were away. The client says he does not know whether to divorce this husband or to separate with him for a while, since he's finding it so difficult to forgive him.

The best response for an effective counsellor in a such a situation is expressing genuineness: acknowledging to himself, perhaps, that he is uncomfortable with the whole gay thing, and that his opinion is just one way of looking at things - so that he can more readily accept the client's lifestyle choice. This can help him develop unconditional positive regard, coupled with empathy towards the client. This is because if he is able to acknowledge that his discomfort with the client's attributes, it becomes easier to get into the client's reality and try to see things through the client's eyes(empathy). It is through this same empathy that unconditional positive regard will come about; as he begins to picture what the client might be going through.

How Important is Self-Care for the Counsellor?

" While an enhanced regimen of self-care may sound like a good idea, most people are fuzzy on what self-care is and how to practice it"(www. psychologytoday. com). And for this reason, it is always best to define something before attempting to describe it. It is as in warfare, a soldier has to have a well-rounded definition of his enemy, so that he should not wage war against soldiers that actually came to the assistance of his own country, thinking that they are the opposition.

One way to look at self-care is to see it as " something one does to improve (their) sense of subjective well-being"(www. thefreelibrary. com). From to

this definition, one can already see how important it is to exercise self-care as a counsellor. Imagine (bearing in mind the above definition) the counsellor who does not consider self-care to be of much value – would this counsellor not be judgemental towards his clients? How will he be able to exercise empathy, positive regard and congruence with all his clients? Thus, self-care is important for the counsellor that seeks to be effective in his occupation.

Contrary to popular belief, self-care is not an easy thing to practice. This belief springs from advertisers' deception and their inability to define self-care clearly (psychologytoday. com). " Many of us think that getting pedicures, choosing hand-dipped dark chocolates and buying thread count bed linens equal self-care. This, in actual fact, is self-pampering" (www. psychologytoday. com). Self-pampering cannot improve one's sense of subjective well-being, neither can it equip one to practice congruence/genuineness, empathy or unconditional positive regard.

According to psychologytoday. com the way to practice self-care is to choose " behaviours that balance the effects of emotional and physical stressors: exercising, eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, practicing yoga or meditation or relaxation techniques" and the like. Another important factor that contributes to the effectiveness of self-care is learning to depend less on other people for healing, be it healing from emotional or even physical pain. Once a counsellor learns to be independent in these areas of his own life, then it will become very difficult for him to keep using his clients' problems as a means of helping him deal with his own. So in essence, self-care is necessary and helpful to the development of an effective counsellor.

Conclusion

This essay has discussed and examined the meaning of an effective counsellor. It has looked into the basic meaning or definition of a counsellor in order to properly differentiate between just a counsellor and an effective one. The qualities that are important for helping a counsellor become effective in his expertise have been outlined. It has also been seen throughout this essay that being a counsellor - especially an effective one - is not as easy a task as it might appear; a lifetime of commitment is necessary for this to be achieved.