

**Guidelines For Counselling
Practice**

A Handbook

What is Counselling

Counselling is:

- A relationship between two people
- In which information is shared
- Options are discussed
- Client is facilitated to find the best options for her/himself from the ones discussed.

A counselling relationship at a site or in the office can start with:

- Shaking hands and introducing yourself by telling your name

Examples:

Hello, Namaste, Aslamalekum, I am

- Introduce your organisation and its work

Examples:

I work for organisation called (give name of organisation)

We mainly work on male sexual health etc.

- Give a complementary remark that makes the client feels nice about himself

Examples:

You are wearing a very nice shirt

I like the way you have your hair

- Continue the conversation by posing open-ended questions

Examples:

How many times during a week do you come here?

How many tea stalls are there in this park?

- Once the conversation starts, information can then be shared

Examples:

Our organisation assists people who are tested positive for any sexually transmitted infection. We have a doctor who comes here every Saturday etc.

We have a drop in centre at (give address) and each Wednesday we have a social group where we all meet and discuss our problems. It is very nice and friendly etc.

- It is possible that the client may describe several problems that are on his mind

Examples:

I have a burning sensation when I urinate and also each night I have a problem falling asleep. My brother is forcing me to take up a job outside the city etc.

My body is aching all the time. I am harassed by the hotel people where I am staying. They think that I am a sex worker and they are very rude to me etc.

- Normally in any given situation counsellors have time constraints. Therefore, it is always good to prioritise the problems of the clients with mutual agreement with him.

Examples:

So you were saying that you have a problem when you urinate and then you also said that you find it difficult to fall asleep at night time. You mentioned about your brother insisting that you take a job outside the city. In total we have three issues/problems that we have to resolve. We have 20 minutes today and we will try to talk about all the three but lets decide in what order we will address these three issues. If anything is left due to time constraint then we call discuss that on the follow up date. How do you feel about that?

- Once the problems are prioritised then take up the first issue with the client and start discussing the options with him.

Examples:

So you said that you would want to discuss your sleeping problem first. What do you think may be causing this problem. Okay if it is the food you eat what kind of food do you feel creates more problems for you. Is it possible for you not to eat that food for one or two nights and see if it helps you in sleeping better or like you said that you will change the rice with a roti and see. Okay so change the rice with the roti and see if that helps.

- Normally a counselling session would follow the same format as above. However, one needs to remember the following during any counselling session:

ESSENTIALS OF COUNSELLING:

- Always introduce yourself to your client
- Be polite and complimentary to your client
- Make the client feel relaxed
- Assure the client confidentiality
- Ask your client open-ended questions
- Share information with your client in precise, short and simple language
- Be attentive towards your client
- Reassure the client of your support and provide sense of comfort through touch, if needed and if culturally appropriate
- Avoid using street language with your client
- Behave in a professional way i.e. being friendly does not necessarily mean that you replicate your client's behaviour.
- Be punctual
- Maintain eye contact with your client
- Motivate the client to speak if he is hesitant to speak
- Provide emotional support to your client
- Have empathy and avoid sympathy towards your client
- Be positive in your attitude

- Do not interrupt your client when he is speaking. Even if he is saying something incorrect.
- Wait till the client has finished speaking and then politely without commenting on inaccuracy of client's information give out correct information
- Try to follow the client's posture i.e. sit down if your client is sitting etc.
- Use positive reinforcement during the counselling session
- Try to bring your client back to the relevant issue if he is distracted. This should be done in a polite way
- Your client is the most important thing to you and he should be aware of that by your attitude
- Share information with your client and stay away from advising him
- Facilitate the decision making process of the client. Do not impose your own decision upon the client
- Always make follow up appointment before the client leaves or you leave the site
- Wrap up each issue that has been resolved during the session
- Have good grasp over the subject matter of counselling i.e. if you are counselling on HIV/AIDS prevention then you should know all about it before you start talking to a client
- If you feel that you do not have an answer for a question tell your client that you will find the answer and would let her/him know in next session or refer him to someone who may have the answer
- Always be non-judgmental while counselling

- Your body language should not be offensive or intimidating to the client
- Probe without getting inquisitive
- Exercise objectivity
- Do not promise anything that you cannot do for your client
- Recap for the client once he is finished telling the problem
- Try to have minimum physical barriers between yourself and your client
- Create an environment of trust for you client
- If the client is agitated try to calm him down before starting the session
- Do not use accusatory tone with your client
- Your voice should be clear but soft
- Do not force the client to say or do things that he may not want to do or admit

Importance of the essentials:

We introduce ourselves to other person i.e. client in this case because:

- It is polite
- It shows the other person that we are respecting him
- It helps in building rapport with the person
- It helps in building trust with the person

When you compliment the other person on something he may be wearing or something that he may have done:

- It makes the other person feel good
- It helps in breaking barrier of shyness and reluctance in your client
- It shows the client that you care and are taking notice of him
- It creates a friendly and easy to talk environment

When you make your client feel relaxed:

- He finds it easy to talk and discuss the problem with you
- It gives him confidence in you and in self
- It motivates the client to give you information that otherwise he may hold back
- Sharing difficult experience becomes easy for your client

When you assure your client of confidentiality she/he:

- Feels confident
- Share experiences problems that they may not share in other situation
- Trust you with their secrets
- Refer their friends to you for counselling

When you ask your client open-ended questions it helps in:

- Free flow of information from the client
- Understanding the problem better because the information is detailed
- Building rapport with the client

When you share information with your client in short, precise and simple language it helps the client to:

- Understand better
- Remember the messages
- Repeat to his friends without losing much
- Ask questions without forgetting what you had said

When you are attentive towards your client your client feels:

- Important
- Comfortable
- Motivated
- Confident

When you are punctual you are:

- Setting up a good example for your client
- Creating trust in your client
- Creating confidence in your client
- Making your client feel good about himself
- Letting your client know that you are serious about your work

When you maintain eye contact with your client you:

- Show your client that you are listening to him
- Understand the problem of your client better
- Motivate your client to share all he needs to share

Empathy versus sympathy gives your client:

- Self confidence
- Assurance that you as counsellor have the strength to provide support if needed
- A positive message regarding your professionalism

If you have a positive attitude you:

- Pass it on to your client
- Facilitate your client effectively to find solution to his problems

If you interrupt your client while he is talking to you the client:

- Gets nervous and the flow of information stops
- Feels intimidated and loses confidence in himself
- May have problem in communicating with you in future

When you use positive reinforcement with your client during the counselling session:

- It helps in building up the confidence of the client
- The client starts feeling comfortable
- The client starts trusting you
- The client is willing to share more than he may have planned to

When you advise your client:

- It can effect his self confidence adversely
- It can intimidate your client
- It can effect the decision making power of the client negatively
- It can create a feeling of dependency in your client

When you make a follow up appointment with your client it:

- Conveys to the client that you are concerned about him
- Helps you in knowing whether client was able to resolve the problem
- Helps you in systematically recording all what you may have done to assist the client

When you know your subject matter you:

- Are confident
- Are able to share accurate information with your client
- And your client have a good rapport

The Dos and Don't of counselling that you should always remember:

Dos

- Always greet your client
- Be polite with your client
- Introduce yourself, your organisation, and its work
- Be precise and clear
- Always know your subject matter
- Be punctual and always keep appointments
- Make your client feel comfortable
- Ask open-ended questions
- Facilitate the decision making process of your client
- Share information
- Maintain eye contact with your client
- Recap the conversation for your client
- Make your client feel important
- Empathy

Don't

- Be judgmental
- Make promises that you cannot keep
- Impose your own solutions on your clients
- Show sympathy to your client
- Give advise to your client
- Provide incorrect information
- Interrupt your client while she/he is talking
- Intimidate your client through your body language
- Use negative reinforcement
- Think that you can control your client's behaviour

Exercise 1:

Self reflection

You have just come out of a counselling session after counselling a client ask yourself the following questions:

When the client was talking where did he give the most information about his problem? Why did he give more information in that part of his conversation versus others?

When did your client feel most comfortable during the counselling session? Why do you think he felt comfortable?

Think of three things that you can do better in the next counselling session.

Exercise 2:

Tell a friend that you have a problem and needs his assistance. While he is going through the process of assisting you to resolve the problem make mental notes of the process he is following. As soon as the exercise is over take a pencil and paper and put the process down step-wise. Use your own checklist of counselling skills and mark what was followed and what was not and reflect how some missed steps affect you in describing your problem to your friend.

Exercise 3:

Test yourself

Please mark the correct response

1. Counselling is most effective when you empathise with your client.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Making notes on a piece of paper while listening to the client is good for the counsellor's memory and makes the client know that you are listening to him.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. **If the client is giving incorrect information the counsellor should immediately check the client before he makes any more mistakes.**
 - a. **Yes**
 - b. **No**

4. **It is important that the client feels listened to.**
 - a. **Yes**
 - b. **No**

5. **Mirroring means replicating the behaviour of your client rather than his posture and positioning.**
 - a. **Yes**
 - b. **No**

6. **Having a table between yourself and your client gives the counselling set up a more professional look and the client feels that he is in a proper counselling session.**
 - a. **Yes**
 - b. **No**

7. **Always greet your client before starting the session**
 - a. **Yes**
 - b. **No**

- 8. Do not look at your client making conversation with him as that can be impolite.**
- a. Yes
b. No
- 9. Always let your client know that he is doing the wrong thing and would be considered a bad person by others if he continues with such behaviour.**
- a. Yes
b. No
- 10. Tell your client what is wrong and right instead of sharing the correct information with him.**
- a. Yes
b. No

Meanings

Open-ended questions questions that are NOT based on yes or no answers.

“Do you smoke?” or “What is your name?”
A closed question would be:

Empathy to imaginatively experience another person’s experience and so experience it fully

Sympathy feeling compassion, pity, affinity to another person’s problems