

Assignment 1

Understand how to establish a relationship using counselling skills

- 1.1 Explain the **process** involved in establishing a counselling skills relationship
1.2 Explain how to manage the helping interaction throughout the relationship to keep those involved **safe** and **supported**

Student should complete an essay explaining the process involved in establishing a counselling skills relationship and how to manage the helping interaction throughout the relationship to keep those involved safe and supported. (600words)

The process of establishing a counselling relationship encompasses a myriad of different elements: establishing boundaries; employing a variety of counselling skills and abiding by confidentiality expectations.

Establishing a counselling relationship begins before the first session. Any relevant information regarding the services available should be provided prior to the client's decision to pursue counselling help.

To achieve a successful counselling relationship, trust must be established. Trust is earned through a conglomerate of factors: integrity of the counsellor and the maintaining of boundaries. To establish such a relationship, it is important to be both genuine and empathetic in approach. Empathy makes the client feel understood, which encourages co-operation. However, it is important to exercise understanding without condoning irrational or dangerous behaviours. It is important that the counsellor allows them the space and time to vocalise their concerns by listening attentively. Naturally, listening will give insight into the causes and nature of the client's concerns, which will determine an appropriate plan for therapy moving forward.

When beginning a counselling relationship, counsellors must consider how the terms of their service will be contracted with the clients; the client's individual needs must be respected. A record of what has been agreed should be made available to the client, and the counsellor should log any changes (BACP, 2016). The counsellor must also be clear in the limitations of confidentiality (such as if the client poses physical harm to themselves or others). It is also advisable that a counsellor should explain the possibility of referrals - for instance, if the counsellor feels that the clients needs could be better resolved with another care professional. Transparency and clear communication are integral to establishing a counselling relationship. The *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* proposed by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2016) emphasises the importance of communicating boundaries when developing a relationship. They advise that counsellors should: communicate the expectations of counsellors that clients have a right to have; clearly communicate any relevant costs; respect the boundaries between their work with the client and what exists outside of that dynamic; never exploit or abuse clients and ensure to listen to the client's views regarding their counselling experience. It is important for counsellors to be aware that, in accordance with BACP standards, the word 'abuse' homogeneously describes financial, emotional, physical, sexual or spiritual abuse (BACP, 2016).

Establishing a safe counselling relationship necessitates that the counsellor recognises professional and personal boundaries (BACP, 2016). Boundaries must be maintained in accordance with the objectives of the professional relationship which are in place to aid the

client. Where personal spheres can extend to the internet, it is also necessary for counsellors to distinguish between their professional and personal presence on social media.

Boundaries also exist to ensure the emotional wellbeing and safety of the client and counsellor alike. However, there are additional ways in which counsellors can manage the helping relationship to ensure safety and support for both parties. For instance, a counsellor should consider the therapeutic environment (Lalor, no date) - ensuring that the space makes the client feel relaxed and secure. If a counsellor visits the client's home, then this could also mean asking family or friends to respect privacy and occupy another room. To ensure that the client receives the most appropriate support, it is also imperative for a counsellor to be aware of when other professional practitioners or authorities should intervene. As already discussed, the limitations of confidentiality and the possibility of referrals should have been communicated clearly to the client during the beginning of the counselling relationship.

It is important to recognise the gruelling emotional impact that the relationship can have on the counsellor; whilst objectivity is practiced and personal resilience developed, it is also recommended that counsellors access support themselves. *The Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors*, BACP states that "it is a breach of the ethical requirement for counsellors to practice without regular counselling supervision/consultative support" (Sanders, 2002).

References:

(2016) 'BACP, Ethical Framework'. Available at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/> Accessed: 15/02/18

Lalor, D (No date) 'Creating a Therapeutic Environment', Available at: https://www.cottesloecounselling.com.au/creating_therapeutic_environment.html Accessed: 15/02/18

Sanders, P. (2002:99) *Code of ethics and Practice for Counsellors*, BACP (1992) Amended AGM September 1993, par.B.3.1 and B.3.2