

# **UNIT 1: ASSIGNMENT 7**

## **Understanding the Development of Own Counselling Skills**

**7.1 Explain how self-reflection can improve use of counselling skills**

**7.2 Explain how feedback and guidance can improve the use of counselling skills**

**7.3 Evaluate own strengths and weaknesses in using counselling skills**

*Students should write an essay in which they first explain how self-reflection can improve the use of counselling skills. From this, they should move into explaining how feedback and guidance can improve the use of counselling skills. Lastly, the essay should evaluate the student's own strengths and weaknesses in using counselling skills.*

*Word count: 600 minimum.*

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Self-reflection is integral to the professional development of a counsellor, as it permits one the time to consider the efficacy of the skills being used during helping relationships. For instance, if one's client is often changing the subject and appears uncomfortable, self-reflection might lead one to consider how they can make their therapeutic environment more relaxing. After one has qualified to become a counsellor, less time will be spent with a supervisor; thus, it is important for a counsellor to recognise their own responsibility in reflecting upon their professional practice. Reflective practice is encouraged by the BACP through the necessitated commitment to ongoing learning and '[keeping] skills and knowledge up to date' (BACP, 2016). Career Professional Development (CPD) is actively encouraged as part of a reflective practice, which will provide counsellors with a myriad of new or updated information in relation to theoretical approaches, skills in practice, legal requirements, and sociological awareness.

Feedback from the client is imperative for one's own professional development as well as gaging the client's progress through sessions; it can be communicated by the client in multiple ways. The counsellor is encouraged to ask the client their thoughts about their counselling experience, and this can be done formally through a collected document at the end of the sessions. This can also be done informally and conversationally, by asking the client for feedback about their helping relationship. Feedback can also be given implicitly and immediately, by gaging the client's responses to the skills being employed. For instance, if a counsellor uses silence too regularly, or for too long, it may be making the client feel uncomfortable.

Feedback is an inherent part of the education process in qualifying to become a counsellor, and students must be prepared to receive constructive feedback from professional supervisors who have a responsibility to support students in this way. For instance, within person-centred counselling, there is an emphasis on 'idiosyncratic empathy' which has more depth and resonance than empathy alone. By being ready to develop upon skills one already has, clients will feel more valued and more understood within their own frame of reference.

Having worked as a Learning Resource Assistant in a secondary school library - supporting students with low-self esteem as a result of low reading ages - I recognise those helping skills that I regard to be my strongest. The school's ethos - which perpetuates and encourages a positive attitude in all member's of staff - taught me the importance of 'Unconditional Positive Regard' (UPR) when developing relationships with students and classes. I recognised this to be especially important when relating to students one-to-one with low-self esteem, whose disruptive behaviour in large groups often stemmed from academic insecurity. Through supporting the students, empathy was also a skill I was able to develop - as the school encourages staff to question the potential causes of a child's behaviour through their unique frame of reference. I believe that day-to-day, I value congruence as a personal quality. I believe it to be of upmost important to be genuine and live with integrity - which extends, naturally, to the professional environment.

To ensure 'good practice', BACP places emphasis on a counsellor's commitment to ongoing learning (BACP, 2016). As a curious learner, I believe this to be another of my strengths. I thoroughly enjoy the challenges and rewards of independent research as evidenced by my high first class achievement in my dissertation at university. Similarly, I would like to continue studies within the realm of counselling support by pursuing other avenues of therapeutic help such as Art Therapy and Holistic Medicine.

Paraphrasing is a skill which I have been able to develop through my academic studies - re-interpreting texts in order to convey the author's sentiment. While I am extremely confident in my written ability, I believe I need further experience in verbal communication to have full confidence.

I still need to develop confidence in using silence. I acknowledge within myself an apprehensiveness about making someone feel potentially uncomfortable, but still recognise the importance of using silence to help clients reflect on their answers and thoughts. I feel I also need to hone the ability to demonstrate idiosyncratic empathy; while I consider myself to be already empathetic, I need professional practice in developing the resilience to empathise entirely with the many differing individual cases I could be listening to each day.

## References

BACP (2016) 'Ethical Framework' Accessed at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/> Accessed at: 25.02.18