UNIT 6: COUNSELING SKILLS FOR TEACHERS

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the need for counseling skills for teachers
- analyze various skills such as communication skills, empathy, genuineness, positive regard, etc.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, you got an overview of the entire concept of counseling. In this unit, you will learn about counseling skills for teachers. Generally, education plays the role of educating an individual. Therefore, the school is the primary institution for shaping well-developed individuals for the nation. In a school, the teacher is the key person or counselor who is directly involved in teaching students and dealing with their performance and behavior. Therefore, to do this effectively, the skills of a trained counselor should also be present in a teacher, because counseling skills help create an organized classroom, make the teaching-learning process interesting, and guide teachers in reducing behavioral problems observed among students in the classroom.

6.3 BASIC SKILLS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS FOR TEACHERS

To understand students' experiences and behavioral problems in school, a teacher must learn skills and acquire a sufficient level of competence to provide help when needed. These skills are discussed in detail in the following sub-sections:

6.3.1 Communication Skills

Communication skills are an integral part of counseling. To be effective as a counselor, one must be skilled in using communication skills. This means understanding verbal messages, sensing non-verbal messages, and being able to give both verbal and non-verbal responses to both types of messages. Communication skills can be divided into three parts – Expression, Listening and Responding, and Reacting. Each of these is discussed below.

(a) Expression

Expression is one of the basic units of communication. Expression may be verbal or non-verbal. Although the proportion of verbal and non-verbal communication may vary in different situations, they have a very significant impact in human relationships and counseling. When the words used by a speaker are consistent with tone, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact, the chances of understanding communication are greater. But when these are inconsistent, misunderstandings may occur. Along with words, equal attention should be paid to the following aspects of non-verbal behavior:

- Facial expressions such as smiling, frowning, eye movement, raised eyebrows, lip biting, alertness or inattentiveness, etc.
- Body posture or movement.
- Vocal qualities such as tone, pitch, volume, pauses, language, rhythm, fluency, silence, etc.

Another aspect of expression is that we disclose important personal information to those whom we trust. The depth of information sharing is related to the level of trust. Therefore, the success of counseling depends on the level of trust between the counselor and the counselee. Hence, the role of the teacher as

a counselor is to build trust among students in school so that they can freely express their feelings without hesitation.

(b) Listening and Responding

Conversation always has two components. Generally, the two people involved in a conversation participate in both components. Each person listens and responds to what they hear. In a school, these two components are the teacher and the student. In all communication, and especially in counseling, listening is a very important aspect. Listening can be divided into three types – Superficial listening, Selective listening, and Attentive listening.

In superficial listening, people listen with partial attention because they themselves are facing many problems. Therefore, the listener may not feel very comfortable.

In selective listening, a person hears only what they want to hear and conveniently ignores the rest, which may actually be the most important part of what the other person is trying to say.

Attentive listening is not only to words but also to thoughts and feelings – whether those feelings are pleasant or unpleasant, joyful or sad, painful or hopeful. It is deep and serious listening that enhances deep trust and complete expression. As a counseling skill in school, teachers should choose attentive listening. It helps in effectively resolving students' problems.

Responding

After hearing or receiving information, a person responds or reacts to it. Psychologists state that people generally use five types of responses or reactions in daily interactions with others. These are mentioned below –

1. **Evaluative Response** – In this, judgments are made about what has been done or what should be done in the counseling process.
2. **Interpretative Response** – The purpose of this response is to tell the other person the meaning of their problem and how they should think or feel about it.
3. **Supportive Response** – Through this response, efforts are made to reduce or increase the intensity of feelings, reassurance, or comfort of

the counselee.

4. **Probing Response** – This response seeks more information about the situation or feelings of the counselee or creates further discussion.
5. **Understanding Response** – This is a reflective response in which the counselor expresses their understanding of the counselee's feelings, problems, and perceptions.

Such communication helps in establishing a counseling relationship.

(c) Reacting

Sometimes, if the counselor gives an evaluative or judgmental response, the counselee tends to react defensively. This is called reacting. Similarly, when the counselor uses understanding and supportive responses, the counselee tends to explain their feelings and experiences with greater trust.

6.3.2 Empathy

In the counseling process, empathy means experiencing the world as seen by the counselee through their eyes. As a result, the counselee feels that you are connected with them. Cormier and Hackney (1995) described empathy in two stages –

- Accurately experiencing the counselee's world, that is, seeing or understanding things as they perceive them.
- Communicating the counselor's understanding to the counselee verbally.

As discussed earlier, any behavior can be understood on the basis of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Therefore, empathetic communication involves listening to and understanding the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the counselee, and then the counselor communicates with the individual based on this experience. For a teacher, empathy is important to understand and support children in school. According to Cormier, Weisser (1984) and Egan (1986), the skills related to empathy are –

Non-verbal and verbal attentiveness

- Paraphrasing
- Reflection of feeling – explicit and implicit
- Pacing or synchronizing with the client's mode of experience

W CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

No. 1: Mention the components of communication skill.

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No. 2: Mention non-verbal behaviors of communication.

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No. 3: What do you understand by superficial listening?

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Activity-1

As a teacher, show with the help of an example how you can use communication skills to counsel your students in your classroom

6.3.3 Genuineness

Genuineness means that the counselor shows real interest in the counselee, which is clearly reflected when there is consistency in their words, actions, and feelings. For example, if a counselor tells the counselee that they are listening, then their posture will be leaning forward, their facial expressions will be interested, and there will be direct eye contact. This is genuineness in counseling, which every teacher should adopt while counseling children in the classroom.

There are two specific skills for expressing genuineness – **self-disclosure** and **immediacy.**

Self-disclosure is a skill in which the counselor shares their own experiences related to the topic under discussion and expresses awareness of their thoughts and feelings. Through self-disclosure, the counselor shows that they are not just playing a role, but are also a person with experiences similar to the counselee. As a counseling skill, self-disclosure is most successful when the counselor's experience is similar to that of the counselee and personal life experiences are shared openly.

Immediacy is another skill used to express genuineness. It is used to describe

the feelings experienced by the counselor and the counselee during the counseling interaction. Immediacy is used when counseling does not progress in the right direction. In such situations, sometimes both the counselor and the counselee may experience frustration or anger but may not want to acknowledge it, as it may hinder relationship building. For example, when even after meeting two or three times the counselee is not willing to open up and feels stuck, the counselor can use immediacy as a tool.

6.3.4 Positive Regard

Positive regard or respect is considered very valuable in creating trust between the counselor and the counselee. It means that the counselor accepts the counselee as they are, without imposing any conditions. Positive regard can be expressed using both verbal and non-verbal skills. Providing care, value, and dignity to the counselee through unconditional positive regard is very important. Non-verbal behaviors related to positive regard include a soft and calm voice, smiling, direct eye contact, open and welcoming gestures, etc. Verbal skills for providing positive regard include genuineness, confrontation, and action planning, etc.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. No. 4: What do you mean by genuineness ?

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No. 5: Mention two skills used to express

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6.4 LET US SUM UP

- Communication skills are an integral part of counseling. To be effective as a counselor, one must be skilled in using communication skills. That is, one must understand verbal messages, sense non-verbal messages, and provide verbal and non-verbal responses to both.

- Communication skills can be divided into three parts – Expression, Listening and Responding, and Reacting.
- Listening is a very important aspect of all communication, especially counseling. Listening can be divided into three types – Superficial listening, Selective listening, and Attentive listening.
- Sometimes, if the counselor gives evaluative or judgmental responses, the counselee tends to react defensively. This is called reacting.
- In the counseling process, empathy means experiencing the world as seen by the counselee through their eyes.
- Genuineness means that the counselor shows real interest in the counselee, which is clearly reflected when there is consistency in words, actions, and feelings.
- Positive regard or respect is very valuable for creating trust between the counselor and the counselee. It means accepting the counselee as they are without any conditions, using both verbal and non-verbal skills.

O 6.5 FURTHER READING

1. Aggarwal, J. C. (1996). Essentials of Educational Technology, Vikas Publishing House.
2. Makinde, T. (1984). Fundamentals of Guidance and Counseling, Macmillan.

K 6.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Question No. 1: Communication skills can be divided into three parts – Expression, Listening and Responding, and Reacting.

Answer to Question No. 2: Non-verbal behaviors of communication –

- Facial expressions such as smiling, frowning, eye movement, raised eyebrows, lip biting, alertness or inattentiveness, etc.
- Body posture or movement.
- Vocal qualities such as tone, pitch, volume, pauses, language, rhythm, fluency, silence, etc.

Answer to Question No. 3: In superficial listening, people listen with partial attention because they themselves are facing many problems; therefore, the listener may not feel very comfortable.

Answer to Question No. 4: Genuineness means that the counselor shows real interest in the counselee, which is clearly reflected when there is consistency in words, actions, and feelings.

Answer to Question No. 5: The two skills used to express genuineness are self-disclosure and immediacy.

6.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Short Answer Questions (Answer within 150 words)

1. Why do you think counseling skills are necessary for teachers?
2. According to you, which counseling skill is most important for teachers and why?
3. When are the skills of immediacy and self-disclosure used?

(B) Essay-Type Questions (Answer within 300–500 words)

1. Discuss the concept of communication skills in detail.
2. What types of listening skills do people generally use in communication? Highlight the characteristics of attentive listening.
3. Write a short note on positive regard as a counseling skill.

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