UNIT 11 : INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING

UNIT STRUCTURE

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11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit shall enable you to :

- understand the basic elements of counselling;
- be equipped with skills essential for a counsellor;
- be aware of the counselling process in solving client's problems;
- learn some techniques to be adopted in modifying client's behaviour.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

Counselling is a distinct profession that has developed in a variety of ways since early years of the 20th century. It is a helping profession aimed at enabling clients change towards positive behaviour by taking rational decisions in life. A lot of emphasis is laid on the client-counsellor relationship where a great deal of responsibility lies on the counsellor to take this relationship forward in enabling the client attain his goals or modify behaviour. Attributes and skills of the counsellor, abiding by the professional standards and guidelines also plays a crucial role. Adopting a theoretical approach using certain techniques makes it holistic. This unit shall provide a basic

introduction to counselling and examine the scope in present day context. The stages of counselling and the different skills to be used for eliciting information are also presented. Finally, behavioural approaches to modify maladaptive behaviour are also discussed in this section.

11.3 AN OVERVIEW OF COUNSELLING

Counselling means different things to different people and the term counselling is many times confused with giving advice, just talking to people, or providing guidance. Guidance is about helping individuals choose what they wish, mostly practiced in schools and career centers to decide on a course of study. But counselling focuses on enabling individuals make changes in life. It is not about giving advice but about helping and supporting a person to find answers, sort out issues and reach decisions affecting their life. Counselling indeed involves talking to people, often performed face - to - facein confidential sessions (also telephone, mail, letters etc) where the counsellor listens and reflects more than just talking.

Clients are enabled to understand their problem, to improve behaviour, character, values or life circumstances through the process of counselling which may take time depending on the nature of the problem. At the end of it, clients find the counselling process beneficial, liberating and empowering experience.



Counselling a dynamic process through which one individual assists another to use one's inner resources in a positive way to explore his / her situation, identify options, decide on possible solutions and act upon them.

It is important to discuss further about the powerful aspect of counselling with the help of a few definitions that enhances one's understanding of the concept and process.

A simple and comprehensive definition of counselling is that it is a dynamic process through which one individual assists another to use one's inner resources in a positive way to explore his / her situation, identify options, decide on possible solutions and act upon them. The terms to be noted here are 'dynamic process' 'use of inner resources' and 'identify options' all of which describe the key elements of the counselling purpose and the process.

Training Manual on Drug Addiction Counselling defines counselling as

an interactive exchange process between counsellors and clients to help clients confidentially explore their problems and enhance their capacity to solve their problems. This definition highlights the importance of confidentiality in the counselling relationship and about enhancing the capacity of the client which are very crucial aspects in counselling.

The American Counselling Association (ACA), Oct 1997, the largest professional organization of counsellors provided a holistic definition of professional counselling as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systemic interventions, strategies that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology. This definition emphasizes pertinent aspects of counselling. Counselling is for persons who are functioning well and also for those who have pathology - serious problems in life.Hence it meets the needs of a wide spectrum of people. The importance of theories and psychotherapy is also stressed upon in the definition.

However, the concern is that there is a stigma associated with counselling or seeking any mental health intervention which delays or compounds to the problem. There is also a shortage of manpower or trained counsellors in India where less than 3000 qualified counsellors are practicing.

11.4 NEED AND SCOPE OF COUNSELLING

An indispensable need for counselling is felt due to the complexities of present day society which is also termed by sociologists and psychologists as the age of anxiety. Tyler (1953)highlighted some factors that create insecurity in the individual such as broken homes, domestic violence all of which can be addressed through counselling. It is sad that children are confronted with varied problems during childhood even before their emotional growth is complete. Statistics reveal high rate of suicide, homicide, marital breakdown, and alcoholism and drug abuse prevalent in today's society. According to WHO, emotional health of humanity is decliningand cases of

depression, nervousness, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders areon the rise. According to the National Mental Health Programme document, 20 - 30 million Indians need some form of mental health care.

Other settings where counselling is essential:

- School counselling / child guidance clinic - children from broken homes are taught to cope with bitterness, hatred, neglect and confusion, scholastic backwardness, behavioural problems and conduct disorders; Academic stress imposed on children and adolescents,
- Trauma counselling - victims of abuse, rape and trafficking, threat of war, insurgency, armed conflict, natural disasters (flood, earthquakes)
- Drug abuse and HIV/AIDS
- Rural migration to the urban areas, displacement - (cope with anxiety, failures, stress etc)
- Occupational counselling - coping with stress, interpersonal relationships
- Family counselling - pre - marital, marital counselling, parenting
- Medical settings

Scope of counselling according to Encyclopaedia of Psychology:

- Facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health related, developmental and organizational concerns
- Address both normal developmental issues and dysfunctional or disordered developmental issues from individual, family, group, systems and organizational perspectives.
- Helps people with physical, emotional, and mental disorders improve their well-being, alleviate their distress and maladjustment, resolve crisis and increase their ability to live more highly functional lives.

This summarises the need and scope of counselling in a holistic way. The scope and nature of counselling keeps changing and job opportunities

also keep changing.

11.5 COUNSELLING SKILLS

A skill is an ability, usually learned and acquired through training, to perform actions which achieve a desired outcome(s). They form the basis in the counselling process from rapport building to assessing the problem and problem solving. Without these skills, it is impossible to begin counselling itself. Counselling skills, also called therapeutic communication skills can be broadly classified into supportive skills and facilitative skills.

Therapeutic Communication Skills

SUPPORTIVE		**FACILITATIVE**
Non-verbal	**Verbal**	**Probing**
SOLER	Attending	Interpreting
	Paraphrasing	Silence
	Reflection of feelings	
	Summarizing	

Supportive Skills

The skills of helping that facilitate engagement with clients; put them at ease; establish a trusting and empathic working relationship;provide comfort, understanding, compassion, and encouragement;and further facilitate the implementation of the assessment and intervention are referred to as supportive skills. They can be classified into verbal and non-verbal skills to provide support to the client.

Non-Verbal Skills

The counsellor's posture, way of sitting and carrying oneself conveys a lot of meaning to the client. A very common and popular acronym is SOLER which is all about the non-verbal gestures of the counsellor.

SOLER consists of the following aspects-

S - Sit squarely : this communicates counsellor's presence and availability.

O - Open posture : to signify that counsellor is open to listen to the client.

L - Lean forward : this is a natural sign of involvement.

E - Eye contact. This communicates counsellor's presence and interest to listen. There should be eye contact but this should not be confused with staring.

R - Relax : shows comfortable with oneself and the situation.

Other non-verbal skill is observation:

Observing Skills

Observing skills are the counsellor's ability to see the client's behaviour and pick up non-verbal messages in order to understand experiences. The richest source of data concerning the client's feelings are from their emotional state i.e. posture, gestures and facial expressions.

Observation can be from three points of view:

- Physically: e.g. body build, physical appearance, level of energy (that is whether client looks fatigued, happy, etc)
- Emotional: e.g. facial expression, posture, grooming;
- Interpersonal: e.g. how they relate to you: positively, negatively, neutrally.

Verbal Skills:

Attending

Attending is about conveying the message to the client that the counsellor is listening and interested in what they are sharing. It is listening to the verbal content of their sharing, observing non-verbal cues and communicating to the client by saying 'um-hm', 'yes', or repeating key words of his sharing. Here, listening takes 90% of the time and talking is only 10%. By attending, the client is made to feel relaxed and comfortable and express his feelings freely with the counsellor. It also enables the counsellor to obtain

accurate information and be attentive to the non-verbal cues of the client. Attending is a very important skill that helps in strengthening the counselling relationship and it should begin from the very first session.

Listening Skills

It is the active process of paying undivided attention to what the client is saying and most importantly "what they are not saying".***Listening*** is an important part of effective communication. It takes place at two levels, firstly at the level of content or words and secondly at the level of feeling. In other words, counsellors pay attention to the verbal content and also understand the feeling behind the words which is possible only when they listen intently to the client's sharing. Counsellor demonstrates that he/she is listening actively by nodding the head, making eye contact, being genuine and making the client feel relaxed.



Listening is an important part of effective communication. It takes place at two levels, firstly at the level of content or words and secondly at the level of feeling.

Use sentences such as the following to demonstrate that you are listening

'You seem to be saying… …'

'I wonder if you are feeling... ... because ... ...?'

'Correct me if I have not understood you correctly. You... ... , is that correct ?'

'What I hear you saying is……'

Open-ended questions

Questioning is an art and a skill. There are three different kinds of questioning. It can be open - ended, closed - ended or leading questions. It is ideal to use more of open - ended questions whereby you give more scope for the client to share what comes to his mind. This would also enable him to share elaborately. An open-ended question requires more than a one-word answer, like for eg. *'What difficulties do you experience in your studies?', 'When do you think would be the right time to disclose your test result to your spouse?'*

These questions usually have: who, why, where, what, when, can and

how at the beginning and cannot be answered by a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. They invite the client to continue talking and allow the counsellor to decide in what direction he wants to take the conversation.

Paraphrasing

A paraphrase expresses the meaning of a client statement or series of statements in different words. It is a response that restates the content of the client's previous statement. It concentrates primarily on the words spoken, the content which refers to events, people and things. It is using words that are similar to the client's, but fewer in number.Repeat in your own words in brief of what the client was saying. Avoid repeating the same words (parroting), except in significant situations. Paraphrasing involves rewording at least the crux of the client message and convey back to clients clearly and briefly what they have just communicated.

Example

Client : *'I am really doing my best to get on with them'*

Counsellor : *You're trying very hard to be friendly with them'*

Reflection of Feelings

Reflecting or mirroring feelings is the main skill of active listening and it is very crucial in the counselling relationship. Reflection is the counsellor's expression of the essence of the client's feelings, either stated or implied. The focus is primarily on the emotional element of the client's communication, whether it is verbal or non-verbal.It is an empathetic response to the client's emotional state or condition.Counsellors should help clients distinguish between their thoughts and feelings.

Components of Reflection of Feelings

Counsellor must first identify client's basic feeling that is expressed verbally or non-verbally. And then formulate a response that captures the essence of the feeling. Finally reflect this with the client. The client's feelings can be identified by observing his body messages ((may look tired, worried or happy, slump in the chair or sit upright), vocal messages (intensity of the

client's feelings by the degree of vocal emphasis), and other words or phrases that show any sign related to feelings (Eg. I'm tired, tensed, feel let down etc).

Example

Client : *'I still get annoyed when I think she is not telling the truth'*

Counsellor : *'You're still angry because you suspect she is lying'.*

Check the accuracy of their reflections of feelings. Understand to what extent clients have insight into themselves to acknowledge shame, embarrassment, anger hurt etc before your reflect their feelings. Reflect the strength of feelings, the varying degree of feelings - Eg; (happy/sad) or (anger/guilt/hurt) and reasons for it.

Summarising

Summarising provides both the client and the counsellor with the opportunity not only to review and determine the significance of information presented but also to use this review to establish priorities. It is a wrap up by the counsellor of the main points discussed in a counselling session. Summarising can focus on both feelings and content. It is appropriate to summarise after discussion of a particular topic within the session or as a review at the end of the session. In either case, a summary should be brief, to the point and without new or added meanings.This should be done at the beginning and at the end of each session. In the beginning, the client is asked to summarise the previous session and at the end, the counsellor summarises the main points of the current session.

Purpose of summarising is to providean overview of what was discussed and terminate the session in a logical way.It helps the client to order histhinking, clarify meaning and realize that the counsellor understood what he had had shared.

Example

Counsellor : *"We have talked about two issues now. You feel you have hurt your parents and given them lots of problems. You want to do something about this. The other issue is related to your work. You feel you*

have been blaming your bosses for losing quite a few jobs. Now you understand that drug taking has been the cause for it"

Facilitative Skills:

Probing



Probing is the counsellor's use of a question or a statement to direct the client's attention inward to explore his situation in greater depth. Probing question should be open-ended which requires more than a one-word answer.

Probing is the counsellor's use of a question or a statement to direct the client's attention inward to explore his situation in greater depth. Probing question should be open-ended which requires more than a one-word answer. In simple terms, it is asking for more information regarding a particular issue the client is sharing about. By probing, a counsellor can help the client focus on a feeling or content area and encourage him to elaborate further on it. It is also to clarify of illustrate what he was sharing on. The counsellor draws the attention of the client to certain issues that need more explanation and also to enhance the client's awareness and understanding of his situation or feelings. But it is vital, that probing is used only after listening and attending to the client.

Example of Probing

Client : *"I had always been a good worker. I even received an award for excellence four years back. But the last two years….my God! So much of problems. Lots of problems for me in the office in these two years"*

Counsellor : *"For the last two years you have been having problems. What do you see as the reason behind these problems?"*

Interpreting :

Interpreting is an important counselling skill in counselling. It consists of these three components:

- Determining and restating basic messages,
- adding the counsellor's ideas for a new frame of reference, and
- reflecting these ideas with clients.

In other words, the counsellor listens to what the client has shared and then adds his or her views on it and checks with the client again if it is congruent with what is going on in his life. By interpreting, we give the client a chance to understand the implication of what he is saying. It is to be noted that, interpretation as a skill and technique cannot be used in the initial

stages of counselling and shall make use of other skills like attending, paraphrasing, reflection of feelings and summarising prior to and in conjunction with interpreting.

Interpretation enables the client to realise there are more than one way to look at most situations, problems and solutions, become more flexible and to explore new points of view andunderstand his problems more clearly.

Example of interpreting

Counsellor : *You say you had difficulty in getting along with your parents. Once you mentioned you simply broke the rules for the sake of breaking them. You have given up three jobs. Each time you said it was because of the negative behaviour of the boss. You feel you are unable to relate to the warden here in the treatment centre. Can there be a possibility, that you find it difficult to accept authority?*

Silence :

Silence can be very powerful in a counselling process. It happens when the client has shared something (that evokes a lot of emotions) and he may pause for a while. Both the counselor and the client may not be saying anything and silence prevails at that time. This moment is very powerful for the client as it is the time when things really 'sink in' and feelings are actually felt. To make it more effective, silence can be combined with 'attending skills' so that the client is encouraged to continue his sharing. Counsellors should allow that silence to prevail and should not try to jump in and say anything. It can allow the client to experience the power of his own words.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q 1: What is the difference between guidance and counselling?

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Q 2: What are the main components in reflecting client's feelings?

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Q 3: How does a counsellor demonstrate active listening?

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11.6 STAGES OF COUNSELLING

The counselling process goes through different stages in a sequential manner. The stages overlap in some situations. The following table provides an overview of the different stages and the major tasks in each of the stage.

Counselling stage	Key features in each stage
Stage 1: Rapport-building	● Forming a rapport and gaining the client's trust ● Assuring confidentiality and discussing the limits of confidentiality ● Allowing ventilation and expression of feelings ● Exploring the problem(s), asking the client to discuss their problem ● Clarifying the client's expectations of counselling
Stage 2: Assessment and analysis of the problem	● Focusing specifically on the problem. ● Identifying and assessing the gravity of the client's problems ● Establishing and clarifying the client's goals and needs ● Taking a detailed history ● Assessing the impact of the problem

	on the client's life ● Exploring the resources and support available to the client ● Understanding the client's level of insight
Stage 3: Provision of ongoing supportive counselling	● Continuing expression of thoughts and feelings ● Identifying options ● Identifying existing coping skills ● Evaluating options and their implications ● Enabling behaviour change ● Supporting and sustaining work on the client's problems ● Monitoring progress towards identified goals
Stage 4: Planning and initiation of steps	● Motivating the client for behaviour change ● Setting attainable goals ● Planning to achieve goals
Stage 5: Implementation of the plan	● Selecting a plan of action ● Putting the plan into action ● Reinforcing and monitoring behaviour change ● Being supportive while the client effects the change
Stage 6: Termination and follow-up	● Assessing the progress of behaviour change ● Assessing coping resources ● Reinforcing follow-up by ensuring that -the client is acting on plans,

-client is managing and coping with
daily functioning, and
-the client has a support system, and
supports are being accessed



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What is self - determination?

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

- Counselling is a dynamic process through which one individual assists another to use his / her inner resources in a positive way to explore his / her situation, identify options, decide on possible solutions and act upon them. Clients find the counselling process beneficial, liberating and empowering experience.
- An indispensable need for counselling is felt due to the complexities of present day society which is also termed by sociologists and psychologists as the age of anxiety.
- The skills of helping that facilitate engagement with clients; put them at ease and establish a trusting and empathic working relationshipare referred to as supportive skills.
- Attending is listening to the verbal content of client's sharing, observing non-verbal cues and communicating to the client by saying 'um-hm', 'yes', or repeating key words of his sharing.
- Paraphrasing is a response that restates the content of the client's previous statement, Iconcentrates primarily on the words spoken and the content which refers to events, people and things.

- Reflection is the counsellor's expression of the essence of the client's feelings, either stated or implied. The focus is primarily on the emotional element of the client's communication, whether it is verbal or non-verbal.
- Summarising is a wrap up by the counsellor of the main points discussed in a counselling session which can focus on both feelings and content.
- Probing is asking for more information regarding a particular issue the client is sharing about.
- Interpreting is when counsellor listens to what the client has shared and then adds his or her views on it and checks with the client again if it is congruent with what is going on in his life.
- Silence can be very powerful in a counselling processasit is the time when things really 'sink in' and feelings are actually felt.
- The six stages of counselling are Rapport-building, Assessment and analysis of the problem, Provision of ongoing supportive counselling, Planning and initiation of steps, Implementation of the plan Termination and follow-up.
- Empowerment is also described as the psychological aspect of dynamic, ongoing and participatory processes by which individuals gain greater mastery and control over their lives and affairs, and engage more in democratic participation in their communities. It is based on the principle of the client's right to self-determination



11.8 FURTHER READING

1. Alao, K.A.., Kobiowu, S.V., &Adebowale, O.F. (2010). Fundamentals of Educational and Counselling Psychology. Strategic Insight Publishing.
2. Corey, G. (2009). Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotheraphy[8th Ed].USA. Thomson Higher Education