UNIT 13 : SKILLS OF CASE WORKER

UNIT STRUCTURE

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the skills of working with individuals
- Get introduced to the skills essential in case work process
- Understand the necessity of people skill for effective therapeutic outcome.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have discussed the phases of social case work. The case worker plays a crucial role in designing and applying tools and techniques to deal with the problems faced by the client. Thus there are certain skills that are applied in various phases of case work. In this unit, let us discuss the essential skills that are crucial to effectively utilize the tools and techniques of case work. To become a successful case worker/ social worker, one needs to have emotional maturity as well as experience. Families case worker / social worker requires the skill to deal constructively with reality, the capacity to adapt to change, a relative freedom from symptoms that are produced by tension and anxieties, the capacity to find more satisfaction in giving than receiving, the skill to relate to other people in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness.

13.3 SKILLS OF WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

Skills are aids to accomplish a job. Casework is a profession/job and it needs skills. Thus casework skills are those which helps enhance contact. Contact is physical, psychological, and social. The contact is for relationship (professional). It is believed that "case workers or social workers must have the capacity to love those who do not love themselves". Thus, there are various skills to deal with sensitive situations and clients who are in need of such professional assistance. The following are the skills of case work:

PEOPLE SKILLS

People Skills are those which are essential for the success in working with people. They are the basic skills that are essential for any human beings' survival in the society. Lack of these skills would result in social exclusion. And, in the case of a therapist, it becomes all the more indispensible to deal with different kind of people. They include building a good rapport with others, listening skills, speaking skills, communicating skills, giving and receiving criticism more effectively, assertiveness skills, skill in dealing with difficult people, negotiation skills, leadership skills, etc.

Along with these basic 'people skills', qualities of a good case worker includes honesty, openness, voluntarism, integrity, confidentiality, self-awareness, respect, comprehension, patience, open to listen and learn from the failures/ problems.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is a two-way process and is the primary tool in case work without which case work cannot take place. It is indispensible to case work process and the case worker should obligatorily possess good communication skills. Communication is used both in diagnosing the problem and treating the problem.

Following are the essentials of maintaining good communication in case work:

a. Restorefull and goal related communication between client and

the caseworker. Goal of the client is to solve the problem; goal of the case worker is to help the client.

b. Make an environment comfortable enough for the client to express his feeling. Provide enough of privacy, confidentiality to express the feelings beyond data and problems.

c. The client should feel that he can tell his 'story' in his own way and also get accepted by the caseworker. The client may be irrational, irrelevant etc. don't interrupt to make it relevant or logical only matter.

d. The worker should gain client's trust and confidentiality by providing emotional comfort to the client. It can be achieved by the following gestures.

- By spending time with the client to express his feelings. One can gain confidence only by the fourth session. Until then it is only trust.
- By showing/having genuine warmth.
- By Focusing in the client and not on his problem/family/friends.
- By the skills to meet positive communication needs. Eg: fluency in language , questioning, listening eagerly and responding appropriately etc.

LISTENING SKILLS

The purpose of listening is to understand the words and feelings of the client. 'Hearing 'is a passive activity while listening is a conscious process. When you use both mind and ear (body) it is listening.

Factors for Effective listening :

i. Maintain eye contact using conversations. Not making eye contact means one is anxious, afraid, unwilling etc. It is essential to keep eye contact with the same age group, friends etc. we need to overcome this limitations without regard for age, sex, beauty etc.

ii. Conduct the session in as far as possible in quiet places. (Not isolated places)

iii. Case worker should clear his anxiety and preconceived ideas

related to the client. Don't be anxious if you see a teacher /best friend of your brother/sister, in-laws etc as your client. Should not form preconceived ideas about client.

iv. Case worker must be trained to listen everything. Make a schedule of 45 minutes for listening. Don't have too long sessions as human mind is not capable of listening for long. We can improve the capacity by listening. Check for meaning - ask questions to check you have heard and understood correctly. Clarify details: ask for more details, ask questions to clarify points and to show your interest. Leave silences - this enables other people to enter the dialogue or to work out their own position.

v. Understand what the client says and make mental note of it. It is not just 'listening' and writing notes on the book, but 'understanding' and 'making note of it. Demonstrate clearly that you are listening, using appropriate body language and

Let people complete the point they are making without interruption. Make some reference, however brief, to what they have been saying before you change the subject. Listen for the underlying message: what does the person really mean? What do they really want you to hear or to know?

Listening Skills demand the practice of the following:

- Eye contact
- Focus on points of agreement
- Not judgmental
- Attentive body language
- No interruptions
- Repeat some words of speaker

The following responses of the listener go against the purpose.

- Inattentive body language
- Verbal fillers
- No eye contact
- Distractions
- Kidnap their story
- Constant interruptions

Listening channels.

- VERBAL - Actual words used (7%)
- VOCAL - Tone, inflection, volume, speed, tempo, pitch (38%)
- NON-VERBAL - Body language, (55%)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define 'people skills'.

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Q 2: What are the essentials of good listening skills?

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OBSERVATION SKILLS:

Observation is the practice of noting features of people, things or situations. It is the power of perception. Example: I'm not criticizing that kind of clothing. I'm just making an observation about the style, These facts are based on close observation of the birds in the wild. Observation is either an activity of a living being, such as a human, consisting of receiving knowledge of the outside world through the senses, or the recording of data using scientific instruments. The term may also refer to any data collected during this activity. An observation can also be the way you look at things or when you look at something.

In casework, it is important to observe the following:

i. General outward appearance. How he/ she is dressed, combing hair, clean and tidy, limping, etc. outward appearance is certain cases can be deceptive, especially during interviews. It is advisable not to make rah judgment based on observation of a short period.

ii. Facial expressions and gestures.

Anger, disinterestedness, happy, active etc can be read from the facial expression. Eg: leg one upon another, occupying full chair, - relaxed, women usually show uneasiness by adjusting their dress, wiping the eyes, nose etc.

Gestures like catching the ear; shaking head, knuckling etc are signs of uneasiness.

iii. Emotions and interactions.

Smiling, crying, frustrations etc to be noted. How the client interacts- verbally/non-verbally,? Is he freely communicating? Stammering is both a sign of disorder as well as anxiety.

PROBLEM SOLVING SKILL

It is necessary for the case worker to:

a. Define the problem
   - A good problem definition states the current situation and the desired situation.

b. Identify and define the root causes --To solve problems so they remain solved, the case worker must identify and define root causes (i.e., reasons for the problem) rather than symptoms (i.e., something that indicates the presence of the problem).
   - A technique to use when considering all possible causes is brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique that allows a large number of ideas to be generated. Prior to brainstorming, go over the ground rules with group members.

     Ground Rules for Brainstorming
     - No criticism of an idea is allowed.
     - Strive for the longest list possible - "go for quantity."
     - Strive for creativity - "wild and crazy ideas are encouraged."
     - Build on the ideas of others - "piggyback on ideas presented by the group."

A helpful technique to structure discussion about root causes is the

fishbone diagram or the cause and effect diagram. The name "fishbone" comes from what the diagram looks like. It is madeup of a horizontal line (the spine) with a box at one end (the head) where the problem is stated. Several angled lines come off the horizontal line forming the ribs of the fish. Each rib will have a probable cause of the problem listed at the end of the rib. Contributors to the cause are usually put on small branches off the rib. If the group has defined the problem statement satisfactorily, the fishbone diagram builds naturally, simply by repeating the question, "what is a potential cause of…?

The best use of a fishbone is when you know that a specific area needs to be analyzed but you are not sure which portion of it is creating the problem. For example, customer satisfaction rated poorly but you are not sure why it was rated so poorly. Once all the root causes have been identified and organized on the fishbone, the group should discuss the potential causes to verify their relevancy and impact to the problem. Some groups may choose to verify potential causes by gathering data or some other form of analysis beyond group discussion.

c. Generate Alternative Solutions - Now that the group has identified and defined root causes, brainstorm alternative solutions. The focus of this step is to generate, not evaluate. Usually groups that generate and evaluate together often reduce the number of potentially viable solutions (i.e. when one member suggests a solution, other members offer reasons why it will not work).

d. Evaluate the Alternatives - Before evaluating alternatives, the group needs to first establish criteria for judging solutions. The criteria should define general characteristics that a solution should have.

   Solution 1

   Solution 2

   Solution 3

e. Agree on the best solution - After completing step 4, the case worker is left with the "best solution" either by evaluating criteria or by the consensus method.

f. Develop an Action Plan - Action planning is designed to involve

the client/other stakeholders, to ensure their commitment, and increase the likelihood that the solution will be implemented effectively and on time.

- Questions that need to be answered during action planning include: (1) what they want to do (goal); (2) how each step is to be undertaken (strategy); (3) when they want to do it (timeframe); (4) who is responsible for each step; and (5) expected outcome of the completed step.

g. Implement and Evaluate the Solution - Solution steps should be implemented according to the action plan. However, sometimes unintended consequences occur that require changing the implementation plan midstream. The group can adapt to unintended consequences by suggesting that project updates (status) be added to each meeting's agenda so that the group has a regular way to check its progress.

INTERVIEW SKILLS

The casework interview refers to the meeting of the social worker and the client in a face-to-face conversation. It is not a casual conversation but a professional action on the part of the social worker, because the conversation is geared to specific or general purposes which may be obtaining or imparting information, giving help or studying and assessing the client's situation. Interview, according to the Young, is a systematic method by which a person enter more or less imaginatively with the life of comparatively strangers. The case worker must be skilled to build good rapport with the client, so as to make the client feel confident about disseminate his/her inner feelings to the therapist.

Purpose of Social Casework Interview

It is the main medium of help without which the social casework procedure will never be possible. Interviewing is one of the significant casework technique which functions as a conveyor for the transmission of help to the client. The purposes it serves may be one or more of the following:-

i. Obtaining and Imparting Information
ii. Study and Assessment of the Client's Situation/ Troubles
iii. To give help to the client.
iv. To obtain knowledge about the situation.

Skills and qualities of a good interviewer:

The case worker/interviewer

1. Should have a professional touch in the interaction process.
2. Must have genuine feeling of warmth and affection to establish a good rapport.
3. Should be trained and should have sound knowledge of (sty, one's role in society) for handling individual
4. Must be able to motivate the client, to remove the communication barrier. Eg. Proper local language, respect etc.
5. Should be receptive and sensitive to the way his bahviour affects others.
6. Should not react impolitely even if the responses are not pleasant.

Objectives/purpose of interviewing.

1. To understand the client and to be understood by the client.
2. To obtain information from the client.
3. To impart information to the client.
4. For studying and assessment of the client's problem.
5. To give help to the client.
6. To obtain knowledge about the situation.

Techniques of an interview :

- Place- and time of interview must be pre-planned.
- Questions should be indirect, interesting, short, impersonal,
- Avoid tricky questions, like that of lawyers and stressful questions like that of policemen.
- Interview should be in the client's own language and in simple words.
- Encourage the client at every stage and thus win is confidence.

- Observe the client well and note the reactions expressed in gestures, facial expressions etc.
- The client should be made aware that the information will be confidential.
- The client's personality must be respected and his views appreciated.
- The interview should be recorded without the knowledge of the subject.

SKILL OF EMPOWERING THE CLIENT



Empowerment is 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.

Empowerment in case work is the belief that clients are capable and have a right to manage their own lives. ***Empowerment*** is 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. Self-determination, an important component of client empowerment, is promoted by helping clients recognize choices and by encouraging them to make independent decisions. Case Workers/ Counsellors should not do for clients what clients can and should do for themselves. When empowerment is the priority, clients become the experts, and there is "collaboration and shared decision making within the professional relationship. Case worker should give the autonomy or the right to decide to the client and refrain from controlling them or the therapeutic process.

The case worker should be skilled in assisting clients to change established patterns of thinking and acting that are interfering with their lives is also about empowering them. Counsellor should not take on that role as 'an expert' or a morally upright person and look down on the client or his ability to change. Focus should be on the client's strengths and capacities. The potentially empowering aspects of counselling include "an underlying belief in basic human potential and in clients' ability to cope with their life problems. Client self-determination is enhanced when clients have more choices.The counselling process itself offers empowerment to clients. The

beginning phaseoffers many clients a unique opportunity to explore their situation and their feelings.Ventilation of feelings can energize clients, and it can lead to spontaneous insightinto new ways of handling problems.

SKILL IN BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

The case worker should be skilled in behavior therapy. Thus it requires training to deal with and modify behavior issues with the client in specific cases. It is a direct and active treatment that recognizes the primacy of behaviour and acknowledges the role of learning. Behavioural theories of counselling focus on a broad range of client behaviour. Often a person has difficulties because of a deficit or an excess of behaviour. Focus is on the presenting problem that causes the client great distress. Counsellors who take a behavioural approach seek to help clients learn new, appropriate ways of acting, or help them modify or eliminate excessive actions. Adaptive behaviours replace those that were maladaptive.

Behavioural counselling approaches are popular in institutional settings such as mental hospitals or sheltered workshops. They are the approaches of choice for clients with specific problems such as eating disorders, substance abuse, and psychosexual dysfunction. They are also useful in addressing anxiety, stress, assertiveness, and parenting. B.F. Skinner is the person responsible for popularizing behavioural treatment methods, based on operant conditioning. Other therapists are Ivan Pavlov, John Watson, Albert Bandura and many others.



ACTIVITY

Identify a problematic situation in your life. First define the problem, brainstorm solutions (as many as possible), evaluate the options, choose a possible solution and implement it to handle your problem. Later, evaluate the outcome. This is a problem solving exercise.

SKILL IN CASE WORKER CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Every type of social treatment requires the use of human relationship. In casework the social worker has to establish relationship with the client. Relationship is sharing responsibilities. it can be personal (Hus-Wife), professional (teacher - student) or social (father - son). Robinson was the first to acknowledge the term 'relationship' in case work..Relationship is a channel through which a client can be understood or is understood. It is accepting the client and client accepting caseworker as helper. There are to objectives of having relationship:

1. General objective; is the understanding of the client. Social case work is professional in character and is different from traditional relations. This is guided by certain principles an norms of he profession. The case workershould be disciplined and sympathetic to his clients. He must be able to motivate his clients and thus satisfy his/her psychological needs.
2. Specific objective is therapeutic relationship (treatment of the problem).. In case work, the client - worker relationship is called treatment relationship. During the process of this relationship the efforts of the worker is oriented towards the satisfaction of the client's psychological needs. For this the case worker should have the thorough knowledge of the psychological principles of human personality -(ego-superego-id etc.)

   When these two objectives are there in a relationship it is a professional relationship.

Characteristics of Case Worker-Client Relationship.

1. Vital relationship between people arises out of shared and emotionally charged situations. The emotionally charged client shares his relation with the case worker.
2. All growth producing relationships including case work relations contain certain elements of acceptance and expectations, support and stimulation. The client accepts you as helper- you accept him as client. The caseworker stimulates and support client eg:

to eat, to fast etc.

3. A professional relationship is marked by its conscious purposiveness. It grows from the knowledge of the goal of relationship- knowledge, competence and authorization.
   a. Each question should serve a purpose of solving the problem. The question should be in sequence and complete.
4. Case work relationship begins as the client shares some part of his problem and case worker demonstrated what he feels with the client and his competence to deal with dealing with the problem.. Empathy if feeling with the client, while sympathy is feeling for the client.

a. Competence lie in making the client feel confident with the case worker. It is not always in solving the problem.

5. The case work relationship may have several therapeutic value. Eg: problem solving, changing attitudes, emotional stability, communication skills etc.
6. Relationship needs and difficulties from outside the case work situation may include and complicate the case work relationship. Relationship needs can be complicate if there are outside interference.
7. The caseworker also has relationship-reactions and part of his professional skill is managing of them. Eg: you feel sympathy for the client - chronic failure- but you have to remember the principle of 'controlled emotional involvement'.

Professional relationship is characterised by:

Purpose and concern for the client- the purpose and concern for the client involves the worker's care for everything that happens to the client in such a way that the client feels and realises the worker's concern for him. This is communicated through punctuality , taking consent before making home visit, attentive listening, etc.

Expectation- three types of expectation are always found in client - worker relationship. Firstly how the worker feels about the client's ability

and his desire to change and how he can effect change in the client's situation? Secondly what are the expectation from the client from the worker? It should be noted that the expectation of the worker and that of the client should be in accord as to what is going on between them in the transaction between them

Empathy- that the worker understands the depth of the feeling of the client and that he is with him.

Genuineness and acceptance- a genuine and congruent relationship consists of a consistent and honest and openness and behaviour matching with the verbalised intention and values of social work. Acceptance implies the that the worker considers the client as a person with feelings, thoughts and experiences unique to him. It also means that the case worker accept the client as a person but not his actions. It is communicated through expressing concern and respect to the client.

Authority - is the authority power delegated to the practitioners by society (client and agency) because of his status and expertise in the field. Authority gets vested in the case worker, because of the of his status in the agency (social or bureaucratic) and because of his knowledge and experience. Thus, client considers the worker as competent to help him, direct his activites and guide him in solution to his problems.

Counselling Skill

As discussed in one of the previous units, counseling is an important process used in case work that involves one-to-one interaction between the client and the therapist. Counselling is a process through which the case worker assists the client to use his or her inner resources in a positive way to explore his/ her situation, identify options, decide on possible solution and act on them. The Bristish Association of Counselling (BAC) 1984 "The term counselling includes work with individuals and with relationship which may be developed mental crisis support, psycho-solving, guiding problem-solving. The task of counselling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfying and resourcefully". Counselling seeks to resolve personal and interpersonal problems through

a variety of approaches, and in a way that is consistent with the values and goals of society in general, and that of the client in particular. The aim of counselling in case work :-

1. Enabling client to become independent in finding solutions to his problems
2. Helps client to change towards positive behavior
3. Assist the client in the process of making rational decision

Skill of Assurance

Assurance is the case worker's skill to build up confidence and instill hope in the client. ***Assurance*** is a technique used by the worker to help the client understand that his/her feelings are not judged and that the worker is not shocked at hearing when the client expresses feelings of hatred, jealousy, resentment and anger. The worker can make statements that are assuring like "I can understand how you feel or ?it is natural to have such feelings in such circumstances". Facilitation of expression of feelings is a technique of helping the client to vent his/her feelings. Strong feelings that are bottled up can create blocks in thinking. In such cases it is essential for the worker to help the client to express and the worker acts as a prodder and prompter. Accrediting and building of self-confidence refers to the worker pointing out to the client his/her strengths and giving him/her due credit for the tasks performed. This helps the client build up his/ her confidence. Being with the client is a technique that is essential when the client loses confidence or is weighed down with anxiety and is unable to make decision or carry out his/ her tasks. In such instances the attendance of the worker will serve as a support.



Assurance is a technique used by the worker to help the client understand that his/her feelings are not judged and that the worker is not shocked at hearing when the client expresses feelings of hatred, jealousy, resentment and anger.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What does empowering the client involve?

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Q 4: Write the meaning of case worker-client relationship

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

- Case worker / social worker requires the skill to deal constructively with reality, the capacity to adapt to change, a relative freedom from symptoms that are produced by tension and anxieties, the capacity to find more satisfaction in giving than receiving, the skill to relate to other people in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness.
- Communication is a two-way process and is the primary tool in case work without which case work cannot take place. It is indispensible to case work process and the case worker should obligatorily possess good communication skills. Communication is used both in diagnosing the problem and treating the problem.
- Observation is either an activity of a living being, such as a human, consisting of receiving knowledge of the outside world through the senses, or the recording of data using scientific instruments. The term may also refer to any data collected during this activity. An observation can also be the way you look at things or when you look at something.
- Authority power is delegated to the practitioners (client and agency) because of his status and expertise in the field. Authority gets vested in the case worker, because of the of his status in the agency (social or bureaucratic) and because of his knowledge and experience. Thus, client considers the worker as competent to help him, direct his activites and guide him in solution to his problems.

- Assurance is the case worker's skill to build up confidence and instill hope in the client. Assurance is a technique used through the worker to help the client understand that his/her feelings are not judged and that the worker is not shocked at hearing the client expresses feelings of hatred, jealousy, resentment and anger.



13.5 FURTHER READING

1. Aptekar, Herbert H. 1955. The Dynamics of Case Work and Counselling. Cambridge: Riverside Press
2. Hamilton, Gordon. 1956. Theory and Practice of Social Casework. New York: Colombia University Press
3. Davidson, E.H. 1970. Social Casework. Baltimore: Williams Company.



13.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. People skills include- building a good rapport with others, listening skills, speaking skills, communicating skills, giving and receiving criticism more effectively, assertiveness skills, skill in dealing with difficult people, negotiation skills, leadership skills, etc.

Answer 2. Listening skills involves taking and interpreting what the client wants to say. Check for meaning - ask questions to check you have heard and understood correctly. Clarify details: ask for more details, ask questions to clarify points and to show your interest. Leave silences - this enables other people to enter the dialogue or to work out their own position.

Answer 3. In empowering, self-determination is an important component of client empowerment, is promoted by helping clients recognize choices and by encouraging them to make independent decisions.