Helping A Student or Resident in Crisis - Basic Counselling Skills for Faculty

Developed for The Faculty Development Office, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, The University of Western Ontario.

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GOALS AND NEEDS

- Basic Counselling Skills
- Crisis Interventions
- Resources
By the completion of this module participants will:

- be able to exercise counselling intervention skills & strategies depending on the presenting problem
- be able to sort out those student problems which require referral to a professional counsellor
- understand some of the pitfalls and errors that are easily made in one-on-one counselling situations
- be aware of other campus and community support systems available for students

The PowerPoint presentation will give you some ideas to consider when students or residents in crisis come to you for help.

- The described techniques are demonstrated with a video clip of a simulated interview.
- Finally, we provide several references for anyone who wishes to learn more.

The Video Example

- Dan sits before you upset. He is a resident in Orthopedics. A six foot six former university football tackle, he passed up a CFL career to come into Medicine and has never regretted his decision. Up to now he has shown lots of promise but his girlfriend has recently split up with him and moved out of the apartment. He has contacted her repeatedly to try to reconcile but has not been successful. He is distraught and wants to drop out of his program to get his relationship back on track.
What to watch for:

- Attending
- Paraphrasing and summarizing
- Reflecting feelings
- Getting concrete
- Referral

To see this 13 minute interaction, click this link: VIDEO

The video will open in a separate window. To return here, close the window with the video.

CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

- Develop an ethos of care
- Repeatedly let students know they can come to you
- Be an agent of change
OPENING PANDORA’S BOX

- “Do I dare?”
- “What do I do if they follow up?”
- “I’ve stopped asking people how they are – because they tell me!”
- “Once they tell me, I have to solve it.”

WHAT DO I SAY AFTER SAYING HELLO?

- Give your undivided attention
- Show you are interested in them
- Ask questions

THE POWER OF LISTENING

“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force – the friends that listen to us are the ones we move towards and want to sit in their radius as though it did us good.”

Clark Moustakas
LISTENING

“If I can listen to what s/he tells me, if I can understand how it seems, if I can sense the emotional flavour which it has, then I will be releasing potent forces of change from within.”

Carl Rogers

THE BASIC OF BASICS - ATTENDING BEHAVIOUR

- Verbal following
- Eye contact
- Body posture

PROMPTS AND VERBAL FOLLOWING

Can you expand on that?
Uh, huh and then?
Please continue.
Was there more you wished to say on that?
Tell me more.
TANGENTIAL – NOT FOLLOWING

CLIENT: My mother’s new boyfriend moved in with us last week – I don’t like him very much.”

COUNSELLOR: “What day did he move in?”

VERBAL FOLLOWING OR TANGENTIAL

CLIENT: “I’ve had the hardest day! We’re putting out a new computer program and everybody was so stressed out.”

COUNSELLOR: “What kind of computer program is it?”

EXPLORING AND ELABORATING ON WHAT IS SAID

- Questions and questioning – reliable technique to gather info, deepen discussion, or broaden focus.
- Ask about – thoughts, feelings, behaviours, relationships
TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Closed ended – more focal and answered with one or two word

You ask – They answer

Do you? Are you? Have you?

TYPES OF QUESTIONS?

Open ended – provide flexibility in responding

What? How?

CHANGING CLOSED TO OPEN

- Are you having troubles with your partner?
- What is your relationship with your partner like?
CHANGING CLOSED TO OPEN

- Are you feeling stressed now?
- How are you feeling right now?

WHEN CLOSED QUESTIONS ARE GOOD

- You need to intervene in a crisis situation - e.g. Do you have a plan to kill yourself?
- When you require specific information – e.g. Are you going to hurt your girlfriend because she broke up with you?

THE PROBLEM WITH WHY?

They put people on the spot
Pressure the individual to provide an explanation when they don’t know
WHY VS. OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Why are you failing that course?
Could you tell me about the difficulties you are having with your course?
What are some of the things that trouble you about your coursework?

TRIED AND TRUE QUESTIONS

What brings you here to see me?
What prompts you to come now to talk?
How did you think I might help?
Where would you like to begin?
Can you tell me more about your situation?
Can you elaborate some on what you just said?
Can you say more about it?
Could you put that in other words so I can understand better?
Does what I am saying make any sense?

PARAPHRASING

- Conveys you are trying to understand
- Clarifies client’s statement by repeating more concisely
- Checks your perceptions to confirm you really do understand
- Emphasizes the cognitive/objective content of the message
PARAPHRASING SAMPLES

CLIENT: “He can’t help me with my relationship troubles – his degree is from an non-accredited school – he’s had very little training – and on top of that I hear he is unkind to his partner.”

YOU: “You question his competency and character.”

PARAPHRASING SAMPLES

CLIENT: “I’m not sure about the Prof – one moment she is really nice and willing to help me and the next moment she seems unkind and distant.”

YOU: “You are troubled by her inconsistency.”

SUMMARIZING STATEMENTS

- Crystallizes more coherently and integrates what has been presented – puts the facts together
- Serves as a stimulus for further exploration – what next?
- Functions as a perception check
- Brings some order to rambling
REFLECTING FEELINGS

Emphasizes emotional/feeling aspect of the client’s message

You communicate you recognize their feelings

HOW TO REFLECT FEELINGS

- Listen intently to feeling words
- Notice the tone of voice
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Suspend how you see things
- Think how this person is feeling - what are they trying to tell me

WORKING WITH FEELINGS

- IDENTIFY THE FEELING
- How do you feel about that?
- What feelings does it bring up in you?
- How does it make you feel when.....?
WORKING WITH FEELINGS - CONTINUED

- DEFINE AND CLARIFY FEELINGS
  - What does it mean to you when you say you feel ______?
  - What else might you be feeling when you feel down?

3. WORKING WITH FEELINGS

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS
  - Encourage responsibility for the feeling
  - State feelings in a direct and personal way. “I feel” vs. “one should feel”

GETTING CONCRETE

Facilitates closer relationship by increasing understanding of the client’s concerns

Facilitates problem identification and goal setting

Determine interventions to deal with the problem
CONCRETE EXAMPLES

CLIENT: “I’m flunking out of school, losing my boyfriend, fighting with my parents – I am really depressed”

Poor – “Tell me more about it.”

Good – “Can you help me understand what it means to be depressed for you?”

CONCRETE HELP

■ “Could it be that……
■ “I wonder if……
■ “Could this be what is going on…
■ “You appear to be feeling….
■ “Perhaps you are feeling…..
■ “I’m not sure I understand - are you saying……

CONCRETE HELP (2)

■ “I get the impression you…..
■ “As I hear it you are saying…..
■ “This is what I think I am hearing…..
■ “Perhaps you are feeling…..
PITFALLS IN HELPING

- Preaching – moralizing
- Evaluating and criticizing –
- Sympathizing
- Not paying attention
- Kidding/teasing
- Continuing with why questions

PITFALLS TO HELPING

- Looking away
- Watching the clock
- Fidgeting and restless
- Walking away
- Being harried
- Not caring

RESPONDING TO CRISIS

- Determine and assess severity
- Risk to self and others?
- Method, means, manner (the 3 h’s), and motive
- Sad persons
RESPONDING TO CRISIS (2)

- Hospitalization
- Community agency
- Campus resource
- Assist in arranging the referral

REFERRAL RESOURCES

- Student development centre - psychological services - 661-3031
- Student health services - counselling – 661-3771
- Mental health crisis line –
- South street -

HELPFUL WEB SITES

- www.udayton.edu/~cc/facstaff.htm