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Introductory Chapter: Counseling and Therapy

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1. Introduction

Counseling and therapy are concepts central to nearly all academic disciplines and serve as an interdisciplinary area of study. The field of counseling and psychotherapy represents a synthesis of ideas originated from science, philosophy, religion, and the arts [1]. The book covered the most practical counseling and therapy basic skills, different counseling approaches, and problem-based techniques. This book is written by specialists in the fields of counseling, psychology, health, and other related fields. University students, academics, researchers, life skills teachers, school and community counselors, and other community practitioners would find this book very useful in their professions.

2. Counseling and therapy

Counseling has been playing a pivotal role in the lives of many people who experienced a wide range of psychological, social, emotional, academic, spiritual, health, and physical issues for many years in memorial. For instance, counseling made considerable breakthroughs by meeting the needs of individuals who experience traumatic or sudden interruptions to their life development and social roles [1]. The concept of developing an individual's potential through counseling is identified in the early Grecian societies, with their emphasis on developing and strengthening individuals so that they could fulfill their roles, reflecting the greatest potential for themselves and their societies [2]. Many of such developmental testimonies and breakthroughs are what make this book a useful source.

3. Individual and group counseling

Counseling is being delivered through one-to-one contact, in groups, with couples and families, over the telephone, and even through written materials such as books and self-help manuals [1, 3]. It is also possible in the era of technology to conduct counseling via video calls, Skype, and livestreaming platforms. *Individual counseling* is a one-to-one helping relationship which focuses on a single person's growth, adjustment, and problem-solving and decision-making needs [2]. *Group counseling* is the routine adjustment or developmental experiences provided in a group setting. Group counseling focuses on assisting clients to cope with their day-to-day adjustment and development concerns including behavior modification, developing personal relationship skills, concerns of human sexuality, values or attitudes, or career decision-making [2].

4. Basic counseling skills

It has long been established that counseling is a daunting and complex process. It is therefore paramount that basic counseling skills are required to have effective and successful counseling sessions. Examples of these skills are minimal responses, paraphrasing, reflective comments, questioning, clarification, silence, body language, summarizing, and evaluation. Even though these skills are well integrated in the entire book, the author has exemplified them briefly below.

4.1 Minimal responses

In most counseling situation, a counselor should know how to use the minimal responses as technique to encourage the client to open up more and as an indication that the counselor is actively listening. While the examples of minimal responses are many to single out, the most common ones are yes, uh, oh, really, mmh, and, so, yeah, and many others.

4.2 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is simply to restate what the client has said in order to make sure the counselor understood the issue/issues correctly. At times, the counselor would need to confirm from the client the meaning of what was said in order to have the mutual understanding on the issue. It is important to note however that paraphrasing can be categorized into simple paraphrasing and advanced paraphrasing. The meaning of the latter is that, in simple paraphrasing, the counselor restates what the client has said by using the same exact words. Meanwhile, advanced paraphrasing means that the counselor uses different words than what the client has used with the same meaning. The main purpose with paraphrasing is simply to confirm to whether the counselor got the client correctly and what he or she meant. It is the search for meaning and mutual understanding between the counselor and the client.

4.3 Reflective comments

In addition to paraphrasing, the counselor may also use what is known as reflective comments during counseling process to ensure that information shared with the client are clear and accurate. Amis [3] notes that reflection is a skill that helps regulate the pace of the session as it allows both client and counselor to think back over what has been said previously and to consider any impact that it has on the present issue.

4.4 Questioning

A good counselor is one who knows how to ask questions and the type of questions during counseling process. The types of questions that are commonly useful to counseling process are open-ended questions and hypothetical questions. Also important but not commonly useful are closed-ended questions, why questions, leading questions, and either/or questions.

4.5 Clarification

In most counseling situations, the counselor would need to make use of clarification skills when the client's information are vague, confusing, and incomplete [4].

It is therefore very important that the counselor may ask the client to clarify certain information during the session.

4.6 Silence

The counselor needs to practice listening to the client's silences in order to try and find out what the reason for the silences are [4].

4.7 Body language

In order for a counselor and therapist to be effective and successful, he or she should be able to understand the clients' body language. The examples of body language are as follows: body posture, body movement, facial expressions, eye contact, voice, general appearance, advanced empathy, and distance.

4.8 Summarizing

Importantly, the counselor needs to be a good listener to be able to get the whole picture of the client's situation at hand. The summarizing skill enables the counselor to focus on the main points of a session.

4.9 Evaluation

Evaluation is believed to come nearer the end of the counseling relationship when the counselor encourages the client to reflect back over a change or development that has occurred and assess its value in the context of their life [3].

5. Counseling needs

Counseling needs are issues or situations that an individual may experience due to external factors and internal factors. Amis [3] asserts that external factors are situations that the client is in, the world and people around them, whereas the internal factors refer to the client's inner world, their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and fears. The counseling usually attempts to address some of the following common issues, namely, addiction, loss, managing feelings, relationship difficulties, study methods, medical conditions, coping memories, financial difficulties, poverty, unemployment, career choices and self-development, and many others [3]. The role of counseling has also been well documented in terms of helping people to better deal with addiction problems related to drug and alcohol abuse, food addiction, and smoking. It has also played an important role toward people with particular health conditions such as HIV or AIDS, cancer, and various genetic disorders [1].

6. Counseling approaches and therapies

Several counseling approaches can be employed by counselors, therapists, and other educators. The common ones are humanistic counseling, psychodynamic counseling, cognitive-behavior counseling, and other contemporary counseling approaches. Each of these approaches has a different view of understanding behavior and how to change unwanted behavior [4] (see **Figure 1**).
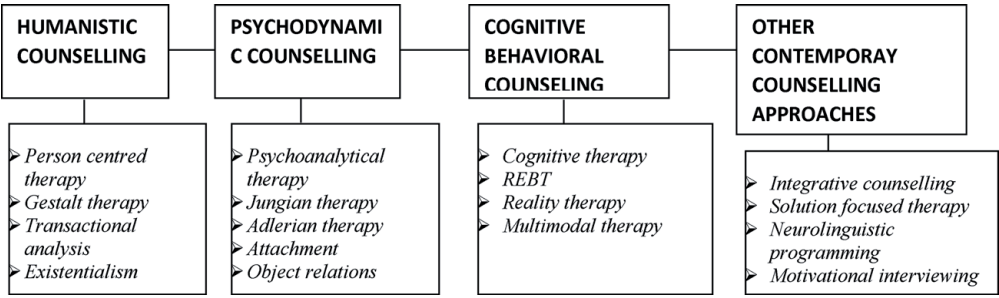
Figure 1.
The main counseling approaches (adopted from [3]).

7. Counseling session

A counseling session is structured nearly in the same way for various problems/ issues facing the client/s. Therapies and interventions can vary considerably from client to client [5]. Before embarking on regular sessions, a contract is agreed between those involved that covers areas such as timing, venue, and confidentiality [3]. In general terms, counseling session is divided into three phases, namely, the beginning phase, middle phase, and end phase.

During the beginning phase, the counselor starts building relationship with the client and assessment of the problem. He or she would need to work together with the client to identify and define the problem. In the middle phase, the counselor starts working with the client to set up counseling goals and plan of action. The end phase is where the counselor would assess the progress made by the client and to terminate the counseling process after an evaluation of the initial goal of the counseling.

8. Conclusion

The importance of counseling and therapy cannot be overemphasized in the world that is facing numerous challenges as a result of technological advancement, educational needs, social-economical factors, and personal developmental needs. In order to addressing students' needs such as study methods, student retention, dropout, peer pressure, relationship skills, and other academic activities, there should be a well-functioning and comprehensive guidance and counseling program in place. It is important to note that not every counseling approach can yield the best results; that is one of the reasons this book provided many different counseling approaches and therapies.

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