

Counselling Session and Analysis

Lianne Vroom

University of Calgary

Counselling Session Transcript

Dialogue segment	Skill demonstrated	Purpose of Skill	Met Desired Effect?
H: Hi Catherine, thank you for taking the time to come and meet with me today.	Welcoming client	Building rapport, establishing a collaborative relationship	Yes
C: Hi: H: Just before we get started I just want to go over a few things regarding confidentiality with you and make sure that we discuss a little bit about the counselling relationship.	Ethical practice	Clearly and thoroughly informing client of limits of confidentiality at onset of session	Yes- could be a bit more succinct with vocabulary
C: ok H: The information that you share with me and any notes that I might take during a counselling session are kept completely confidential.	Ethical practice	Clearly and thoroughly informing client of limits of confidentiality at onset of session	Yes – could also add the definition of confidential such as “no information about what we discuss can be released to anyone without your written permission.”
C: ok H: However, there may be specific situations where I may need to break confidentiality. That is if you tell me that you may be of harm to yourself or to others or if you tell me that you’ve been involved in a serious crime or if the information is requested with a subpoena during legal proceedings. So in those situations I would be required to share the information that we discuss. Do you have any questions about any of this so far?	Ethical practice / Asking Questions	Clearly and thoroughly informing client of limits of confidentiality at onset of session	Yes – checked for understanding to ensure comprehension of the concept of confidentiality
C: No I don’t think so. H: Ok then we’ll just get started, so firstly thanks for coming in today, it’s nice to meet you. Is there a specific reason for your visit?	Permission to talk	Allow client to elaborate their internal frame of reference, allowing her to share her viewpoint without curtaining opinions (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p. 86)	Yes- client elaborated on reason for visit.
C: Yes, I’m here because about	Empathetic	Fully	Yes – demonstrated

<p>6 weeks ago I was in a really bad car accident.</p> <p>H: Oh dear, I'm really sorry to hear that.</p>	<p>Understanding</p>	<p>comprehending the subjective world of the client so that the client feels understood (Truscott, 2010 p. 74)</p>	<p>genuine empathy and was able to accurately sense the feelings of the client and communicate this understanding to the client.</p>
<p>C: Ya, I was driving along the highway, it was late at night I was on my way home from a friends house and it was raining pretty hard and I just ended up loosing control of my car, it spun around and I ended up upside down in my car in the other lane.</p> <p>H: Wow, that must have been extremely scary for you.</p>	<p>Empathetic Understanding</p>	<p>Fully comprehending the subjective world of the client so that the client feels understood (Truscott, 2010 p. 74)</p>	<p>Yes- the empathy was accurate and being made known to the client, demonstrating sensitive, active listening.</p>
<p>C: Yes, it was pretty crazy, definitely scary.</p> <p>H: Can you tell me a little more about what happened?</p>	<p>Open-Ended question / Prompting</p>	<p>Allow client to elaborate their internal frame of reference, allowing her to share her viewpoint without curtaining their opinions (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p. 86)</p>	<p>Yes- information gathering is important for understanding her situation, however, having her re-live the traumatic event is not necessarily essential for being empathetic and helpful towards her situation. I could have asked a more direct open-ended question such as "how have you been feeling since the accident?"</p>
<p>C: Yes, luckily I had my phone in my pocket and I was able to get it and call 911. But I was so out of it I hung up before I even told them where I was or how seriously I needed help.</p> <p>H: Yes you were understandably in a state of shock in that moment; it's commendable that you were able to manage the call at all.</p>	<p>Empathetic Understanding</p>	<p>Allow client to elaborate their internal frame of reference, allowing her to share her viewpoint without curtaining their opinions (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p. 86)</p>	<p>Yes- demonstrating support with empathetic responding to continue to develop rapport</p>
<p>C: Luckily there was a truck driving behind me who saw the whole thing and he ended up stopping traffic and calling 911. The firefighters needed to use the Jaws of Life to get me out of my car.</p>	<p>Paraphrasing</p>	<p>Provide a mirror statement that is clearer and more succinct than the original statement (Nelson-Jones, 2015 p. 65).</p>	<p>Yes- gathered the main idea into one more succinct statement, hopefully without diminishing the severity of what the client has just</p>

<p>H: Wow. So, it sounds like it was a very serious accident.</p>			<p>described.</p>
<p>C: Yes it was, I could have been very badly hurt, or worse, have lost my life. But luckily there was someone there who helped me.</p> <p>H: Wow, that must have been very frightening. And I notice that you're feeling a great deal of gratitude towards the person that was able to help you.</p>	<p>Reflecting</p>	<p>Affective reflection of what the client is communicating, as well as reasonable inferences about what the client might be experiencing emotionally in order to ensure understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.72).</p>	<p>No- took away from what the client was actually feeling, the fear and anxiety of how badly they could have been hurt, and instead turned the focus towards how I have interpreted that they should be feeling, the notion of gratitude. Identified the wrong emotion, even though the client agreed.</p>
<p>C: Ya I am, it could have been so bad it was terrifying; I had never experienced something where I was so out of control like that.</p> <p>H: Yes, many people would perceive a car accident as being a very traumatic event. Sometimes even just witnessing a car accident can be very stressful.</p>	<p>Normalizing</p>	<p>Normalizing the helpee's difficulties (Nelson-Jones, 2015)</p>	<p>Yes- serves to instill hope that others have felt this way and experienced the same thing and that her reaction is normal and justifiable, therefore validating her feelings.</p>
<p>C: Mmhmm</p> <p>H: So how has your recovery been since the accident six weeks ago?</p>	<p>Probing</p>	<p>Used to gather more information about how the client has been feeling since the accident (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.105).</p>	<p>Maybe- I could have used a more open-ended question such as "how have you been feeling since the accident?"</p>
<p>C: Well, it's been really hard. Even though the doctors say that there's nothing wrong with me, no broken bones, nothing physical, I really just don't feel like myself.</p> <p>H: Right, in what way do you feel different than from before the accident?</p>	<p>Prompting/ Small verbal reward / Probing</p>	<p>Let the client know that I am engaged and actively listening. Elicit information regarding how the accident has affected the client (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.105)</p>	<p>Yes – This was more effective than the previous question.</p> <p>I should also take the time to pause and slow down when giving small verbal rewards.</p>
<p>C: I've just been kind of tired. Like I want to sleep a lot. I don't feel like going out.</p> <p>H: That is understandable; you've been through a very frightening experience. I want you to know that I've</p>	<p>Self-Disclosure</p>	<p>Normalizing the helpee's response, validating her thoughts and experiences and minimizing the power imbalance between therapist</p>	<p>No- I don't think that it was appropriate to use self-disclosure this early on in the counselling session. It was not essential in order to move the</p>

<p>experienced a similar thing in my life, so I do understand that it is really challenging, but I want to help you get through it.</p>		<p>and client (Nelson-Jones, 2015; Truscott, 2010 p. 134)</p>	<p>conversation forward and it just seemed odd to interject with a comment about my own experience. While transparency is a good thing to establish the client/therapist relationship, this seemed to be done in an artificial manner.</p>
<p>C: Hmm ok. H: So since the accident, you just haven't been feeling like yourself, you've been feeling tired and down. Can you tell me a little more about that?</p>	<p>Reflecting Feelings/ Open-Ended Question/Probing</p>	<p>Affective reflection of what the client is communicating, as well as reasonable inferences about what the client might be experiencing emotionally in order to ensure understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.72). I then used probing in order to gain more information about how "feeling down" is interpreted for the client.</p>	<p>Yes- I think that this was an accurate use of reflecting what the client has expressed they are feeling. The open-ended question was used effectively to gather more information.</p>
<p>C: Ya, so I've just been really scared to drive anywhere by myself mostly. I haven't been wanting to go to work because I'm scared to do the drive in the morning and during rush hour on the way home and I've been avoiding seeing my friends because I will only hang out with them if they'll drive over to my house. H: I know that takes a lot of strength, even just driving to work. And I can hear how that has really affected you, and how difficult it is to get into a car after being in an accident. So this is causing you to avoid spending time with your friends.</p>	<p>Reflecting</p>	<p>Reiterating what the client has expressed to me in a non-judgemental manner. Reflecting the client's feelings and reason for feeling, to ensure accuracy of understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2012, p.58)</p>	<p>Yes – I think that I accurately reflect the client's feelings, however I could use more feeling words in my description. Rather than a more vague statement like "I can hear how this is affecting you," I think it would be more powerful if I incorporated a reflection of the vocabulary used by the client such as "you're feeling scared."</p>

<p>C: It is, ya I'm definitely not going to get into the car to go and see my friends, so I'm really not doing anything anymore, and I bet they just think that's kind of pathetic, like it was over a month ago now, they think I should just get over it. It seems like I <i>should</i> just get over it by now, but I'm not. So I'm feeling pretty down about it.</p> <p>H: So you're feeling upset that you aren't back to your normal self yet.</p>	<p>Reflecting Feelings</p>	<p>Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed (Velsor, 2004).</p>	<p>Yes- In this instance, the reflecting skill helped me to become aware of a key disclosure, clarifying what the client has said. This then allowed me to direct the conversation in a way that I thought would be helpful for the session.</p>
<p>C: Yes</p> <p>H: And you think that your friends don't really understand or value the extent of what you've been through.</p>	<p>Reflecting</p>	<p>Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed (Velsor, 2004).</p>	<p>Yes- accurately identified how the client was feeling, however, again I could be more specific with my language, "thinking" vs "feeling" something.</p>
<p>C: Ya I don't know they haven't really said that I should be over it by now, but you can just tell by like the little comments and the way my husband is trying to push me to start driving again.</p> <p>H: Right, so you're feeling a lot of pressure to be able to drive again but you're not feeling quite ready yet.</p>	<p>Prompt/ Small verbal reward/ Reflecting Feelings</p>	<p>Let the client know that I am engaged in active listening.</p> <p>Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed (Velsor, 2004; Nelson-Jones, 2015).</p>	<p>Yes- began with the personal pronoun, "you" and was able to paraphrase and use different vocabulary to describe how the client is feeling, in order to avoid "parroting" back what they have already expressed.</p>
<p>C: Ya and it's making me depressed because I'm not seeing my friends, I'm not living up to what I was once able to do. And then on top of that I'm not doing any exercise because I usually drive to my gym and I'm not going out for dinner with my friends and my husband is making comments like "you'll be ok" "you used to love driving" like just get back on the horse right, but I don't really feel motivated try.</p> <p>H: Right, so it's affecting your social interactions and your relationships, and it sounds like it's affecting your beliefs about</p>	<p>Paraphrasing</p>	<p>Provides a mirror statement that is clearer and more succinct than the original statement (Nelson-Jones, 2015 p. 65).</p>	<p>Somewhat- I was able to grasp the main concept of what she was expressing and word it in a more direct and clear manner, however I didn't address the fact that she mentioned the word "depressed." As before, my language is not very specific, saying "affecting" rather than something along the lines of "so this is causing you to feel..."</p>

<p>yourself as well, having kind of a negative self-talk and inner dialogue.</p>			
<p>C: Yeah, I mean I've always kind of considered myself to be a pretty strong person, I've always been pretty independent, usually I do a pretty good job at handling situations and I think I should be able to get over this but I just can't. I get so stressed when I have to drive to work, I'm sweating, my heart is racing and I have difficult time breathing. I just have this fear that I'm going to die in another accident.</p> <p>H: Right that is understandable, you're experiencing a lot of anxiety, and that is a very typical fear response for someone who has been through what you've been through.</p>	<p>Reflecting / Normalizing</p>	<p>Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed (Velsor, 2004).</p> <p>Normalizing the helpee's difficulties by reassuring them that others feel the same way (Nelson-Jones, 2015)</p>	<p>Yes- I think that normalizing is important in this scenario as it validates the way that the client is feeling. I also think it was an effective way to use reflecting as the client was using all the vocabulary of anxiety, but did not have the name to define all the symptoms that she was experiencing.</p>
<p>C: Ya I guess so.</p> <p>H: And it's very difficult when you experience all those physical symptoms, like a racing heart, shortness of breath, that can be very stressful for you.</p>	<p>Paraphrasing</p>	<p>Provides a mirror statement that is clearer and more succinct than the original statement (Nelson-Jones, 2015 p. 65).</p>	<p>Yes- The client responded in the affirmative however I think that this could have been a bit redundant, as we had already discussed her symptoms of anxiety.</p>
<p>C: Yes, just makes me so nervous, when I used to be fine with driving</p> <p>H: It sounds like you're just feeling a little unsure about yourself right now, a little bit of a lack of self confidence that you once had</p>	<p>Reflecting Feelings</p>	<p>Reflect client's feelings and reason for feeling, to ensure accuracy of understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2012, p.58)</p>	<p>Yes- the client affirmed that the reflection was an accurate interpretation of how they are feeling.</p>
<p>C: right</p> <p>H: and this is causing you to have doubts in yourself like "what's wrong with me" why can't I get over this.</p>	<p>Reflecting Feelings</p>	<p>Reflect client's feelings and reason for feeling, to ensure accuracy of understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2012, p.58)</p>	<p>Yes- the client affirmed that the reflection was an accurate interpretation of how they are feeling/ perhaps redundant.</p>
<p>C: yea exactly, like I just feel like I should be ok by now.</p> <p>H:Mmhhm, so lots of feelings of "I should" be able to cope</p>	<p>Reflecting Feelings</p>	<p>Reflect client's feelings and reason for feeling, to ensure accuracy of understanding</p>	<p>Yes- the client affirmed that the reflection was an accurate interpretation of</p>

<p>and “I should” be back to normal</p>		<p>(Nelson-Jones, 2012, p.58)</p>	<p>how they are feeling.</p>
<p>C: Yes because I didn’t get seriously hurt, I wasn’t even really injured, but now I’m just so nervous about driving and it’s making me miss out on the things that I used to enjoy doing.</p> <p>H: Right, so the fact that you’ve been avoiding driving means that you’re not participating in things that you think make you feel good, like being with your friends.</p>	<p>Prompting/ Paraphrasing</p>	<p>Let the client know that I am engaged in active listening.</p> <p>Rewording helpee’s message to try to convey back to them clearly what they have just communicated from their internal frame of reference (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.66).</p>	<p>Yes- accurately pinpointed the main idea of what was being expressed and conveyed that meaning back to the client in order to ensure accuracy.</p> <p>Prompt should be followed by a longer pause in order to allow the client the time to elaborate.</p>
<p>C: Ya and just having the independence to go places and get things done. Like now my husband is doing the grocery shopping after work because I don’t want to drive anywhere. But then this makes me feel bad because I’m like not being helpful anymore and I’m not doing anything. Instead of grocery shopping or exercising or meeting up with friends I just come home and sometimes I’ll like take a nap or just watch TV because I just don’t want to go out and do anything.</p> <p>H: Right, so the feelings of anxiety and the fact that you don’t want to be driving is leading you to feel down about not doing all the things that you did before the accident.</p>	<p>Paraphrasing</p>	<p>Rewording the crux of the helpee’s message to try to convey back to them clearly what they have just communicated from their internal frame of reference (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.66).</p>	<p>Yes- This was a more succinct version of what the client was expressing. I managed to grasp the main ideas as she responded with an affirmation that I was on the right path.</p>
<p>C: right</p> <p>H: But it’s amazing that you are making it to work, so that’s really impressive and clearly demonstrates your strength.</p>	<p>Compliment</p>	<p>Acknowledge how difficult the client’s problems are, while communicating the therapist’s belief in the client’s capacity for change (Truscott, 2010, p. 149)</p>	<p>Yes- rather than focusing solely on what is going wrong, a genuine compliment can validate what the client is already doing right.</p>
<p>C: Ya, I guess I just don’t really have a choice, so I just force myself even though I’m really nervous the whole time.</p> <p>H: So if you could kind of imagine yourself, maybe three months down the road, what would you <i>like</i> to be feeling</p>	<p>Goal Setting/ Open-Ended Questions/Probing</p>	<p>To establish a collaborative problem-solving approach (Truscott, 2010).</p>	<p>Yes- this lead to a conversation about what the client would like to achieve from counselling and move towards setting goals for change together.</p>

and thinking?			
<p>C: I think that I want to feel confident in my ability to drive and also just my ability to get through this.</p> <p>H: Ok. What else do you envision for the end of counselling?</p>	Goal Setting / Probing	<p>To establish a collaborative problem-solving approach (Truscott, 2010).</p> <p>While the client had already shared one goal, I felt that if I asked again we might be able to get a more concrete answer.</p>	Yes
<p>C: Just to feel more comfortable driving, and be able to drive to the gym, or just drive to go and see friends.</p> <p>H: Right.</p>	Prompting / Small Verbal Reward	Let client know I am engaged in active listening, encourage the client to elaborate (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p. 78).	Yes- Client went on to elaborate and add other goals.
<p>C: And then just feeling better about myself.</p> <p>H: So your goals are to feel significantly more comfortable and confident with driving again in comparison to how you're feeling at the moment.</p>	Summarizing	Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed and gathering together the content, themes and feelings of what the client has presented (Midwinter & Dickson, 2015).	Yes- it provides some order to the information and process, and demonstrates that I have listened and made sense of what the client is saying. The summary should have also included information about what the client previously shared, rather than just the goals.
<p>C: Yes definitely.</p> <p>H: And then also with that you want to be able to do the every day things that you were used to doing before the accident.</p>	Interpretation	An additive statement about the clients' desires for personal growth (Truscott, 2010 p. 75)	Yes- it provides some order to the information and process, and demonstrates that I have listened and made sense of what the client is saying.
<p>C: Yes.</p> <p>H: Ok, yes I can tell that it is important for you to keep seeing your friends and doing the activities you enjoy as well as helping out with day-to-day errands.</p>	Reflecting	Reflection of what the client is communicating, as well as reasonable inferences about what the client might be experiencing emotionally in order to ensure understanding (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.72). Inferred that	Yes- accurately reflect how the client is feeling in order to gain assurance that I have the correct understanding.

		being with friends/helping out leads to increased mood	
<p>C: Right</p> <p>H: All these things contribute to your feelings of happiness and create a positive mood and help combat those feelings of being depressed as you said you were feeling.</p>	Paraphrasing	To reword client's statements more succinctly	No- This rewording of what the client expressed was not necessarily helpful as it did not clarify new information or offer it in a very succinct way.
<p>C: Ya</p> <p>H: And then with this confidence, and just feeling like you can get through this you'd be saying to yourself "I am strong" "I can handle this" and then that is going to affect how you behave, and you will be able to go out and go to your regular activities.</p>	Paraphrasing	The intention was to clarify that I understood her goals for moving forward, however it was not very clear or effective.	No- not succinct, not necessarily a direct reiteration of what the client has said. I think that a pause or a question would be more appropriate in this instance, rather than more talking on the part of the helper.
<p>C: Right,</p> <p>H: So looking at some of your goals, like feeling more comfortable and being able to go to friends, what might be a small step you could take in order to reach those goals?</p>	Paraphrasing/Goal Setting/Probing	Clarify that I have an accurate understanding of her goals. Establish a collaborative problem-solving approach (Truscott, 2010).	Somewhat- We eventually got to a place where we were able to set a goal, but it was initially met with some resistance.
<p>C: I don't know... I guess now I'm just driving to work right now and then I come straight home. So I don't know like I don't really want to drive anywhere else.</p> <p>H: Ok, thank you for being honest.</p>	Unconditional positive regard.	Client feels understood in a non-judgemental way. The therapist is accepting of whatever immediate feeling the client is experiencing (Truscott, 2010 p. 74.	Somewhat- I think that it was an appropriate response, however I think reflecting how the client was feeling would have been more appropriate in this instance such as "so you're feeling ok with driving to work at the moment, but not to other locations."
<p>C: Ya I just don't know if I can do it. I just get so nervous.</p> <p>H: Right, and that is very understandable. You mentioned</p>	Probing	Used to elicit more information with regards to how the client was feeling about a particular	Yes- I was somewhat successful here. I think that it lead to a good conversation,

<p>the grocery store, and that kind of affecting your mood, because you usually do the grocery shopping?</p>		<p>situation in order to work towards goal-setting (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.105)</p>	<p>however I think reflecting could have been a better technique in this moment such as “you’re feeling uncertain as to your ability to feel comfortable driving.”</p>
<p>C: Ya I just feel bad because I feel so stressed I’ll avoid driving even if it’s just to the store. H: Do you think you might be able to try some very simple breathing exercises, and some mindfulness practices that help to reduce the feelings of anxiety when you get into the car.</p>	<p>Relaxation-based intervention</p>	<p>To reduce muscle tension, heart-rate, blood pressure and hyperventilation (Truscott, 2010, p.43).</p>	<p>Yes- the client was open to this suggestion. It is an appropriate step in a change process. I think that the wording of the suggestion was an effective way of approaching the subject.</p>
<p>C: Ya, definitely. H: Great, I can tell you’re really motivated and demonstrating a lot of strength and a positive attitude towards wanting to achieve your goals.</p>	<p>Compliment</p>	<p>Validate what the client is already doing right (Truscott, 2010, p. 149)</p>	<p>Yes- I think that it is also valuable to not only focus on what is going wrong in the client’s life, but also to validate what is going well, thus communicating the therapists belief in the client’s capacity for change.</p>
<p>C: Ya. H: So maybe if you’re feeling a little calmer when you were driving home, do you think you could stop at a store that is along your way on your drive home from work?</p>	<p>Exposure-based intervention/ probing</p>	<p>Client is gradually exposed to their fear in order to reduce the anxiety provoking symptoms of the stimulus (driving) (Truscott, 2010, p. 43)</p>	<p>Somewhat- I think that it would be better to come to this goal more collaboratively and with more client input.</p>
<p>C: Ya I think so... like I could go to a grocery store that’s close to my house and so I would almost be home and I guess since I’m already in the car anyways and it’s right along the way. H: Right, ya. So you’re already in the car because you have to drive home from work, and then along the way you stop at a grocery store and then perhaps we could gradually work our way up to driving to different locations.</p>	<p>Paraphrasing/Goal setting</p>	<p>Clearly identify and rephrase what the goal is as well as make a further suggestion in order to clarify the ultimate goal down the road.</p>	<p>Somewhat- this seems slightly repetitive and possibly unnecessary. A question clarifying how the client is feeling about this idea might provide more insight into whether or not the client will be successful with reaching their goal.</p>

<p>C: Yea I guess I could start with something that is right along the route of where I drive to work and then go from there.</p> <p>H: You have made a lot of progress already, at the beginning of the session you mentioned that you weren't feeling motivated.</p>	<p>Summarizing</p>	<p>Convey an understanding of material explicitly expressed and gathering together the content, themes and feelings of what the client has presented (Midwinter & Dickson, 2015).</p>	<p>Somewhat- in order to be an effective summary, more information would need to be expressed in order to organize what the client has expressed up to this point.</p>
<p>C: Ya that's right.</p> <p>H: But you're here and you're talking to me about wanting to get better and more comfortable with driving again.</p>	<p>Compliment</p>	<p>Acknowledge how difficult the client's problems are, while communicating the therapist's belief in the client's capacity for change (Truscott, 2010, p. 149)</p>	<p>Yes- rather than focusing solely on what is going wrong, a genuine compliment can validate what the client is already doing right.</p>
<p>C: Ya that's right.</p> <p>H: Well I think that's a really good place to get started and things might not progress perfectly, but you have a very good attitude especially considering what you've experienced so thank you for coming here today.</p>	<p>Unconditional Positive Regard</p>	<p>Client feels understood in a non-judgemental way. The therapist is accepting of whatever immediate feeling the client is experiencing.</p>	<p>Yes- I think that it was interpreted as a genuine response</p>
<p>C: Thank you</p> <p>H: Great thanks Catherine, I look forward to continuing to work with you and help you get through this difficult time.</p>	<p>Closing</p>	<p>To end the session and encourage future sessions together.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>C: Thanks.</p> <p>H:</p>			

Counseling Session Analysis

There is a tremendous responsibility placed on the therapist whose goal it is to help individuals navigate through the difficulties in their life (Truscott, 2010). Counseling is often recommended as an essential component of an intervention program, and therefore an important skill to master moving forward into a position of school psychologist. As a therapist-in-training, it became evident after conducting a mock counseling session, that the essential skills such as prompting, probing, reflecting feelings, paraphrasing, and summarizing are not as innately embedded into normal conversation, and need to be routinely practiced in order to develop a mastery of these counseling techniques (Nelson-Jones, 2015). After conducting a counseling session, with a peer serving as a volunteer client, I became aware that there are certain skills that are more easily mastered than others, and areas for further investigation required in order to gain a more robust understanding of the basic Relating-Understanding-Changing model (Nelson-Jones, 2015).

Strengths

I was able to demonstrate an adept ability with certain basic counseling skills outlined by Nelson-Jones (2015). Firstly, at the onset of the counseling session with regards to the simple inquiry as to what has brought the client in for counseling. This skill of asking open-ended questions is essential for gathering information about the client's viewpoints and opinions (Nelson-Jones, 2015). One critique would be of my wording however, as it does allow the client the option of answering with a "yes" or "no." I asked the client "is there a specific purpose for your visit?" To this the client could have answered simply

“no”, making it an inefficient way of wording the initial session welcoming question. If the client had answered with a one word answer such as “yes,” then I would have asked a more direct open-ended question such as “could you please elaborate?” Although this wording was not fully efficient, I think that it was still effective at eliciting the necessary information, which was gathering an understanding of why the client has come in for counseling on that day.

Following this, I was able to demonstrate empathetic understanding while listening to the client describe her experience of being in a car accident. Empathetic understanding is seen by many as the single quality that is most important in all forms of therapeutic listening (Truscott, 2010). Beyond reflecting that you have heard what a client has said, empathetic understanding goes even further into conveying to the client that you understand what they are going through (Truscott, 2010). For example, when Catherine initially disclosed that she was in a car accident, my response was “that must have been extremely scary for you.” This demonstrates that I was listening and that I understand how she is feeling. This is an essential skill to master as “this kind of sensitive, active listening is increasingly rare in our lives. We think we listen, but very rarely do we listen with real understanding- with true empathy” (Truscott, 2010, p. 74). Ultimately, I would not be able to gain a strong ability to demonstrate empathetic understanding without having a grasp on the concept of reflecting. Another important step that I was able to demonstrate relatively consistently was reflecting feelings that the client was expressing during our dialogue. I was able to emphasize the emotional content of the helpees’ communications, demonstrating active listening as part of the empathy process (Nelson-Jones, 2015).

Furthermore, while I do believe that paraphrasing is a skill that will continue to require further practice, I do believe that I was able to demonstrate a strong foundational understanding of the concept during the counselling session. The skill of paraphrasing entails listening to the meaning of what your client has just said and rephrasing it, showing your understanding using your own words, picking up the essence of what has been said without interpreting it (Midwinter & Dickson, 2015). Throughout the session there were many examples where paraphrasing was used effectively to demonstrate to my client that she was being heard. An example of such dialogue was with the statement “so, [your fear of driving] is affecting your social interactions and your relationships, and it sounds like it’s affecting your beliefs about yourself as well.” My client then responded with a comment of appreciation “right.” I think however, that I will continue to follow the advice outlined by Nelson-Jones (2015) and “slow the helping conversation down, thus providing more time to think” (p. 87) in order to allow myself more time to provide a thoughtful response.

Finally, I believe I was successful in beginning the change process by encouraging a relaxation-based intervention in conjunction with exposure-based interventions (Truscott, 2010). In this particular case, the client was not asked to simply get into the car and start driving again, without first being taught some mindfulness breathing exercises. One limitation of the assignment was the time limit, and therefore I did not go into the specifics of the relaxation techniques, however I think that it would be an essential component to her recovery. Because her goal was to gradually begin feeling comfortable driving again, an exposure-based intervention would be appropriate in order to gradually build her comfort level with driving again. In this instance, as a therapist, I

was working with the client to develop a hierarchy of feared stimuli in order to assist the client in becoming unafraid of the relatively minor fears, such as stopping somewhere along the way, and gradually progressing through increasingly fearful stimuli, such as driving to a friend's house (Truscott, 2010).

Weaknesses

Conversely, when listening to the recording, I became aware that I was speaking much faster than I had originally intended. This could be due to the time constraints of the assignment and the knowledge and anxieties associated with being recorded. Whatever the reason, I think it is important to note for future counseling sessions. As mentioned by Nelson-Jones (2015), in order to give the client permission to talk, your body and vocal messages are important in indicating that you are a comfortable and trustworthy person. Speaking clearly and relatively slowly may help to create a calm environment (Nelson-Jones, 2015). This is consistent with the prompting technique, used to elicit more information from your client (Nelson-Jones, 2015). While I did use several small verbal rewards, these were often not followed by a sufficient pause in order to allow the client the opportunity to offer further clarification or information.

Another weakness demonstrated in this mock counseling session was when I utilized the reflecting strategy early on in the session. Catherine was describing the horrific accident, and I chose to reflect back focusing on her comment of "luckily there was someone there to help me." I focused on how she was feeling gratitude, when upon reflection, I think that this was an inaccurate statement. I mentioned that "you're feeling a great deal of gratitude towards the person that was able to help you," yet while I take a

closer look at the transcript and listen to the recording, the client was still very much fixated on her fear response, not yet demonstrating those positive thoughts of feeling gratitude. I will take this mistake as a learning experience when reflecting client's emotions in the future. It is important to think very carefully about which words you chose to reflect back to the client, as they can convey a message that is opposite perhaps to your intended effect (Midwinter & Dickson, 2015). For example, rather than conveying that I was proud of her for feeling grateful considering what she had just gone through, I could have instilled feelings of guilt and more pressure to move on from the current situation, when she is still not feeling ready.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to either explicitly or implicitly state the fact that you are summarizing, using a statement such as "what I have heard you say is" or "I understand from what you're saying that..." This way the client has an opportunity to correct you if you have inaccurately interpreted something (Nelson-Jones, 2015). This would also distinguish summarizing from the skill of paraphrasing, making it more of a summative statement perhaps at the end of the counselling session, or along the way to clarify meaning (Nelson-Jones, 2015).

A considerable error was made when as a counselor, I chose to self-disclose regarding the car accident that I myself have experienced. The concept of self-disclosure is when the counselor shares personal feelings, experiences, or reactions to the client (Truscott, 2010). However, "it is better to not self-disclose unless there is a pressing clinical need which cannot be met in any other way. Remember empathy is not sharing similar experiences but conveying in a caring and understanding manner what the client

is feeling and thinking” (Nelson-Jones, 2015, p.136). Upon reflecting on this counseling session it became evident that I should stick to the rule, and not share personal information, even if I believe it is relevant and intended to help. My hope was that the transparency and genuineness would serve to create an opportunity to build rapport and a strong relationship with the client, however I feel there are more risks to hindering the client/therapist relationship than there are benefits.

Growth Plan

Moving forward, I want to familiarize myself with the helpful statements listed by Midwinter and Dickson (2015). Statements such as “it seems as though... what would happen if... can you tell me more about... and can I just check out that I’ve got this right...” All of these statements encourage exploration of an issue. These would be more productive in comparison to stating that “I know how you’re feeling,” as that statement stops people from exploring their feelings for themselves (Midwinter & Dickson, 2015). I would also like to solidify my reflecting and paraphrasing skills, as I think that the client can find these helpful in many ways. He or she can feel ‘heard’ by the therapist, and can see that you have been listening and understand (Nelson-Jones, 2015). Paraphrasing can develop trust and understanding between a client and a helper, and the helper can check that he or she has understood and is tracking the client and not ‘leading’ them (Nelson-Jones, 2015). I believe that in these beginning stages of developing confidence as a helper, some of the dialogue feels a bit contrived. I hope to develop into a more skilled helper and empathetic listener as I develop a comfortable ability to engage with others while helping in a non-judgemental and a non-directional manner.

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