

Counselling

Counselling is an act of extending professional help to individuals who need assistance with psychological, and/or social conflicts. Professionals who are trained to offer such guidance are known as counsellors. A counsellor makes use of various psychological tools and techniques to assist their clients to reach their own resolution or develop strategies to address and remedy their concerns.

A popular definition of counseling is “an interactive process conjoining the counsellee who needs assistance and the counsellor who is trained and educated to give this assistance (Perez, 1965)

Patterson (1959) characterizes counseling as “the process involving interpersonal relations, between a therapist and one or more client(s), by which the former employs psychological methods based on systematic knowledge of the human personality in attempting to improve the mental health of the later.”

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF COUNSELLING

There are 4 basic assumptions that must be accepted for counselling to be successful:

1. The client is willing to participate in the counselling process.
2. The counselor possesses the right personal attitude apart from training and experience to function effectively.
3. The setting of the counselling assures confidentiality, a mood of contemplation and adequate information.
4. It seeks to meet both immediate and long term needs of the counselee.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF COUNSELLING

1. Confidentiality
2. Autonomy
3. Non-maleficence and Beneficence
4. Empathy
5. Effective communication, both, verbal and non-verbal
6. Non-Emotional Involvement
7. Non-possessive warmth
8. Veracity

Counselling is not a chatty session of giving advice, but it is a process of helping an individual overcome their immediate personal and inter-personal problems and to equip them psychologically to meet future problem better. Counselling is, thus, FOCUSED, SPECIFIC and PURPOSEFUL.

PURPOSE OF COUNSELLING

- Achievement of positive mental health

Positive mental health has been defined as a state of well-being, whereby, individuals recognize their abilities, are able to cope with the normal stressors of life, work productively and make a contribution to their communities.

A positive state of mental health includes –

- Subjective well-being
- Perceived self-efficacy,
- Autonomy
- Competence
- Recognition of the ability to realize one's intellectual and emotional potential.

Kell and Mueller (1962) affirms that “promotion and development of feelings of being liked, sharing with, and receiving and giving interaction rewards from other human beings is the legitimate goals of counselling.”

2. Problem resolution

Wolpe (1958) says that the purpose of counselling is to relieve the suffering and inhibitions of the client.

However, it must be remembered that the individual is only assisted to find solutions for the problems by himself.

3. Decision making

The counsellor may assist the individual by providing necessary information or clarifying the counselee's goals, but the decision should be taken by the counselee himself.

Reaves (1965) reflects that “the primary objective of counselling is that of stimulating the individual to evaluate, make, accept and act upon his choice.”

4. Improving personal effectiveness

An effective person is the one who is able to control impulses, think in creative ways and has the competence to recognize, define and solve problems. The purpose of counselling is to improve personal effectiveness.

5. Making Changes in attitudes and perceptions

According to Tiedeman (1964), the purpose of counselling is to focus on the mechanism of change. And, that the counselee should be helped in the process of “becoming” the change which pervades the period of adolescence through early adulthood during which the individual is assisted to actualize his potential.”

6. Behaviour modification

In behavioural terms, three major purposes can be identified, namely, –

- i. Altering maladaptive behaviour
- ii. Learning the decision making process
- iii. Securing desirable behavioral change

It must be remembered that the individual is only assisted in the journey to find solution for the problems by himself (Kruboltz, 1966).

THE PROCEDURE OF COUNCELLING

The counselling process is a planned, structured dialogue between a counsellor and a client to deal with and overcome the client's problems.

Step #1: Readiness

Counselee fall under two broad categories -

1. Those who voluntarily seek assistance
2. Those who are pushed by family, educational authorities and civic authorities for counselling.

Among these clients, there are those who truly want to profit from the process and those who resent it.

The best method of bringing about client readiness is through dissemination of information. Administering problem checklists or asking subjects to fill an adjustment inventory could be of great value in this regard.

Step #2: Pre-counselling Interview

The objective of pre-counselling interview is to apprise the client of his responsibilities as a counselee. The interview usually covers the following –

1. Obtaining client data to build a case history
2. Making the client abreast of the frequency and time of the sessions
3. Fee structure disclosure

The pre-counseling interview marks the beginning of a counselor-counselee relationship.

Step #3: Expression of Feelings

The counselee should be encouraged to ventilate their tied up feelings which often create a sense of “release of tension”.

Step #4: Exploration and analysis of deeper feelings

If therapeutic helps is the objective, the counselor must try to explore the deeper feelings. These thoughts and ideas should not only be brought to the surface but should also be resolved without damaging the individual's personality.

Step #5: Interrogation

Interrogation consists of working in close harmony with the counselee with due empathy and understanding. Interrogation allows the counselor to synthesize and

integrate the potential, needs, motivators and aspirations of the counselee and direct them towards the right goal.

Stage #6: Time Perspective

Counselees fail to have a logical perspective of the “present”, how it is affected by the “past” and how it affects the “future”. This baffles them. A counsellor’s job is to make the counselee see his problems through the lens of real time.

Stage #7: Development of Insight

Intellectual insight is the prelude for emotional insight. For example, an individual may experience acute fear on seeing a snake like rope. On realizing it’s just a rope (intellectual insight) he may see the meaninglessness of his fear (emotional insight).

Step #8: Termination

During this crucial stage, the client is encouraged to make use of the psychotherapeutic and counselling benefits to his advantage. If the counselee is capable of adapting well to his surroundings, the counselling considered successful and calls for termination.

Step #9: Interruptions and Follow ups

The counselee may interrupt or end the counselling as soon as they feel good enough. Interruptions are frequent in a counselling process. In many cases, the counsellor assumes that the correct follow up response is to be patient and exit.

Step #10: The Ending

While ending a counselling process, whether forcibly or otherwise, counsellors must have a full understanding of the counselee's problems and needs, So as to meet them effectively.