

Counseling Skills for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

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Shouldn't we leave this to the counselors?

- Faculty, staff, and administrators are often first to notice or be approached by students with problems.
- Most have no training and feel unprepared to handle these issues, which can lead to avoiding them altogether or getting in over one's head.
- Purposes: (1) to introduce the basic counseling ideas and skills for responding to students' psychological, emotional, and developmental issues, and (2) to learn to identify students in need of additional academic or personal counseling.
- Obviously we will not create counselors in 90 minutes- but you will be better equipped to handle a number of student issues.
- Effective use of these skills can facilitate better relationships with students, colleagues, and even family members.



A few mistaken assumptions

- Counselors listen to peoples problems and then give them sound advice.
- The more questions we ask, the more information we will obtain.
- Agreement and sympathy are the same as empathy.
- Positive thinking is the same as rational thinking- “you need to believe in yourself”



Counseling

- Helping people solve their own problems through providing encouragement, support, and challenge.
- Phenomenological- rather than assuming we know clients' feeling and thoughts, we strive to understand their subjective world.



Counseling/listening Strategies

- Listen patiently and empathetically
- Speak briefly- succinct summaries, minimal encouragers, use of silence
- Briefly paraphrase and clarify
- Reflect student feelings and meaning
- Ask open-ended questions
- When in doubt, focus on feelings
- Be concrete- by asking for examples in vivid detail and rich description of feelings and thoughts
- Utilize student metaphors
- Gently challenge- support but also point out verbal/nonverbal discrepancies and pay attention to student language- always, musts, shoulds
- Use self-disclosure appropriately
- When in doubt, refer.



Counselor Know thyself

- Why are you choosing to help this person?
- With what issues are you uncomfortable?
- With what emotions are you uncomfortable?
- How will you handle students feelings toward you (transference).
- How will you handle your feelings toward them (countertransference).
- Can you be accepting, flexible, gentle?
- What amount of progress is acceptable to you?



Role Play

When to Refer for Counseling

- “Red Flags” – Instructor/Student Relationship Dynamics
 - Neediness and Dependency
 - Lack of Boundaries
 - Excessive disclosure and/or problem-solving about personal issues and crises
 - Unreasonable requests
 - Excessive number of meetings
 - Difficulty ending meetings
 - Students showing up often



When to Refer cont.

- “Red Flags” – Possible Signs:
 - Suicidal thoughts and hopelessness
 - Homicidal thoughts
 - Extreme mood shifts, irrational behavior or lack of judgment
 - Self-harm – cutting
 - Odd behavior and speech patterns
 - Poor personal hygiene
 - Extreme changes in sleeping, appetite and weight
 - Decreased concentration, motivation and interest
 - Excessive substance use, internet use, or gambling
 - Family issues
 - Social isolation
 - Loss
 - Relationship issues
 - Consistent poor academic functioning



How to Set Boundaries

- Clarify role as instructor
- Be mindful of “red flags”
- Learn how to respond to student’s neediness and unreasonable requests
- Be aware of personal reactions and feeling burdened or overwhelmed
- Consult as needed with colleagues and CC staff



How to Refer to Counseling

- Sensitivity of language
- Leave assessment to clinicians
- Regular Appointment
- Emergency Appointment
- Consultation with CC staff



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