The Counselor as a Person and as a Professional

Chapter 2
Psychology 475
Professional Ethics in Addictions Counseling

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Self-Awareness

- Without a high level of self-awareness, the counselor will hinder the progress of their clients,
- as the focus of therapy shifts from meeting the client's needs to meeting the needs of the therapist.

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Counselors must be aware of their:
- Needs
- Areas of "unfinished business"
- Personal conflicts
- Defenses
- Vulnerabilities

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Ask yourself these:
- What are my motivations for becoming a counselor?
- What are my rewards for counseling others?

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Interfering Motivations
- Working primarily to be appreciated by others, instead of what’s in the best interest of the client
- A tendency to give advice and to direct another person’s life, can lead to excessive dependence on the counselor

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More Interfering Motivations
- Working to gain the acceptance, admiration, and awe of clients.
Questions to ask yourself

• See page 38

Unresolved Personal Conflicts

• Counselors should be aware of their:
  • Biases
  • Areas of denial
  • Unresolved issues

Personal Therapy During Training

• It helps to know what the experience of being a client is like.

Issues that may surface during training

• A need to:
  • tell people what to do
  • have all the answers and be perfect
  • be recognized and appreciated

More issues

• A fear of doing harm
• To deny or not recognize client issues that may relate to their own.
• A desire to take all pain away from clients.

Ongoing Therapy for Practitioners

• Committed professionals engage in lifelong self examination, as a means of remaining self-aware and genuine.
Transference and Countertransference

- The client's general reactions and orientation to the counselor and to the counselor's action in response.

Direct Response

- How counselors handle their client's feelings will have a direct bearing on therapeutic outcomes.

Transference: The "Unreal" Relationship in Treatment

- Transference: the process whereby clients project onto their counselor's past feelings or attitudes they had toward significant people in their lives.

Countertransference: Clinical Impressions

- Countertransference: any projections by a counselor that can potentially get in the way of helping a client.
  - Ethically, counselors are expected to deal with these reactions, so "their problem" doesn't become the clients.

Countertransference: Ethical Implications

- Being overprotective with a client
- Treating clients in benign ways
- Rejecting a client
- Needing constant reinforcement and approval

More ethical implications

- Seeing yourself in your clients
- Developing sexual or romantic feelings
- Compulsively giving advice
- Desiring a social relationship with clients
Client Dependence

- Ethical issues arise when a counselor encourages dependence.
- Don't want to “lose” a client.
- Don't want to challenge a client who shows up regularly and pays on time.
- A need to feel important.

Delaying Termination as a Form of Client Dependence

- It becomes unethical when a client is not terminated because of the counselors emotional or financial needs.

The Goal

- The ultimate sign of an effective counselor is the ability to help clients reach a stage of autonomy, wherein they no longer need a therapist.

Stress in the Counseling Profession

- Signs of burnout:
  - Irritability and emotional exhaustion
  - Feelings of isolation
  - Abuse of alcohol or drugs
  - Reduced personal effectiveness

More signs of burnout

- Indecisiveness
- Compulsive work patterns
- Drastic changes in behavior

Source of Stress

- Occupational Hazards:
  - Economic uncertainty
  - Professional conflicts
  - Time pressures
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More occupational hazards
- Sense of enormous responsibility
- Excessive workload
- Managed care
- Educational system

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Counselor Impairment
- Impairment: the presence of an illness/severe psychological depletion that limits the professionals ability to deliver effective services and results in consistently functioning below acceptable practice standards.

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Sexually exploitive behavior by counselors is a sign of impairment

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They often show these characteristics:
- Fragile self esteem
- Difficulty establishing intimacy in their personal life
- Professional isolation
- A need to rescue clients

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More characteristics
- A need for reassurance about ones attractiveness
- Substance abuse of some kind

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Signs of Impairment
- Lack of empathy
- Loneliness
- Poor social skills
- Discounting the possibility of harm to others
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More signs of impairment

• Preoccupation with personal needs
• Justification of behavior
• Denial of professional responsibility to clients

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Preventive Steps for Burnout

• Continued education
• Personal therapy
• Periodic supervision
• Peer interaction

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Maintaining Vitality

• Sustaining the personal self is a serious ethical obligation.
• Self care involves searching for positive life experiences that lead to peace, excitement, and happiness.

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Factors that Contributed to Well-Functioning:

• Self awareness and monitoring
• Social support
• Values
• A balanced life that allows time for family and friends

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Healthy Functioning

• Myers (2000) identified five life tasks that are part of healthy functioning:
  • Spirituality
  • Self-Direction
  • Work and Leisure
  • Friendship
  • Love