

AIMS

The aim of this course is to give an overview of counselling and the basic skills needed to become a counsellor

OBJECTIVES

Studying this course should enable a student to:

- describe the role of a counsellor and what counsellors do
- List common types of counselling
- Understand the skills and attributes required to conduct counselling
- Practise and improve their listening skills
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of negotiation
- Describe the key aspects of successful mediation
- Understand the role of counselling in crisis mediation
- List sources of help and advice in a range of counselling situations

Introduction

The following notes provide a summary of aspects of the professional counsellor's role which will help to set the scene, before looking at counselling skills themselves.

Job description

Sees individual clients, couples, families and occasionally groups to explore, in confidential environments, difficulties, feelings of distress, dissatisfaction or a loss of purpose. Helps clients to explore problems; to develop a new perspective; to understand their perceptions and behaviour; to identify changes they wish to make; and to implement changes for themselves.

Counsellors often work with clients over an extended period involving several sessions. They do not judge their clients neither do they direct them but aim to help them to see matters differently and to make changes in their lives.

There is a range of methods of counselling each with its own theoretical basis.

Typical work activities

The purpose of counselling is to help clients make their own decisions. The largest part of what all counsellors do is careful listening.

Counsellors work with clients individually to enable them to explore difficulties that they might be having or distress that they might be feeling in any area of their life. Counselling is always undertaken at the request of or with the consent of the client; it is not accurate to say that someone has been 'sent' for counselling.

There is no clear distinction between counselling and psychotherapy and the terms are often used interchangeably; the differences often relate more to

individual counsellor's training and interests. However, it is probably true that counsellors working in settings such as schools and colleges or for voluntary agencies deal more with 'everyday' problems, such as family issues and exam/study stress, rather than with more severe psychological disorders. Counsellors working in particular fields, for example marriage guidance or drugs, will obviously specialise in working with people experiencing problems in those areas, but, across all areas of counselling, typical activities include:

- listening attentively and patiently to clients;
- responding empathetically to clients and attempting to see issues from their perspective;
- helping clients to identify their current and underlying concerns;
- enabling clients to identify their existing unhelpful patterns of behaviour;
- helping clients to decide on and implement appropriate courses of action;
- offering pointers to how others have dealt successfully with common problems;
- referring clients to other sources of help if appropriate;
- attending supervision and training courses;
- undertaking personal therapy at some time (mandatory for accreditation);
- liaising when necessary with other agencies and individuals.

Expected Income & Benefits

- Range of typical starting salaries: £15,000 - £20,000 (salary data collected April 02).
- Range of typical salaries for those with experience or in managerial positions: £19,000 - £35,000 (salary data collected April 02).
- Income can be low at first in private practice.
- Most counsellors are volunteers as paid employment is comparatively rare.
- Working hours are mainly nine to five, although self-employment may entail evening and weekend work. The majority of counsellors work

from home which may have implications for involvement in out-of-work activities.

- Self-employment/freelance work is commonly possible, although only advisable for main breadwinners if well connected to sources of referral, e.g. GPs and big companies, with the potential for earnings from training and supervision. Self-employment may involve work outside office hours and clash with home life.
- Jobs are available in most areas but the concentration is heavier in the south east. Some rural areas are poorly served.
- Around 70% of counsellors are female; this is higher in private practice because many counsellors work part-time.
- Counselling can be stressful as some clients are hard to help and some are hard to like. The support of peers or a supervisor is essential as the work can be isolated. There is also the potential for a clash of values on subjects such as abortion.
- A quiet comfortable room is a must and dress must not be distracting.
- Pastoral care work mostly involves visiting the elderly/unwell.
- Travel within a working day, absence from home at night and overseas work or travel are all uncommon, except for those in a training role where some travel may be necessary.

Typical employers

Counselling vacancies can occur in a range of settings including schools; further education colleges; universities and higher education colleges; organisations dealing with people with disabilities; agencies dealing with drugs, alcohol and AIDS; hospitals and general practices; youth agencies; the human resource departments of larger employers; general counselling services and centres; and churches. Those working in such organisations will expect to deal with a wide range of presenting problems and the counselling role may sometimes be combined with another, for example teacher.

Most counsellors work on a voluntary basis, however, for many of the types of organisation listed above, supplementing the service provided by paid staff. For many, this is often the first step towards eventually securing paid employment. Agencies such as Relate (marriage guidance), Cruse (bereavement) and others recruit and train volunteers for counselling work

within their organisations but will expect a commitment over several years. Many counsellors are self-employed and work in private practice although this is normally only an option for those with considerable counselling experience.

Increasingly, telephone help lines are staffed by people trained in listening and counselling skills, although there is debate within the profession about whether the counselling relationship can adequately be established and maintained via this medium.

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Self assessment activity
	You are looking for a job as a Counsellor, search out Job Descriptions and write a Job description for the post you find

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Unit 1: The Basics of Counselling
In this unit you will learn	Definition of counselling What is counselling Who is a counsellor When is a counsellor not ready to counsel Who needs counselling Ten steps to counselling Guidelines for good practice and care

Definition

Overall definition

The term "**counselling**" including the overall aim **of counselling** is to provide an opportunity for the client to work towards living in a way he or she experiences as more satisfying and resourceful.

CASA in Australia defines counselling as follows:

Counselling, broadly defined, includes 'therapy and psychotherapy'.

Counselling is a developmental process, in which one individual (the counsellor) provides to another individual or group (the client), guidance and encouragement, challenge and inspiration in creatively managing and resolving practical, personal and relationship issues, in achieving goals, and in self-realisation.

Counselling emphasises the conscious use of the client-counsellor relationship.

Counselling includes an extensive range of theoretical approaches, skills and modes of practice.

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Self assessment activity
	What do you think the definition of counselling should be?

The Basics of counselling

A vast majority of people are well prepared physically and psychologically to cope with many negative physical and psychological events that take place during their lifetime, these can be:

- Deaths within the family and friends and work associates
- Injury
- Divorce
- Marriage
- Stress
- Unemployment
- Change of jobs
- War
- Disaster
- Birth

Families and friends too help us to absorb many such negative events making painless transitions to accepting the challenges before us. However all the

above lead to an enormous amount of pressure being placed on the individual and some can cope and other just simply cannot.

In addition to the above list, what are considered minor traumas created by man himself can cause as much of a problem on an individual as a major disaster. These could be:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Sexual discrimination
- Sexual abuse
- Abusive language
- Intolerance
- Negligence

All these events whether natural or manmade result in disruption of normal life.

A long process of healing is required to bring back normality in the lives of the people who have been exposed to such negative life events, and one of the main healing techniques is called counselling.

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Self assessment activity
	Excluding the above lists what other “traumas” do you think need counselling?

What is Counselling?

Now that we have looked at the overview of the definition we can say that counselling can be defined as a therapeutic procedure in which a counsellor adopts a supportive non-judgemental role of enabling a client to deal more efficiently with psychological or emotional problems and gives advice on practical situations.

Who is a Counsellor?

A counsellor is an individual who:

- Understands the feelings of a client and treats it as fact
- Keeps all information confidential
- Facilitates discussions on the issues in question
- Builds self-esteem of the client
- Reassures if the client is insecure
- Solicits the client's own feelings and ideas for solutions
- Be empathetic to the client and show care
- Has patience
- Does not get distracted during interaction with client
- Builds confidence
- Considers the client's long and medium term goals
- Avoids acting like an expert
- Has a BIG ear and SMALL mouth so is able to listen more than speak.

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Self assessment activity
	What do you think the most important qualities for a counsellor are?

How does Counselling Work

Life is one long process of change. Counselling is about taking control and making the changes your clients want.

Within the safety of the therapeutic relationship your client can express deeply-held feelings such as anger, pain and anxiety that they may not have fully acknowledged before.

By making sense of the past and gaining insight into present behaviour, more options can be created for change in the future.

So confusion can lead to clarity; self-doubt to self-awareness and self-esteem.

Counselling therapy can be the path towards living in a more satisfying and fulfilling way. It's about living the life your clients want.

How often should Clients have appointments

Appointments would usually be on a weekly basis, but they could be more or less frequent by arrangement.

You should be able to offer appointments on a flexible basis, rather than a regular time each week, to accommodate your client's particular needs.

Most counsellors are often able to make appointments at the weekend to fit the client's workload and not wanting associates at work to know that they are seeking help from you.

Introductory Certificate in Counselling	Self assessment activity
	Briefly how would you plan your day to allow for client needs?

How long should counselling last?

Normally sessions last for one hour each for approximately 8 -12 weeks. The number of sessions would depend on individual cases and progress.

How much could you charge per session?

As a counsellor, who has an established practice you could expect to earn approximately £50.00 per session of one hour, however this rate does depend on market forces. You should note that counselling on the National Health Service is FREE.

When will the client start to feel better?

Some people feel better even after the first session. Others find it takes time to feel the benefit and may not even realise there has been any benefit until they stop going to see the counsellor and compare how they were before the counselling started.

Every one is individual and the amount of benefit your client receives from your sessions is very personal.

When is a counsellor not ready to counsel?

A counsellor should not practice when he or she:

- Lacks motivation and creativity
- Has prejudices against the client
- Has preconceptions about the issues faced by the client
- Feels social distance between themselves and their client
- Feels insecure and lacks self confidence
- Be impulsive to clients comments

Who needs counselling?

Classically you could say all of us need it sometime in our lives, however it is specifically needed when:

- A person is always irritated
- Angry
- Is distrustful of people
- Always suspicious
- Lacks self confidence
- Always in doubt
- In apathy about life
- Shows anxiety about the future
- Resents life and family
- Remains isolated
- Lacks willingness to take any initiatives
- Shows territorial behaviour

Ten Steps to Counselling

The ten steps to counselling are to establish basic ground rules in what you do and how you operate. These ten steps are:

- Encourage the client to talk about the feeling
- Validate the feeling with reflective listening
- Let the client have the chance to speak
- Provide missing information where needed
- Talk about the client's views and goals
- Communicate what it takes to get to the to the point needed
- Observe signs of trouble and prepare for possible violence and threats
- Encourage client to develop positive energy towards devising a solution
- Establish a regular schedule for follow-up discussions and give feedback
- Agree on what steps are needed to be taken by the client to change the current situation.