

# Communication Skills for the Helping Profession

SOW301



University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre  
Open and Distance Learning Course Series Development  
Version 1.0 ev1



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## Vice Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfilment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



Prof. Abel Idowu Olayinka

Vice-Chancellor

## **Foreword**

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

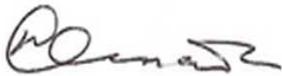
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre’s provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bayo Okunade', written in a cursive style.

Professor Bayo Okunade

Director

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## About this course manual

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Communication Skills for the Helping Profession SOW301 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. All course manuals produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre are structured in the same way, as outlined below.

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### How this course manual is structured

#### The course overview

The course overview gives you a general introduction to the course. Information contained in the course overview will help you determine:

- If the course is suitable for you.
- What you will already need to know.
- What you can expect from the course.
- How much time you will need to invest to complete the course.

The overview also provides guidance on:

- Study skills.
- Where to get help.
- Course assignments and assessments.
- Margin icons.
- Study Sessions.

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We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

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#### The course content

The course is broken down into Study Sessions. Each Study Session comprises:

- An introduction to the Study Session content.
- Study Session outcomes.
- Core content of the Study Session with a variety of learning activities.
- A Study Session summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.
- Bibliography

## Your comments

After completing Communication Skills for the Helping Profession we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assignments.
- Course assessments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.)

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.

# CourseOverview

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## Welcome to Communication Skills for the Helping ProfessionSOW301

This course provides students with a foundation of the values, knowledge and skills used to communicate in a professional social work context. The course will focus on the interview as a means to understand and apply the skills of ethical and effective interpersonal communication within a helping relationship.

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## Course outcomes

Upon completion of Communication Skills for the Helping ProfessionSOW301, you will be:



### Outcomes

- aware of the core values, principles and skills of interpersonal communication.
- aware of the conditions which inhibit or facilitate ethical and effective communication.
- able to use a range of interviewing and communication skills.

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## Timeframe



### How long?

This is a 15 week course. It requires a formal study time of 45 hours. The formal study times are scheduled around online discussions / chats with your course facilitator / academic advisor to facilitate your learning. Kindly see course calendar on your course website for scheduled dates. You will still require independent/personal study time particularly in studying your course materials.

---

## How to be successful in this course



As an open and distance learner your approach to learning will be different to that from your school days, where you had onsite education. You will now choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities.

Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, stress management, etc. Perhaps you will also need to reacquaint yourself in areas such as essay planning, coping with exams and using the web as a learning resource.

We recommend that you take time now—before starting your self-study—to familiarize yourself with these issues. There are a number of excellent resources on the web. A few suggested links are:

- <http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/resources/studyskill.pdf>

This is a resource of the UIDLC pilot course module. You will find sections on building study skills, time scheduling, basic concentration techniques, control of the study environment, note taking, how to read essays for analysis and memory skills (“remembering”).

- [http://www.ivywise.com/newsletter\\_march13\\_how\\_to\\_self\\_study.html](http://www.ivywise.com/newsletter_march13_how_to_self_study.html)

This site provides how to master self-studying, with bias to emerging technologies.

- <http://www.howtostudy.org/resources.php>

Another “How to study” web site with useful links to time management, efficient reading, questioning/listening/observing skills, getting the most out of doing (“hands-on” learning), memory building, tips for staying motivated, developing a learning plan.

The above links are our suggestions to start you on your way. At the time of writing these web links were active. If you want to look for more, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type “self-study basics”, “self-study tips”, “self-study skills” or similar phrases.

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## Need help?



As earlier noted, this course manual complements and supplements SOW301 at UI Mobile Class as an online course, which is domiciled at [www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc](http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc).

You may contact any of the following units for information, learning resources and library services.

### **Distance Learning Centre (DLC)**

University of Ibadan, Nigeria  
Tel: (+234) 08077593551 – 55  
(Student Support Officers)  
Email: [ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng](mailto:ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng)

### **Head Office**

Morohundiya Complex, Ibadan-Ilorin Expressway, Idi-Ose, Ibadan.

### **Information Centre**

20 Awolowo Road, Bodija, Ibadan.

### **Lagos Office**

Speedwriting House, No. 16 Ajanaku Street, Off Salvation Bus Stop, Awuse Estate, Opebi, Ikeja, Lagos.

For technical issues (computer problems, web access, and etcetera), please visit: [www.learnersupport.dlc.ui.edu.ng](http://www.learnersupport.dlc.ui.edu.ng) for live support; or send mail to [webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng](mailto:webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng).

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## Academic Support



A course facilitator is commissioned for this course. You have also been assigned an academic advisor to provide learning support. The contacts of your course facilitator and academic advisor for this course are available at the course website: [www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc](http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc)

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## Activities



### **Activities**

This manual features “Activities,” which may present material that is NOT extensively covered in the Study Sessions. When completing these activities, you will demonstrate your understanding of basic material (by answering questions) before you learn more advanced concepts. You will be provided with answers to every activity question. Therefore, your emphasis when working the activities should be on understanding your answers. It is more important that you understand why every answer is correct.



### Assessment

There are three basic forms of assessment in this course: in-text questions (ITQs) and self assessment questions (SAQs), and tutor marked assessment (TMAs). This manual is essentially filled with ITQs and SAQs. Feedbacks to the ITQs are placed immediately after the questions, while the feedbacks to SAQs are at the back of manual. You will receive your TMAs as part of online class activities at the UI Mobile Class. Feedbacks to TMAs will be provided by your tutor in not more than 2 weeks expected duration.

Schedule dates for submitting assignments and engaging in course / class activities is available on the course website. Kindly visit your course website often for updates.

---

## Bibliography



### Readings

The following materials will be resourceful to your learning in this course:

- ❖ Adepoju, Tunji. (2000) Introduction to Mass Communication. Ibadan. The Gift communications.
- ❖ <http://www.scie.org.uk/assets/elearning/communicationskills/cs01/resource/underpinningKnowledge.pdf> retrieved July, 2013.
- ❖ <http://learntech.uwe.ac.uk/communicationskills/default.aspx?pageid=1376> retrieved July, 2013.
- ❖ <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9137&p=0> retrieved July, 2013.
- ❖ <http://www10.hrsdc.gc.ca/english/ShowProfile.aspx?v=241> retrieved July, 2013

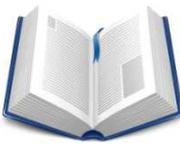


# Getting around this course manual

## Margin icons

While working through this course manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to “signpost” a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this course manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the icons and their meaning before starting your study.

			
Activity	Assessment	Assignment	Case study
			
Discussion	Group Activity	Help	Outcomes
			
Note	Reflection	Reading	Study skills
			
Summary	Terminology	Time	Tip

## Study Session 1

# Introduction to Communication

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will review some of the basic skills, such as the ability to listen and communicate effectively, that are vital to the social worker's success. Social workers must have an awareness of their own styles of communication.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 1.1 *define* communication.
- 1.2 *discuss* the characteristics of communication.
- 1.3 *highlight* the forms of communication



## 1.1 Communication

Communication is the process of transmitting feelings or thoughts so that they are understood. This process involves conveying information verbally or nonverbally through a variety of means such as body movement, facial expression and gestures. To communicate, there must be both a sender of a message and a receiver of a message. Generally speaking, all behaviours transmit certain information and may, therefore, be involved in communication.

Many aspects of human services work require the ability to communicate. Communication is an integral part of human services, and may take the form of transmitting particular knowledge, information, or skills. For example, when a helper is counselling individuals who are preparing for retirement, the content of the communication may focus on financial planning, housing needs, or social or emotional concerns. At the other end of the life cycle, helpers working in children's human services programs may focus the content of their communication upon the development of basic life skills. Communicating effectively and responding appropriately are often the key factor in determining the success of any attempt to help.

You can easily understand the complexity of communication by considering the example of the game of passing a single message through a series of individuals. In this game, one person thinks of a message and in turn whispers it to another. The next person attempts to whisper the same message to another person, who does the same, passing it to as

many people as possible. When the last person tells the entire group what his or her version of the message is, it is usually very different from the original message. How does a relatively simple message become distorted when conveyed to another person? To understand this, we must look at the various factors involved in communication and understand the obstacles and barriers that can distort even the simplest of messages.

Accurate communication occurs between people when the receiver interprets the sender's message the way the sender intended it. Difficulties in communication arise when the receiver imparts to the message a meaning that was not intended. When the sender attempts to convey a message, the receiver interprets the message before he or she can respond to it. All forms of communication require some degree of interpretation, meaning that an individual must construe, understand, and attach individual meaning to a message. It is through this act of interpretation that communication can become distorted. The process of interpretation is always filtered through our individual biases, expectations, and prejudices. As mentioned previously when information is transmitted, the listener tends to accept what seems to fit into his or her belief system and sometimes rejects or distorts information that is not consistent with these beliefs. Also, people are sometimes so positive they know what the other person is going to say that they distort the incoming message to match their expectations. For example, if a man who has very low self-esteem asks his boss for a raise, he may take the boss's statement "I'll have to give it some thought" as a sign of refusal.

A common problem in communication occurs when the receiver understands the words of the message but fails to recognize the sender's underlying meaning. For example, a person might say "Sure is a rainy day" in an attempt to change the subject, while the receiver might assume the person is really concerned about the weather. Another example is the client who sits in the office looking down, arms crossed, slouched deeply in his or her chair, who responds to the question "How do you feel?" by saying "Fine." The client's nonverbal behaviour, consisting of posture, eye contact, and facial expression seems to indicate the opposite. Which message does one respond to? The answer is both. The helper must hear the words but also be aware of additional information conveyed in the communication.

Helpers must have an awareness of their own styles of communication. Becoming aware of style means that you know when you as a helper might be creating difficulty in communication by sending out conflicting verbal and non-verbal messages to the client. To this degree, you can see how the quality of self-awareness enhances the skill of communicating effectively. Inappropriate use of language can also lead to mishaps in communication. The helper should avoid using words the client may not understand or may find objectionable. The helper's vocabulary must be understandable to the client. Since words do not mean the same thing to all people, the helper must sometimes provide clear definitions and examples of meaning. If the client's message is unclear, the worker has the responsibility of helping the client to clarify its meaning. Communication is a process through which needs, emotions, desires, goals and sentiments. These are expressed among human beings through

codes, symbols and languages understood by the parties involved in the process.

## 1.2 Ability of Humans to Communicate

The ability of humans to communicate with one another is a principal hallmark of contemporary civilization. The first messages sent and received were undoubtedly by sight and sound, gestures and pantomime, shrieks and laughter. Language followed, along with the alphabet and the recording of written, then printed words.

The electronic age brought instant communication worldwide into reality: telegraph, photo telegraph, radiotelegraph, teleprinters, telex, telephone, cable, radio, television, satellite, computer and finally, the internet.

If one thousand and one people are asked to respond to this question, we might equally have as many as that number of responses. We would not like to be-labour the definitions of this concept with too many academic rigours, therefore, we like to consider Opubor's view. He emphasized that communication is the process of sharing experience (Opubor, 1976).

The great anthropologist, Edward Sapir, sums up most definitions and varieties of communication when he describes it as a study of people, relating to themselves and to one another in groups and societies, influencing one another and being influenced, informing one another and being informed teaching and being taught, loving and being loved, entertaining and being entertained.

## 1.3 Characteristics of Communication

The following are the characteristics communication as identified by Bradley (1984):

1. Communication is dynamic, not static; it involves changes and effects as the elements interact. Participants are obliged to adapt to these changes and effects.
2. It is continuous; there is no beginning and no end to communication in a person's life.
3. It is complex: it occurs at many levels and reflects many influences.
4. It is irreversible; the communication process cannot be turned back, e.g. what has been said cannot be "unsaid. A message once sent and received produces effects on later messages.
5. It is non-sequential; the elements in the communication process are not rigidly patterned, say in a linear or circular manner. Which element comes on at which time and place in the process depends on the situation.
6. It is unrepeatable; a given communication act cannot be recreated.

## 1.4 Scope and Forms of Communication

By scope, we mean which area of communication can be covered?  
Business communication, cross-cultural communication, Healthcommunication instructional communication,

Organizational communication, Religious communication and Mass communication.

1. Business Communication: is the term used to describe all forms of communication that takes place in the business circuit. The emphasis here is the improvement of reports and memoranda, oral and non-verbal communication.
2. Cross-Cultural Communication: refers to communication among/ between different cultures.
3. Family Communication: refers to communication among /between family members.
4. Health communication: refers to medical care communication.
5. Instructional Communication or information: is peculiar to the issue of teaching and learning.
6. Organisational Communication: This term emerged out of a greater degree of seriousness or development that comes up in the way of management studies. Communication in organisations flows within a network of interdependent relationship, which may be formal or informal.
7. Administrative Communication: it deals with formal issues and issues of leadership. We also have grapevine communication. This means gossips or rumours being said and spread out.
8. Downward or Upward Communication: this refers to instruction or information for those people that is below.
9. Horizontal Communication: this is the degree to which people communicate with peers or colleagues.
10. Internal Communication or External Communication: these are inside and outside ways of communicating.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed how behaviours transmit certain information and may therefore be involved in communication. Also, communicating effectively and responding appropriately are key factors in determining the success of any attempt to help. We also explained sign system which therefore, is only a kind of shorthand—the encoder has to be able to write the shorthand, the decoder to read it. In other words, talking in terms of the circles they have a large in common then, communication will be easy. If the circles do not meet, if there has been no common experience, then, communication is impossible. If the circles only have a small area in common, that is, if the experiences of the source and the destination have been strikingly unlike — then, it is going to be very difficult to get an intended message across from one to the other.

## Study Session 2

# Communication Process

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine communication process; the process of encoding and decoding. Encoding is the process in which the source's message or purpose in form of the message is expressed. When a source uses verbal symbol and offers something as speech, the process of encoding takes place.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 2.1 *explain* the communication process
- 2.2 *discuss* the endless nature of communication process

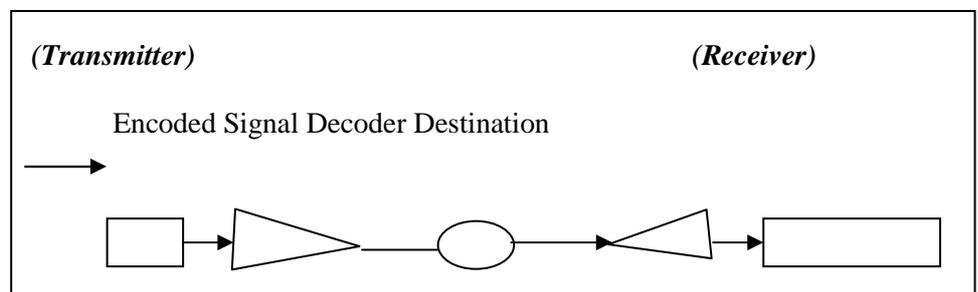


## 2.1 Concept of Communication Process

The concern with communication has produced many attempts to develop models of the process — descriptions, listing ingredients. Of course, these models differ. None can be said to be “right” or “true”. Some may be more useful than others. We have already examined three communication ingredients, the speaker, the speech, and the audience. Most of the current communication models are similar to that, though somewhat more complex.

### 2.1.1 Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication

Figure 2.1



Shannon, a Mathematician, and electrical engineer discovered this while talking about electronic communication, but other scientists have found the Shannon-Weaver model more useful in describing human communication. Examine the more substitute “microphone” for encoder and “earphone” for decoder and you will be talking about electronic

communication. At another breath, consider that the “source” and “encoder” are one person, “decoder” and “destination” is another and the signal; is gauge and you are talking about human communication. We say that all human communication has:

### Source

Some person or persons with a purpose, a reason for engaging in communication. He has needs and intentions for communication.

### Encoder

Takes the ideas of the source and puts them in code. In person to person communication, encoding function is performed by motor skill of the source — his vocal mechanism, or muscle mechanism (which produce written words or features) or other muscle systems (which promotes gestures or posture).

### Message

The ideas, the purposes and the intentions of source.

### Decoder

Just as a source needs an encoder to translate purposes into a message, to express purpose code, the receiver needs a decoder to retranslate, to decode the message and put it into a form the receiver can use. We can look at the decoder as the set of sensory skills of the receiver.

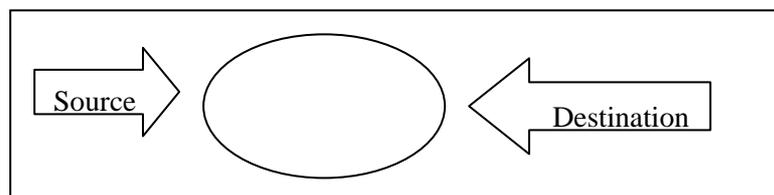
### Receiver

The destination, the person or persons at the other end, the target of communication. After all, what we talk, somebody must listen; when we write, somebody must read.

Perhaps the most important thing about the communication system as we have been talking about is the fact the receiver and the sender must always be in tune.

Let us redraw our diagram (the Shannon-Weaver Model) in a very simple form, like this,

Figure 2.2 Schram Model of Communication

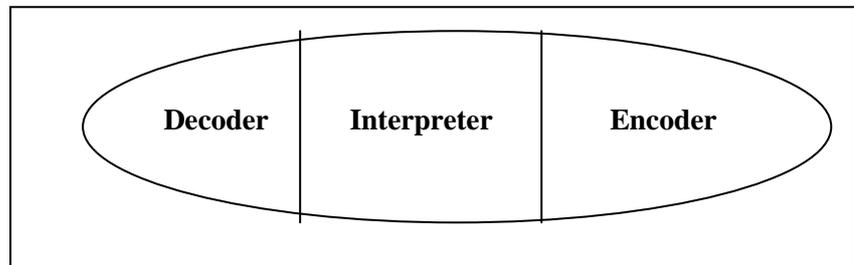


Think of those circles as the accumulated experience of the individuals trying to communicate. The source can encode and the destination can decode messages only in terms of the experience each has had, Messages are made up of signs. A sign is a signal that stands for something in experience. if we have never learned any French, we can neither code nor decode in that language..

**Every Individual is both an Encoder and a Decoder**

Each person in the communication process is both an encoder and a decoder. He receives and transmits. He must be able to write readable shorthand, and to read other people's shorthand. Therefore, it is possible to describe either sender or receiver in a human communication system thus:

Figure 2.3

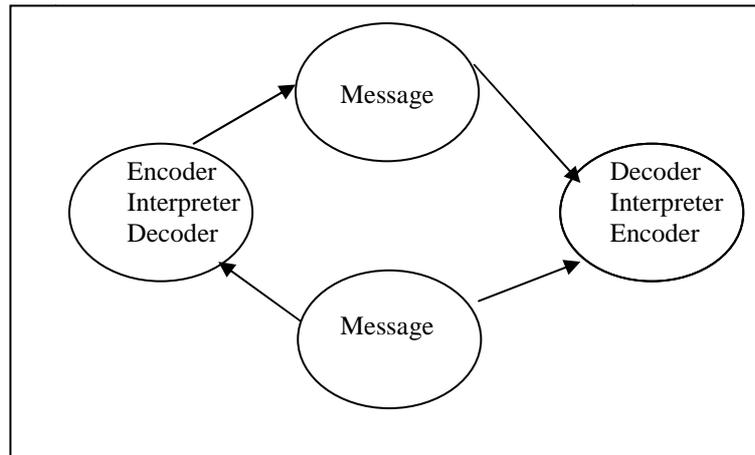


What happens when a signal comes to you? Remember that it comes in the form of a sign. If you have learnt the signs, you must have learnt certain responses with it. These responses are the meaning the sign has for you and they are learned from experience. A sign that means certain thing to you will start certain other processes in your nerves and muscles. In other words, meaning that results from your decoding of a sign would start you encoding. But exactly what you encode will depend on your choice of the responses available in the situation, and connection with the meaning.

## 2.2 Endless Nature of the Communication Process

The process described in the above paragraph is what everyone is constantly engaged in. You are constantly deciding signs from your environment, interpreting these signs and encoding something as a result. In fact, it is misleading to think of the communication process as starting somewhere and ending somewhere. It is: usually endless. We can accurately see the endless nature of communication as passing through us changed, to be sure, by our interpretations, our habits, our abilities and capabilities, but the input is still being reflected in the output. Consider what happens in a conversation between two people — one is constantly communicating back to the other thus:

Figure 2.4



The return process is called feedback and it plays a very important part in communication because it tells us how our messages are being interpreted. Does the hearer say, “Yes, yes, that’s right” as we try to persuade him? Does he nod his head in agreement? Does a puzzled frown appear on his forehead? Does he look away as though he were losing interest? All these are feedback.

So is a letter to the editor of a newspaper, protesting an editorial. So is an answer to a letter. So is the applause of a lecture by the audience. An experienced communicator is attentive to feedback and constantly modifies his messages in the light of what he observes in or hears from his audience.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that message is the idea being communicated. The speech that a person makes or writing sent to others could be seen as a message. A message is also seen as a symbolic code such as language or gesture made by a sender to a receiver. The message only goes on to acquire a meaning when a receiver properly decodes it.

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## Study Session 3

# Non Verbal Communication

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the concept of non-verbal communication, visual and media forms of non-verbal communication, categories of non-verbal communication, functions of non-verbal communication, and significance of interaction in problem solving.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

- 3.1 *explain* the concept of non-verbal communication.
- 3.2 *enumerate* the various categories of non-verbal communication.
- 3.3 *highlight* the three possible ways in which we can ascribe different meanings to nonverbal codes.
- 3.4 *list* the functions of non-verbal communication.
- 3.5 *explain* the significance of interaction in problem solving.



## 3.1 Concept of Non Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is essentially an inseparable aspect of communication. The concept of non-verbal communication denotes that which is non-linguistic (Plosy, 1993). Specifically, non-verbal communication refers to body language and audio-visual codes used in communication. The fact remains that even if we stop talking says Goffman (1963), we “cannot stop communicating through bodily idiom” while it has been estimated that 65 per cent of the social meaning in interpersonal face- to-face communication is conveyed non-verbally (Schramm and Porter, 1982).

In studying nonverbal communication, such investigations could include an analysis of a variety of visual forms and media, from paintings, sculpture, monuments, architecture, crafts, illustrations, photographs, graphics, industrial designs, cartoons, layout of newspapers and magazines, billboards, labels of packages, photographs, television images and films, to computer graphics as well as paralanguage codes (voice intonations), sound effects and music.

## 3.2 Categories of Non-Verbal Communication

Burgoon and Saine (1978) identified the following six distinguished codes of non-verbal behavior:

**Kinetics:** Refers to and deals with communicating by means of movements of our hands, arms, feet, legs, face, eyes and/or the posture or movement of the body as a whole.

1. **Proxemics:** This is concerned with the way in which we use space as part of our communication behaviour. Four spatial zones or distances can be distinguished: intimate, personal, social and public (Hall, 1966).
2. **Chronemics:** This is concerned with our use of time, such as planning the future according to prescheduled appointments.
3. **Paralanguage:** Deals with prosodic features of speech communication, such as the quality or tone of voice, hesitations, tempo or rate, volume and pitch.
4. **Haptic:** Refers to our sense and use of touch when communicating.
5. **Artefacts:** Refer to and include fixed features, such as static architectural structures, and semi-fixed objects, such as furniture and the clothing we wear.

## 3.3 Ascribing Meanings to Non-Verbal Communication

Ruhly (1982) identified three possible ways in which we can ascribe different meanings to nonverbal codes.

1. **Random Non-Verbal Communication:** Means that which does not have or does not convey any particular meaning, such as the physical contact that occurs between a doctor and a patient.
2. **Idiosyncratic Non-Verbal Communication:** Means that it is unique to a specific individual such as the habit someone has of scratching one's head when irritable, and the meaning conveyed is known only to those who are aware of this habit. They are often performed unintentionally.
3. **Culture-Specific Non-Verbal Communication:** Conveys shared meanings when a group of people ascribe the same meaning to the codes used (kneeling or prostrating as forms of greeting are examples of non-verbal signs which are culture-specific. If we are not aware of the shared meanings represented by the proxemics and haptics habitually used in another culture, we could easily misinterpret another person's behaviour.

## 3.4 Functions/Uses of Non-Verbal Communication

- Non-verbal codes can accentuate the message being spoken.
- Non-verbal codes can be used to complement verbal communication.

- They can be used to contradict or regulate verbal message
- Non-verbal codes can function as a substitute in the absence of speech.
- Communication for helping cannot be so limited that only immediate solutions for immediate problems are sought. Instead, basic to successful problem solving is communication that is clear and complete.

## 3.5 Communication Concepts of Problem-Solving

Effective communication with others is probably the most valuable experience in every person's life. Indeed, it is communication that makes us people. How we communicate, how we learn to communicate, when we communicate, and with whom will significantly influence our ability to derive satisfaction from daily living and to solve the problems that are an inevitable part of living.

Communication that is clear and comprehensive is fundamental to effective problem solving. Without good communication, problems cannot be fully understood or needs expressed so that appropriate solutions can be sought. A limited understanding of what is really helpful to people and a fragmented, partial delivery of human services is obviously of little usefulness. Instead, professional helping must occur in a problem-solving process in which a person can communicate fully about his needs and the service provider can communicate adequately about her capacity to provide for those needs.

Both partners in problem solving, the person in need of help and the person providing service, need to listen and speak clearly. Though this may sound self-evident, it bears further consideration. A person is not well served if his needs and the ramifications of his problems are not communicated well. For example, a person who is ill might be sent to a doctor for a quick check-up, without exploration of the environmental or stress factors that might be contributing to his illness. Or, a child who can't read may be penalized for poor classroom performance without the benefit of necessary audiometric testing. Or, a family in trouble might be advised to place its children in foster care without sufficient consideration of the probable negative impact of this dissolution of the family.

These two must be able to "speak the same language," so that they can share ideas and explore problem-solving alternatives and the impact of those alternatives in an atmosphere of open understanding and trust. Learning doesn't happen without communication and, therefore, neither can optimal problem solving.

Interaction is also essential to problem solving. While it is sometimes true that a problem can be solved without much or any interaction (i.e. by simply reading directions or following instructions), more often problems that can't be handled alone require interaction of some dimension and intensity with another individual in order for a satisfactory solution to be reached.

Because very often the helping is in the doing, interaction adds significantly to the success of problem solving. For example, getting a

physical examination is more helpful to solving a medical problem than reading a medical text. Likewise, it is more helpful to discuss career options with a guidance counsellor than to simply register with an employment agency. It is also certainly more helpful to share marital conflicts with a therapist than to rely on a lonely hearts column to solve the marriage's problems satisfactorily.

Helping requires assertive action on the part of each person involved in the problem-solving process. Each one will be required to make a contribution of action in order for the problem-solving goals to be achieved. It is not nearly enough to ponder about the problem and its causes or effects.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that if we decide to stop the communication process by not talking, we cannot stop communicating through the other forms of non-verbal communication. We also discussed how resolving matters require that people themselves are set into motion to bring problem-solving change. Toward that end, it becomes imperative that the helper be skilled in guiding or encouraging appropriate causes of action for the individual needing his assistance.

## Study Session 4

# Concept of Helping

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss the concept of help, constraints of problem solving, reaction of the social worker and her client to problem solving, role of the social worker and associated feelings.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

- 4.1 *itemize* the constraints of problem solving.
- 4.2 *highlight* the skills required of the human services professional in any discipline



## 4.1 What is helping?

In every human services profession, the helping interview is used by professionals to guide them in their efforts to effectively assist in bringing about positive change for the benefit of the people they seek to serve.

Essentially, helping is problem solving. An individual requires help when his own ability to solve his problem and meet his need is somehow insufficient to surmount whatever difficulty is confronting him. His problem-solving capacities are generally limited or diminished by one combination of the following constraint factors:

- lack of information about available solutions, alternatives, or resources.
- lack of skill or motivation necessary to obtain either the needed information or resources
- lack of opportunity or resources available to solve the problem and meet the needs
- emotional conflicts that interfere with the ability to pursue needs effectively
- crisis situations that over-whelm or immobilize capacities

Many of people's problems are, of course, externally caused and can be alleviated by manipulating or negotiating the external environment successfully so that adequate resources or skills or even alternatives or opportunities are made available to solve an individual's problems. Where problems are internal in origin (such as physical or emotional

problems) their solutions, too, are generally found in the external environment if successful problem solving has taken place.

Problem solving is fundamentally educative—a learning experience. It is a process through which new problem-solving skills are transmitted and by which new perspectives and coping patterns can be learned. Through an effective problem-solving process, the person who sought help can come away from the experience with a solution to his immediate problem and also with newly gained knowledge about handling stress and solving problems that may confront him in the future.

The most effective problem solving takes place when both the professional and the person needing help approach the problem from this perspective: together they will join forces and talents to learn “What is helpful?” and how to bring about problem solving most expeditiously and most effectively. Through their interaction and their exchange of knowledge will emerge an experience in which communication is established to facilitate problem solving and by which solutions are achieved.

## 4.2 Asking for Help

Before the helping process can be set in motion, a deceptively simple step must be taken. Unblocking communication to allow problem solving to occur begins with asking for help. Clear enough. Or, is it? The meaning of asking for help is of great importance to an understanding of helping and how to achieve it.

The nature of helpfulness is determined not only by people’s actual or perceived needs, but also by society’s perceptions of those needs and its attitude towards helpfulness. Clearly, for example, our society has a commitment to making educational and medical assistance available to everybody. Because this is so, there is little or no negative connotation ascribed to asking for help with education or medical needs.

However, our society also lauds self-sufficiency and denigrates dependency. It follows then that there are times when asking for help can place a person in a classical double-bind: he may get the help he needs for his immediate problem, but he will have to bear the stigma attached to asking for that help. It is unfortunate that this continues to be so evident, but it is a reality that professional helpers must contend with if they would be effective on their clients’ behalf.

Asking for help makes people, in many instances, quite uncomfortable—almost uncomfortable, in fact, as the problem that prompted them to ask for help in the first place. The two most glaring examples of this set of circumstances are the person who is in psychotherapy and the person who receives public assistance.

This may all seem ludicrous to the professional who would be helpful. But it is often quite painful for the, person coming for help. Because the discomfort engendered by being in a dependent position (as seen through society’s eyes) can thwart problem solving and even cause the individual to withdraw before helping is accomplished, it is imperative that, as stated

earlier the helping interview is clearly depicted at the outset as a partnership in problem solving .

On the other hand, we are all of us, including the most skilled professional interviewer, heir to human frailties-including our own attitudes and biases about getting and giving help, which may not be entirely as egalitarian and objective as we like to believe. This is not to suggest that professionals who would be helpful are not well intended or earnest. However, it is essential that professionals review and assess their own attitudes towards giving and getting help before they go about offering it.

Summarized briefly, classmates are asked to pair up and to take a ten minute walk around the campus together. Certain rules are applied: the two may not speak to each other; for the first five minutes one student will close his eyes and permit himself to be guided by the other; then, for the second ten minutes the process is reversed and the other student closes his eyes, “trusting” his classmate to guide him safely.

The classroom discussions that usually follow a “Trust Walk” are very lively and revealing, to say the least. Invariably, when asked, the students will say that they much prefer the role of helper; that the dependent posture of needing help made them uncomfortable and even anxious. Typically their reactions to the two roles seem to be:

<b>Giving Help</b>	<b>Getting Help</b>
Gratifying	frightening
Powerful	powerless
Feeling important	feeling inadequate
Feeling useful	feeling depressed
Happy	angry

And, this was just a classroom exercise!

Potentially, the role of helper can carry with it a certain sense of power over another individual that is quite seductive. Everyone likes to maintain a sense of control over himself and his environment, which extends to the other people within that environment. It is critical that any professional helping person be mindful of the very human tendency to enjoy the kind of control and power available in the helping interview, and guard against exercising it.

Similarly, by using the students’ reactions as a guide, we can see that the role ascribed to the person asking for help carries with it, almost by definition, discomfort and negative feelings. No helping person can afford to overlook the effect this will have on the helping process if it is not handled promptly and well.

It is no doubt a reflection of the complexity of our modern industrialized society that there are now professional helpers—be they called teachers, nurses, social workers, or counsellors—designated to assist people in problem solving. The complexity of common problems as well as the like complexity of achieving adequate solutions has necessitated the growth of professional helping. Our modern day struggles for comfort and

purpose have stimulated the development of new skills and knowledge and indeed even of new professions and professionals.

Although the focus of each discipline within the human services is somewhat different, all share a commitment to meeting people's needs and all utilize a problem –solving process to achieve that goal. Similarly every discipline utilizes generic helping principles and techniques. The professionals of each, whether they are medical social workers, guidance counsellors, vocational rehabilitation advisors, or psychologists, put into practice a range of generic human services, skills, and body of knowledge in order to be helpful.

The skills required of the human services professional in any discipline include:

- techniques for interviewing and counselling.
- ability to relate to groups, individuals, and communities.
- effectiveness in bringing about change.
- capacity for self-understanding and for a professional use of self.
- establishment of useful professional, interdisciplinary relationships.
- knowledge of personality, group, and societal dynamics.

The human services professional maximizes his capacity for helping by utilizing these helping “tools”, the skills and techniques necessary for communicating effectively in order to bring whatever, change is necessary to help someone work through a problem and achieve some satisfaction, in himself and his life.

The professional's goal is to facilitate the communication for helping.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that the human services professional has been trained to integrate a sufficient knowledge base on resources and problem-solving interventions with a solid self-understanding. So equipped, the professional is armed with the ability to help a client assess a problem and its dimensions effectively; to explore alternative solutions thoroughly; and to stimulate appropriate open avenues toward action to precipitate positive change and problem resolution.

## Study Session 5

# Helping Interview

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the channels of communication between the individual and his environment, major problem solving goals of a helping interview, and constant interview components.

### Learning Outcomes

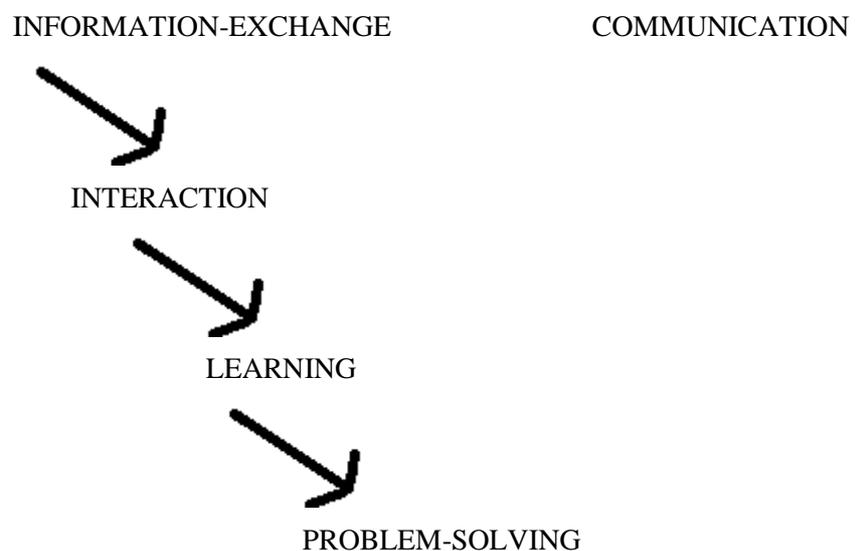
When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

5.1 *explain* the concept of helping interview



## 5.1 Concept of helping Interview

Figure 5.1



The helping interview is a catalyst for change. Through the interview, by the route depicted above, blocked channels of communication between the individual and his environment can be opened or reopened so that his environment can serve him better and he can make more appropriate use of his environment in order to meet his needs.

The helping interview is goal-oriented. An interview is never only idle, if pleasant conversation. It is purposeful discussion directed toward a

meaningful goal in the life of the client. The major problem-solving goals of helping interviews are to achieve one of the following.

- new knowledge for decision making
- new resources for crisis resolution
- new insight for self-awareness

Certainly every helping interview has its own unique size and shape, its own time and place, and its own people and purposes. Nevertheless, these elements comprise universally the basic, constant interview Components:

- People      • Problem
- Purpose     • Process
- Place        • Outcome

The people involved in the helping interview constitute an unequal partnership clearly. Helping efforts are concentrated in only one direction on the person needing help. The other partner fulfills her professional role by removing her own needs from the interview entirely.

There develops between the partners in a helping interview a relationship that contributes enormously to problem solving. This relationship is the cornerstone of helping. Through a positive relationship, communication can be cleared and goals achieved for a client's benefit. The relationship is nurtured through the interviewing process so that the human services worker can be maximally helpful and the client can be open to receiving information and gaining understanding to use in his problem-solving efforts.

The helping interview must of course, be conducted in a place, the place may be either an office or a home or a Street corner or two ears at two telephones. In any of these possible "places," a context is provided for interviewing and for helping. Furthermore, where an interview is conducted can have a significant bearing on whether helping is achieved. A place that is not conducive to communication will hinder helping considerably.

Each person involved in the interview—the client(s) and the human services professional—adds another dimension, another kind of "place" to the interview, too. They add their own individual perspectives on the problem at hand, on each other, on the goals they will mutually seek to accomplish together, and on their view of possibilities for resolution of problems. By bringing their unique perspectives to the interview they are, in a sense, adding new windows on the world that can significantly enhance the helping process.

Helping is a process guided by its clearly defined problem-solving purpose. It is a process by which learning deficits, in the broadest sense, can be corrected so that the person seeking help will gain the skills to problem solve. Sometimes, one helping interview will suffice to meet the problem-solving goal; at other times a number of interviews are needed. In either instance, a defined, goal-oriented process of evaluating the situation and reaching conclusions is going on steadily and purposefully.

There is always, of course, an outcome to any interaction. In the helping interview, it is hoped that the conclusion of the interaction will be

beneficial. But, it may not be. In large measure the outcome will be determined by the interplay of the other interview components.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that either a client seeks help in order to reach a decision or resolve a crisis or increase his self-understanding; the dynamics and structure of helping interview are very much the same. Although the content of discussion during a helping interview will vary depending on the focus and goal of the situation, certain key components of the helping interview remain unchanged.

## Study Session 6

# Helping Relationship

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss the kinds of relationships in which we are involved in our daily lives, general problem solving goals of the helping relationship and general problem solving goals of the helping relationship.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

6.1 *explain* the concept “Relationships”

6.2 *highlight* the general problem solving goals of the helping relationship.



## 6.1 Relationships

There are all kinds of relationships in which we become involved in our daily lives: family relationships, friendships, brief acquaintances, intimate relationships, team memberships, and work relationships among them. Some relationships are quite superficial, born mainly of circumstance such as attending the same classes or working together. Other relationships are more meaningful to us and have a significant impact on our feelings and lives. Everybody has some of each kind of relationship in his life. Hopefully, there is a good balance among them so that a person is neither isolated, in contact with only a few significant others, nor spread too thin in a great many shallow acquaintanceships.

In our contemporary society, the value of worthwhile relationships has not received sufficient emphasis. We are an achievement-oriented society in which we often seek out relationships with other people who may be “useful” rather than meaningful to us. For example, the ambitious young executive is probably far more concerned with establishing linkages to the “right” people who can influence his career than he is with seeking out folks who will value him for who he is rather than for what he does.

It is often said that it’s hard to really get to know people nowadays. That’s probably because in our fast-paced world, people have learned to play many roles and hide behind many masks in order to achieve and to remain invulnerable. That is very sad indeed. I’ve noticed a popular wall poster that says, “People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges.” Unfortunately, it’s a sad, but very accurate commentary on many people. Perhaps even us.

Relationships, 20th century style are like the era itself, rapidly changing and sometimes unpredictable. Because people today change locations and even interests so often, they tend to feel a sense of anomie or rootlessness far more frequently than did their grandparents, who were more firmly rooted to one spot, in geography and outlook. That feeling of rootlessness, of not having a psychic place to hang your hat, can be very uncomfortable indeed.

Since our society tends to undervalue relationships, many of us have not learned how to overcome that rootlessness and find the kind of relationships that will enhance our lives. As a result, many people stay locked in destructive relationships that are really unhealthy dependencies, and others shy away from any kind of emotional investment at all. Neither is an adequate solution to the human being's innate need to relate meaningfully to other people.

We say that people have two basic sets of values:

- Expressive values
- Instrumental values

Expressive values are those related to feelings and relationships. Instrumental values are those related to achievements and general action. When a person places too much value on instrumental aspects of his life, he cannot also nourish his expressive values or fulfil his needs emotionally. A healthy person knows that he needs not only to achieve but to relate as well. He looks for relationships which will make him feel good as well as activities that are rewarding in other respects.

Someone once asked how to find a good therapist. The answer came back to pick the therapist who made the person feel good about herself. That happens to be excellent advice for starting any relationship. Fritz Perls, a psychotherapist and founder of Gestalt therapy, pointed out that there are "nurturing people" and "toxic people," people who make others feel good and people who make others feel bad; the trick for each of us to find as many nurturers as we can to enjoy life with and to avoid the poisoners at all costs.

## 6.2 Helping Relationship

The helping relationship between a human services worker and his client is not unlike any other healthy relationship in many respects. There must exist between both parties a mutual comfortableness with each other and enough investment in the relationship so that it can continue and helping can occur.

The helping relationship is however unique, and different from other significant relationships in a client's and a worker's life in several ways. Although the helping relationship is a partnership in problem solving, we know that it is an unequal partnership. The helping efforts are focused in one direction only—towards the client.

Also, the helping relationship is time limited. The people involved have come together for a prescribed period of time to work together on solving a specific problem. The duration of the relationship may be no more than

one helping interview or it may last through a year or more. However, the relationship will never outlast the problem solving. When the helping is done, the helping relationship is finished.

Problem solving is the goal of the helping relationship and the singular purpose for its existence. More specifically, the helping relationship may be developed to achieve one or more of the following general problem-solving goals:

- to help the client meet a basic need
- to help her achieve comfort or satisfaction in her life
- to teach her new problem-solving skills
- to encourage her personal growth
- to assist her in decision-making
- to bring about crisis resolution

The relationship that develops between worker and client is the very cornerstone of helping. Through the helping relationship, the client and worker come together to unblock communication that is preventing problem solving. Through the helping relationship, new communication skills are made available to the client so that she can enhance her knowledge, skill, or resources for the attainment of more satisfying living.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that through the vehicle of the helping relationship, the client can communicate to the worker what she thinks, knows and feels about her problem. This kind of in-depth communication when reinforced by effective responses by her worker will strengthen the helping relationship itself and will soon open the door to problem solving.

## Study Session 7

# Tools for Helping

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine productive relationship, tools for helping, significant elements of body language, helpful responses that a social worker can make we will also expose you to how you can make use of confrontation as a tool for helping people, in the same vein, clarifying, paraphrasing, highlighting and summarizing are very important tools in effective report writing.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

- 7.1 discuss at least four tools for helping.
- 7.2 write a good and effective report.



## 7.1 Tools

The helping process is an exploration, between client and worker, of the alternatives available to solve a problem and bring satisfaction to the client's life. The worker needs to be able to stimulate the client's thinking and to make her aware of the choices and possibilities available and helpful in seeking resolution of her problem.

The helping relationship becomes the primary tool for problem solving. Within this entity, the worker brings to bear all his skills needed to enable the client to gain enough trust in her and in the therapist to sort out her problem effectively. If the helping relationship is a productive one, it will result in the client's gaining sufficient motivation to see her problem through to a positive resolution. For the relationship to evolve and for the client's trust and motivation to grow there must be ample communication between client and worker. It is through the communication that occurs in the helping relationship that problems get solved and helping happens,

Achieving a high level of helpful communication cannot occur without the client's full anticipation, of course. But the responsibility for facilitating communication rests with her worker. It is he who must attend to the flow of communication and direct it always toward its appropriate conclusion—problem solving.

If he is able to balance well, helping will be enormously facilitated. The tools for helping (and for the "balancing act") are four:

- Observation
- Listening

- Questioning
- Responding

Through the worker's balanced utilization of these four helping techniques in an interview, problem solving will be effectively mobilized.

### 7.1.1 Observation

Observation is the first route to learning how to problem-solve. In order for there to be effective results, the worker's observation skill must be fine-tuned. He must be objective in his appraisal of any given situation, individual, or piece of information. He cannot allow himself a subjective reaction born of his own predispositions or biases, rather than on his actual observation.

There is little room in helping for the so-called "educated guess" unless it is quickly backed up by corroborating information. In other words, don't make a case on "circumstantial evidence." For example, if a woman tells you that she got a little drunk the night before, don't assume that she's an alcoholic. Or, if a child tells you that he hates his parents, don't immediately assume that they are neglectful or abusive.

There is room in the art of helping for hunches and "vibes," but each must be carefully checked out against supportive or non-supportive data. Nor can we draw conclusions about complex human beings on the basis of a once-only observation. We know that single causation is an incredibly rare occurrence. In people's behaviour this is particularly true. People do not always react predictably or consistently. The same stimulus may trigger one of an array of different responses. Likewise, many stimuli may result in one particular response.

Our observations, as professionals, must be guided by a wait-and-see attitude. We cannot afford to jump to conclusions without a substantial amount of supporting evidence, if we are going to be really helpful.

Assuming that the worker is cautious and objective in his ability to observe accurately, he is still confronted with an enormous task. There is a great deal of communicating going on in every interview, which the worker must try to observe. He must be watchful for many cues and clues in the interview that can help him to help.

Observation requires a familiarity with the language of nonverbal communication. Through this medium, known popularly as body language, an individual communicates a great deal to the person who is able to understand his unspoken messages.

There are a number of significant elements of body language that a worker must be attuned to observing:

- clothing
- tension
- distance
- head movements
- physique
- eye contact
- touching
- posture
- facial expression
- gestures

Body language is a direct expression of how a person feels about herself and the situation in which she finds herself. A person who thinks well of herself will usually be dressed neatly and stand erect. A depressed person on the other hand will tend to dress more carelessly and to maintain more physical distance from other people.

In addition to a person's general posture and appearance during an interview, her gesturing and movements will be an indicator of her emotional state. Her eye contact with the worker will also reveal how engrossed she is in the interview. On the contrary, a client whose eyes are darting all over the room is giving her worker a direct message that she is either very bored with the proceedings or is feeling very anxious about the topic for discussion.

Changes in a person's appearance and mannerisms during the course of either a single interview or the longer helping process can sometimes serve as a kind of barometer of the client's reactions to the progress (or lack of it) toward problem solving.

### **7.1.2 Listening**

Effective listening all too often seems to be a lost art nowadays. Yet, undervalued though it may be, listening is a very important helping tool.

Theodor Reik wrote a book entitled *Listening with the Third Ear*. This kind of listening is an absolute prerequisite to effective helping. Every worker must cultivate "a third ear" which he can tune in to hear more fully. With this "third ear," a worker can hear what isn't said as well as what is. In other words, with this tool he will be able to hear his client's music as well as her words.

Here too, body language is quite useful. A person's tone of voice and her speech patterns are both significant in the contributions they make to an understanding of an individual if the worker is listening carefully. The meaning of a statement will be radically different if the person is speaking with a voice full of sarcasm or if her voice reveals anxiety and fear. Also, if a person begins to speak very rapidly when her usual speech pattern is calm and slow, a worker should discern that the speaker is distressed by something she is telling you.

Combined observation and listening will quickly serve to either validate or negate the communication that a client presents. If, for example, a student tells you that everything is terrific and that she is happy with herself, and you observe that there is nervousness in her voice and that she is slouched in her chair, you can readily surmise that things don't really add up. People don't always say what they mean or mean what they say. By carefully observing and listening, a worker can come closer to understanding what his client really means by what the client says. Only when he is able to do this can he really help her.

### **7.1.3 Questioning**

Asking the right question at the right time is another of the basic techniques of interviewing and helping. In the example above, it is important for a worker to be skilled in the use of questioning before he proceeds to ask the student why she looks so depressed when she claims

to be happy. The timing of that question will have a significant impact on the helping process. If it is asked prematurely, it can undermine the client's trust in her worker. If it is asked with scorn, it can undermine the entire helping relationship. Again, (as I am so fond of saying), timing is of the essence.

Every question asked by a worker during a helping interview should be constructed to do one or more of the following:

- help the client to express and understand her problem as well as her feelings and attitudes about the problem
- provide the worker with sufficient information about the problem and the client so that he can be helpful at problem solving
- provide the client with the opportunity to learn and evaluate new problem-solving techniques

There are all kinds of questions: open, closed, "leading," and "loaded." Here, again the worker is busy with his balancing act. The quantity and quality of the questions he chooses to ask and the way he phrases them are of utmost importance to the helping process.

In the helping interview, each question should be constructed so that it is clear and easily understood by the client. No ambiguity should creep into the question being framed. For interviewing purposes, a question should, in addition to being clear, be open ended in that it encourages the client to respond with more than a simple yes-or-no answer. A worker usually prefers to ask a client to tell him about her feelings or opinions on a subject rather than asking her to just answer negatively or affirmatively.

Asking too many questions too quickly or asking too many heavy questions is never helpful. Particularly at a first interview, there is a tendency to overwhelm a client either with too many questions or with a thrust for material she is not ready to share yet. A worker needs to be sensitive to his client's needs and emotions and to refrain from digging too deep too soon or inviting a round of "twenty questions." A worker needs to be able to tolerate his own frustration at not having all the information immediately and not unload it on the already uncomfortable client.

It is sometimes a useful technique to ask a question without directly seeming to ask a question at all. There may be times in a worker's exploration of a client's problem that he needs to learn more than one question, directly stated, could yield. In such a situation, he might then say, "I wonder if/about... (your work, your family, whatever the area of interest) or, somewhat more directly, 'I'd like to hear about (your vacuum, your husband, your fears, whatever)"; suggesting a topic for discussion in this way is usually perceived by the client as less threatening than a bombardment of very specific questions about the same topic.

In an interview, questioning may be used as a tool to facilitate the helping communication and the problem solving in a number of ways:

- by energizing the client's thoughts with new alternatives ("Had you considered ...?")

- by eliciting the client's feelings ("You seem to be very angry today ...?")
- by redirecting the client's ideas ("Could we talk about...now?")
- by linking subjects discussed during the interview ("Do you notice how similar your reactions have been . . .?")
- by asking for clarification and additional information ("When you said . . . , did you mean ...?")

There is one little word that interviewers usually try to avoid as much as possible. That word is "why?" For some reason, we all tend to take up the defensive when a question is directed to us, that starts with "why.. . "Why are you late?" "Why weren't you home?" "Why is the sky falling?" In a helping interview, it is much more preferable to use other equally effective words, such as "how?" or "what?" "How did you happen to be late?" "What are you feeling?" Both those words come across as non-accusatory and therefore more helpful.

There is another matter related to questioning that most workers find particularly difficult to deal with in the course of an interview. That is the situation in which the client turns the tables, so to speak, and starts asking questions of the interviewer. The most effective technique for dealing with this turn of events is to simply answer the question with a question. For example, if a client wants to know something about your personal life that seems irrelevant to the helping process, you may question his request for this information.

There really is no sound reason why a worker should not feel free to reveal herself with direct answers to certain direct questions, i.e., age or marital status. On the other hand, dishing up your personal biography is not going to be very helpful to solving the problem at hand, except in occasional circumstances.

Apart from sharing personal data, it is also important for a worker generally to refrain from giving direct advice. Although it is undeniably pleasant to be asked what to do, it is rarely very helpful, in the long run; try to solve a person's problems for her, instead of with her. When a client asks, "What shall I do?" it is preferable for a worker to respond, "What would you like to do?" That type of response will lead to meaningful discussion about problem-solving alternatives and will allow the client, quite appropriately, to make the required decisions for her own life.

By observing carefully, listening intently, and asking well-placed questions, a worker will learn a great deal about his client and about what will be helpful to her. Using those three interconnected interviewing tools, worker will learn much about the client's feelings about herself and significant others; her problem and its meaning in her life; her coping powers and her defences; her values, goals, and aspirations; her strengths and weaknesses; and her readiness for change and her problem-solving capacities. He will learn from what the client communicates and from what she fails to communicate, He will be helpful by taking what he has learned and responding in a helping manner.

## 7.1.4 Responding

Because helping is a partnership, the responses of the worker to his client's communications carry enormous weight in deciding the outcome their helping relationship. In the final analysis, there are but two kinds of responses a human services worker can make: helpful and unhelpful.

Being ever attuned to balancing his various listening-observing-questioning-responding activities during every helping interview, the worker is careful to gauge his responses appropriately. There are many, many helpful responses that a worker can make, including:

- giving support
- information
- reviewing data
- interpretation
- confrontation
- clarification
- reassurance
- explanation
- identification of feelings
- agreement
- disagreement
- reinforcement

Every response given by a worker is carefully constructed and stated so that it will have a beneficial impact on the client and her problem solving efforts.

### Confronting

**Confrontation** is a word that conjures up fear in some individuals. People often associate the word with some form of attack, anger, or hostile behaviour. In the context of the helping profession, the term requires a different understanding. *Confrontation can be defined as calling to the attention of the client discrepancies between or among the client's thoughts, attitudes, or behaviours* (Ivey, & Simek-Downing, 1987). A confrontation is actually an invitation to the client to become more aware of and to examine more fully certain aspects of behaviour that seem to the counsellor to be harmful or self-defeating for the client. It is through the process of confrontation that clients are made aware of specific obstacles that have impeded or could interfere with reaching their desired goals. Through this process, clients optimally learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour.

Confrontation need not focus exclusively upon negative aspects of clients' behaviour. It can be used to show clients' strengths and resources they have overlooked. The acknowledgment of strengths can sometimes produce anxiety, however, since then people can demand more of one, confrontation involves challenge even when a positive aspect of behaviour is pointed out. Before individuals can change, they must perceive a need for change. Confrontation provides one stimulus for change.

Constructively challenging the client can take various forms. Counsellors can call attention to the clients self-defeating attitudes, point out discrepancies between what the client says and actually does, focus upon various manipulations or forms of game playing, or as mentioned

previous address unrecognized areas of strength. Following are some examples of the use of confrontation in counselling.

**Example 7.1**

**Client:** I am not really interested in a better-paying job. It will probably demand more of my time and I will have to learn new skills and even wear a tie and jacket to work.

**Counsellor:** You say you are not interested in a better job, yet you have spent several sessions talking exclusively about it. Is it possible you really want to go after the better job and are afraid of failing, so you have convinced yourself that you really do not want the job? Are you possibly afraid of new demands that could be placed on you?

This confrontation addresses the client's incongruent behaviour.

**Example 7.2**

**Client:** I am really concerned about the shape of the world today. People do nothing to change the situation. People are starving. Trash is scattered all over the streets, crime is everywhere, and people do not get out and talk to one another anymore.

**Counsellor:** You say you are a concerned person. But the bulk of your time is spent sitting in front of the television and drinking beer.

This confrontation focuses the client upon the discrepancy between what he claims concerns him and what he actually does about it.

The misuse of confrontation can have negative effects on clients. If the client is not ready to accept the challenge of the offered information, the confrontation is not helpful. The counsellor must time the confrontation so that it is most helpful.

**Clarifying**

The basic purpose of clarifying is to make clear what information is being conveyed by the client and how it is being received by the counsellor. Sometimes difficult situations and painful emotions can create problems with communication. When the counsellor clarifies aspects of the client's message, the client knows how the message has been received. The process of clarifying often involves using the skills of paraphrasing, highlighting, and summarising.

**Paraphrasing**

When the counsellor paraphrases a client's message, he or she rewords it. In doing so, the counsellor attempts to focus the client's attention on the main element of an immediate message. Through the use of paraphrasing the counsellor conveys to the client that the meaning and the feelings of the message have been received and understood. Consider the following example

**Example 7.3a**

**Client:** Even though I feel I have a lot of friends. I feel as if no one understands me or really wants to my mother and father don't listen to me. My teachers ignore me and my girlfriend says I'm no fun to be with

anymore.

**Counsellor:** It sounds as if you feel that you have no one you can really talk to

**Client:** Yeah. I guess that is how I feel

In this example, the counsellor rewords and restates the client's message and pinpoints the basic feelings. This serves to focus the client upon his main areas of concern, in addition to conveying to the client that the counsellor understands what is being expressed.

### Highlighting

Highlighting is very similar to paraphrasing, but has a slightly different purpose. Paraphrasing is often done as a response to the client's immediate message. Highlighting, however, is not an immediate response and does not necessarily follow the sequence in which the client is expressing the message. Highlighting is an attempt to capture the recurring theme of messages during a counselling session. In this way, the counsellor emphasizes the main aspects of what the client is expressing over a short time

#### Example 7.3b

Following the previous example, the counsellor has just spent twenty minutes listening to the client's appraisal of himself and his many friendships. The counsellor is now attempting to highlight the major theme and feelings expressed by the client.

**Counsellor:** Even though you say you have many friends, you still feel that no one really understands you.

The counsellor has now identified the major theme of the client's message and is again drawing the client's attention to what he has already expressed as his main concern.

### Summarising

Like paraphrasing and highlighting summarising is a means of giving back to the client the essence of what he or she has been trying to convey. The distinction concerns the amount of material covered. Paraphrasing and highlighting concentrate on the immediate aspects of client messages during parts of a single counselling session, whereas summarising involves restating the chief elements of the client's message over one or a series of counselling sessions (Shulman, 1982). When the worker summarizes the major points of information and recurring themes brought forth by the client over several sessions, the client can develop a broader perspective on and deeper understanding of the depth and significance of specific problem areas. This process brings to the attention of the client changes in feelings and attitudes that may have gone unnoticed. It enables clients to develop a frame of reference in which to see where they were, where they are now, and where they would like to be.

## 7.2 Report Writing

Report writing is a means of recording the interactions between clients and events. Most reports concern client behaviour and progress. Report writing is not generally perceived as one of the more exciting skills to acquire within the human services field, but nevertheless, it is one of the most practical and valuable. Report writing in one form or another is necessary in many aspects of the human services field. All professionals and institutions require a consistent method of keeping track of what happens to whom, when, and why although specific methods and styles of report writing vary. Many human services agencies use a standardized form for the various types of reports. Obviously, writing clearly and using the language accurately are important. More specifically, reports are usually compiled with two basic objectives in mind, to establish a documented record for future reference, and to convey current information regarding a specific case or event (Wicks, 1979).

A counsellor working with many clients must keep an accurate report of each one's progress. Clients maybe taking medication, which necessitates that a consistent and accurate report be kept on the type of medication, dosage, and consequent reactions. If a client changes counsellors, the report of the previous counsellor may be requested by the new counsellor as a means of gaining background information on the client. In many clinics it is mandatory to keep reports of patient contacts, diagnosis, and treatments. Very often these reports are monitored by state and federal agencies to ensure a continuous level of compliance with state and federal regulations.

Reports are crucial when professionals evaluate or consult with public or private agencies, institutions, or schools. For instance, a human services specialist might be brought in to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific program or service. The evaluator would rely heavily on the records and reports submitted.

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### Study Session Summary



#### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that accomplishing effective communication is the worker's "Balancing Act" At all times during the helping interview, the worker is balancing his own input into the communication; he is both acting and reacting, in stable balance. He does not always lead; nor is he always led. He is not always quiet nor does he always keep quiet. He is not always without judgment; nor is he opinionated. His responses, acting and reacting are indeed a fine balancing act. Also in helping process, the social worker has to employ the use of helping tools which includes confrontation, clarifying, paraphrasing, highlighting, summarising and report writing to function effectively.

## Study Session 8

# Unhelpful Responses

## Introduction

In this Study Session, you will learn the unhelpful responses which the social worker can make and the ones she must be observant enough to avoid, in order to accomplish her goal.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

8.1 highlight and explain the unhelpful pitfall a social worker must avoid



## 8.1 Concepts of Unhelpful Responses

There are as many unhelpful responses as there are helpful ones. Some of the most common unhelpful responses a worker can make include:

- arguing
- moralizing
- criticism
- coercion
- disbelief
- ridicule
- sarcasm
- contradiction
- threats

None of the foregoing responses has any place in either a healthy relationship or a partnership. It should go without saying, then, that such responses cannot enter into a helping interview.

There are other unhelpful pitfalls which a worker must be ever alert to avoid if he is to be helpful. Among them are the following:

### 8.1.1 Steering or Prompting

The worker who leads the client into a position she really doesn't own is not being very helpful. The result will be that the client feels steamrollered, not helped. A worker cannot enforce his timetable, his expectations, or his point-of-view. The client is entitled to her own in the helping interview.

### 8.1.2 Professionalities

The worker who likes to give the impression that he is all-knowing and close to infallible is not only dishonest, but unhelpful. No one has all the answers. A good helping person will readily admit when he doesn't know something and will also be quick to admit when he is wrong. Another symptom of "professionalism" is an attitude of disdain which communicates to the client that the worker feels somehow superior

because she's the one with the problem instead of him. Obviously, such an attitude is totally contradictory to helpfulness.

### **8.1.3 Rambling**

Although the beginning of an interview may need time for "ice breakers" or small talk, too much meaningless and undirected 'discussion will only dilute the effectiveness of the helping relationship and waste everybody's time. The client has come - to discuss her problem and is entitled to expect the worker to stick to business.

### **8.1.4 Laughing at Rather than With a Client**

This is never helpful. Similarly, expressing only vague tolerance for a client or her point-of-view instead of non-judgmental acceptance will never be interpreted as a helpful response.

### **8.1.5 Mixed Messages**

The worker who attempts to help his client by "do as I say, not as I do" messages cannot be very helpful to her. Nor will placing her in, a double bind by offering only unacceptable alternatives.

### **8.1.6 Taking Sides**

Although it is understandable that it may be a worker's natural inclination to take a client's side, he should be cautioned not to do this overtly. For example, if an adolescent is engrossed in rage at her father, it will do little good for worker to agree that the father is a tyrant. Instead, the worker should be focusing on helping the young woman to deal with her feelings and reactions in the most appropriate way.

Remember, too that even when someone is recruiting your vote against some significant other in her life, her feelings about that person are rarely all negative. Your negative vote may not be construed as appropriate either. We all know how it feels when we hear someone criticizing someone close to us. Even if we've said the same things, we do not like hearing someone else saying so.

Conversely, it should be self-evident that it is never helpful to take sides against your client. Often when a mother brings her child to play therapy because she is "bad" (misbehaving), there is an assumption on the mother's part that the worker will take her side against the youngster and try to make her "good." A competent human services professional refuses to be drawn into that tug-of-war by either party.

### **8.1.7 Clichés**

Saying things like "pull yourself together" or "don't feel that way" are empty phrases that have no place in helpful communication. How did you feel the last time someone told you to "cheer up"?

### **8.1.8 Commands**

Not only can't we dish out clichés to our clients, we cannot issue orders, even well-intended ones. Whenever you hear the word "should" creeping

into your communication, it is a sure sign that some inappropriate commanding is going on. Saying “you should do this; shouldn’t do that” deprives the client of her right to make the decision for herself.

### **8.1.9 Snowballing**

Feelings snowball. When one person acts in anger, the other person in the relationship will tend to react with anger. It is never helpful to react in kind to an angry client. A worker should be equipped with other responses to diffuse the anger instead of letting it control his interaction with his client.

### **8.1.10 Waking Sleeping Dogs**

It is never appropriate for a worker to try to uncover every problem in a person’s life or personality. Some sleeping dogs should be left alone. To wake them all would be overwhelming to both client and worker and, therefore, decidedly unhelpful

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## **Study Session Summary**



### **Summary**

In this Study Session, we discussed the unhelpful responses which the social worker must always take cognizance of in the helping process.

## Study Session9

# Crisis Intervention

## Introduction

A special kind of interview and interviewing process, which is really intensified helping, is crisis intervention. Sometimes crisis intervention is a version of one-stop helping. Other times several helping interviews will take place while the crisis is being resolved.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

9.1 *discuss* crisis intervention



## 9.1 Concept of Crisis Intervention

Life isn't always tranquil for any of us. We all have faced crisis in our lives and certainly will again. What amounts to a crisis for a person is really a very individual thing. A situation or event that will not particularly alarm or upset one individual, may cause tremendous distress and be a crisis for someone else. Whether or not something amounts to a crisis for a person depends on his unique combination of tolerance for stress and coping capacities.

When a crisis does occur, it invariably tips the balance for a person from a state of reasonable comfort to a time of turbulent strain and anxiety. A crisis may be caused by a specific, external force or event, such as loss of someone or something important in a person's life or some catastrophe, such as a fire or hurricane. Or, crisis may result from a series of stresses that have accumulated over a long period of time. "The straw that broke the camel's back" is this latter type of crisis precipitant.

However the crisis was caused, the impact on the individual faced with it is the same: a time of problems and anxiety. A crisis poses a problem that, by definition, is without immediate solution. That's why it's a crisis. The person's problem-solving resources are overwhelmed and overtaxed. The person does not have the problem-solving skills at his disposal. If he did, he would mobilize them to deal with the problem effectively before it reached crisis proportions.

A crisis is a threat. When crisis enters a person's life he usually perceives it as a threat to his value system and his paramount life goals. For example, loss of a job may threaten a person's life style; a mother's serious illness may threaten dissolution of a family. A crisis is far more

than a naissance or inconvenience in a person's life. It is a frightening and threatening experience.

Because the crisis holds some serious threat of disrupting a person's life, it is understandable that the crisis situation generates an enormous amount of tension in him. During a crisis, emotions are running very high.

Usually during the course of the crisis, however, the tension will reach its most intolerable peak and then fall off to a more tolerable level. Or, the tension may come in waves—up and down—until the crisis is resolved and the anxiety dissipated. Either mode is emotionally painful for the person going through the crisis and needs swift, skilful intervention from a professional to disarm the crisis as quickly as possible and return the person to a more comfortable functioning level.

While the crisis is painful and threatening, however, it is also an opportunity. It is paradoxical but true: a crisis provides potential for growth and change which can be of tremendous benefit to a person's life.

As we know from the work of Erik Erikson, growth requires crisis at every developmental stage in life. If the crisis is met and successfully resolved, the personal gains from the experience can far outweigh the immediate pain and discomfort.

A crisis, more often than not, is usually superimposed on a hotbed of chronic problems that have been complicating and frustrating a person's life. The crisis brings these old problems to the surface where they can be dealt with at long last and finally resolved. Maladaptive problem-solving techniques can be replaced with more effective ones. And an individual can move from his relative isolation towards more satisfying living. This movement is hastened and enhanced if, during his crisis, a helping relationship is made available to him.

Yet, even though the worker is expected to move through the helping process at top speed, she is also expected to maintain a professional attitude towards her client, the work at hand, and the helping process. The worker must be doubly careful not to be overwhelmed by the crisis situation or the client's distress. Over-identification with the problem will only serve to exacerbate the client's difficulty and block the way to problem-solving.

The first goal in crisis intervention is to stabilize the situation. This may simply mean to help the client to calm down. Or, it may mean finding alternate housing or medical treatment immediately for a family in trouble. The worker will have to act fast. But she cannot move so quickly that she forgets to involve the client in her efforts.

A client feeling overwhelmed by a crisis and in some serious jeopardy will understandably be somewhat immobilized by it all. The worker needs, nonetheless, to involve the client as fully as possible in:

- a. Assessing the dimensions of the crisis and
- b. Developing resolution strategies. As always, the worker wants to work withher client, not do things for him

The worker will have to determine the state of the client's inner equilibrium in order to evaluate how much active participation she can realistically expect from him in the crisis solving. The best way to find out is simply to ask. A client who cannot mobilize himself at that moment will let you know. Likewise, a client who wants and is able to participate will do so.

During her crisis intervention, the worker knows that her client is "at risk" and that she may need to let him lean on her and borrow her strength during this stressful period. She is there to be his advocate and ally throughout the crisis and will move with him towards their problem-solving goals in harmony with his needs and capabilities.

The worker needs to make herself available to her client during the crisis as fully as possible. This may well mean extending herself beyond normal working hours. This is a consideration that must be borne in mind. Continuity of communication between worker and client during a crisis time is of crucial importance to the speedy resolution of the problem.

Handling a crisis effectively comes with experience of course. Yet, even a young worker will not be "thrown" during her efforts at crisis intervention if she has mastered, at least at a beginning level, the fundamental interviewing tools and has developed the "solid self" on which to rely in helping.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that crisis intervention telescopes the interviewing process and demands the rapid-fire use of a worker's helping tools and skills, without delay. There is a sense of urgency and immediacy added to the helping relationship. There is no time to waste.

## Study Session 10

# Social Worker in Group Settings

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will focus on the basics of group dynamics and the skills necessary to facilitate group work. Many additional concepts, skills, and techniques can be acquired through advanced training in group work.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 10.1 *define* the term “group”.
- 10.2 *itemise* at least three types of group.
- 10.3 *list* and *explain* the leadership skills



## 10.1 Definition of a Group

There are a variety of ways to define a group, and many types of groups exist. For the purpose of our discussion, we can define a group as a collection of people who share a common purpose and who come together to achieve their goals by working together in sonic form. The primary characteristics of groups include the following:

Group members perceive themselves to be a part of a group.

- Members are interdependent in some manner:
- Members strive to achieve goals.
- Members influence each other in some way

## 10.2 Types of Groups

Since human services workers function in a variety of settings, the variety of groups they may be involved with is large. The following categories illustrate the broad range of types of groups:

- families with problems
- *goal-oriented groups*: task forces, teams, commissions, and so on
- *personal growth groups*: assertiveness, sensitivity, encounter, T-groups
- *treatment groups*: group therapy, group counselling around a wide variety of problems and using a wide variety of approaches such as Gestalt, rational- emotive, and transactional-analysis therapies

It should be noted that categories can overlap to some extent. Often groups can have a multiple focus. For example, they may be both therapeutic and educational for members.

## 10.3 Group Leadership Skills

Group leaders share many traits with orchestra conductors (Benjamin, 1978). Both set the pace and the tone for the rest of the group. A worker who leads a group must be aware of the needs and goals of all members. What follows is an examination of basic group leadership skills found to be most useful in and applicable to group settings in the human services field.

### 10.3.1 Selecting Group Members

In many groups, especially in therapy or counselling groups, the selection of group members is an important consideration. Establishing a balanced group composition is often desirable. The worker might want to provide a varied mix of young and old, male and female, or talkative and quiet. Previous knowledge and information about an individual can help the worker make appropriate decisions concerning a person's suitability to a particular group.

### 10.3.2 Establishing Goals

Once the group is established, the leader, together with the group members, must determine the group's objectives and goals. Goals are based on the members' level of functioning. In a group with a low level of functioning, the goals are usually set by the leader. Whether the goals are specific or general they must be clearly defined and agreed upon by the group members. The leader should normally discuss group goals suggest procedures and provide an opportunity for group members to express their views.

### 10.3.3 Establishing Norms

Establishing a clear set of group rules at the beginning helps the group to proceed more effectively toward its goals and enables the leader to determine whether or not the group is on the right track. Group rules or guidelines might address the issue of confidentiality by having participants agree to discuss group matters only within the confines of the group itself. Another rule might involve allowing each member to finish talking before another member can interrupt.

### 10.3.4 Intervening

The helper intervenes by stepping in and attempting to change, modify, or point out something that is occurring in the group. Intervening is not focused exclusively on blocking negative aspects of a client's behaviour. It can also be used to point out the positive aspects. For example, a helper may intervene between two clients who are arguing over a particular issue to point out to one of the clients that she is finally standing up for what she believes in. The leader may also intervene when one member violates the established rules of the group.

Sometimes, groups get stuck. The leader may intervene in a group discussion when the discussion has reached an impasse. The leader may then suggest additional or alternative ways of viewing the situation or problem. The leader may also intervene by introducing a specific therapeutic technique, such as role playing, to help clarify and bring additional insights to a particular problem a client or group of clients may be experiencing. Knowing how and when to move in is as important in group work as it is in interviewing.

### **10.3.5 Promoting Interaction**

By skilfully facilitating, the group leader helps to promote and bring about interaction among the group members. Promoting interaction can lead to the establishing of clear channels of communication among clients. When group members are linked to one another, they begin to work together and relate personally to one another. To be effective as a facilitator the leader needs to be insightful and sensitive. The leader has to find ways of relating the concerns of one individual to the concerns or struggles of another. This provides further opportunities for mutual support and helps to develop a feeling of interconnectedness and cohesiveness.

The result of this process can be the creation of a climate of safety and acceptance in which members trust one another and are therefore likely to engage in productive interchanges (Corey & Corey 1977). As a facilitator, the group leader helps the participants to express their problems, provides support as members explore aspects of themselves, and essentially helps group members reach their individual goals through this mutually influencing process.

### **10.3.6 Appraising evaluating**

The group leader must appraise the on-going process and goals of the group. It is particularly helpful to do this after each group meeting. The leader must reflect on what is happening in the group the direction it seems to be taking, how it helps certain participants and not others, and the types of interventions that may be helpful in the next group session. Often a leader will suggest that the members become part of this process by sharing their evaluations of what is happening in the group with group members. In this process, group member's can become more aware of how they are influenced by others and how others may be influenced by them. As a result of the process, constructive changes or new goals can be implemented to enable the group to fulfil more of each member's stated needs.

### **10.3.7 Termination in the Group**

The issue of termination emerges in every group in various ways. Workers must know how to end each group session.

Sessions can be terminated in a number of ways. The leader can suggest to members how to transfer what they have learned in the group to other life situations or environments. The leader can summarize what happened during a session or can ask the members to think about some point that

has emerged. The leader can also end a session by suggesting mini goals for clients to work on.

Workers must know when it is most appropriate for a certain member to leave the group. In this decision, the worker must consider and evaluate all available information pertaining to the client, such as the client's stated goals, his or her past and present abilities to achieve stated goals, and whether the group is still useful for the client's present situation.

A worker must also know when an entire group has completed its work so that it is time to dissolve the group. Has the group achieved its stated purposes or goals? If the leader has previously highlighted a clear set of group goals developed constructive group guidelines, and consistently monitored the group's progress, the group is now in a good position to decide about termination.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed responsibilities of a human services worker to sometimes involve working with groups. This requires using the skills previously discussed in a somewhat different manner, as well as using additional skills.

## Study Session 11

# Characteristics of Effective Helpers

## Introduction

In this Study Session, you will learn the characteristics of effective helpers which include: empathy, genuineness, self-awareness, acceptance, desire to help and patience.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

11.1 *highlight* at least five characteristics that contribute to the development of helping relationships.



## 11.1 Effective Helper

Although research has not yet indicated a “correct” method of helping, it has identified certain characteristic of helpers that are associated with successful helping. For example, the findings of Avila, Combs, and Purkey (1978), Brammer (1981), Truax and Carkhuff (1967), and Rogers (1961) indicated that effective workers possess certain personal characteristics that contribute to success. The discussion that follows examines these characteristics that contribute to the development of helping relationships.

### 11.1.1 Empathy

Empatheia is the Greek work that refers to a affection plus passion touched by the quality of suffering. In Latin, the word pathos is analogous to the Greek patheia with the added dimension of “feeling.” Through the years, this somewhat vague meaning has evolved into a more comprehensive definition. For example, Brammer (1981) views empathy as the ability to appreciate and understand the client’s perspective. More simply, empathy is the ability to see things from another point of view. Empathy is viewed by many professionals as the most important characteristic in a helping relationship. It serves as a basis for relating and communicating. For example, when clients feel deeply understood they are generally more willing to risk disclosure of their inner feelings. Carkhuff and Berenson (1967) concluded that “the therapist’s ability to communicate at high levels of empathic understanding involves the therapist’s ability to allow him or herself to experience or merge in the experience the client”

Empathy is often viewed as conveying sensitivity to the client and trying to understand what “walking in the other guy’s shoes” may feel like. The helper does not necessarily have to have had the experiences of a client in order to understand the client’s feelings. Feelings are universal. Different experiences often generate similar feelings. For example, death of a loved one and divorce may both generate feelings of loss and anguish.

For empathy to be constructive and worthwhile, it must be demonstrated, as in the following example:

**Client:** I just recently lost my father, who had cancer.

**Helper:** It must be a very painful experience, causing you to feel angry, sad, and abandoned.

### 11.1.2 Genuineness

Genuineness is the expression of true feelings. To be a genuine helper, one must avoid role playing or feeling one way and acting another. Genuine helpers do not take refuge in any specific role, such as counsellor or therapist. Genuineness involves self-disclosure. It implies a willingness to be known to others.

In most types of helping relationships, a certain degree of modelling behaviour takes place. The client sometimes tries to emulate the characteristics of the helper. If the helper is genuine, free, and expressive, the client is also free and able to express authentic feelings.

Shulman (1982) adds two dimensions to our examination of this characteristic by introducing parallel elements: “Two words are closely related in explaining the meaning of genuineness—congruency (when one’s words and actions correspond) and authenticity (when one is him- or herself, not a phony)”. Being genuine, however, is not free license for the helper to do or say anything to the client at whim. Helpers are not “free spirits” who inflict themselves on others. Being genuine does not necessarily mean expressing all one’s thoughts to the client.

Helpers can be genuine without being hostile or hurtful to the client. For example, a client may ask the helper, “What do you really think of me?” Assuming the helper has negative feelings at the moment toward the client’s behaviour, these feelings could be openly expressed in a variety of ways without appearing as a direct attack on the client. The helper might express disappointment at the client’s unwillingness to attempt to change his or her behaviour. In other words, one can dislike a person’s rigidity but can still respect the person as an individual.

Sharing personal experiences with the client can sometimes be helpful. For instance, the counsellor may be helping someone come to grips with problems generated by a recent divorce. The helper may have been divorced and can therefore understand the range of the client’s feelings on a personal level. Subjectivity refers to private, personal, and unique ways of experiencing situations. Being subjective means one’s experience is unique and not directly observable by another person. It is a private reaction to or feeling about someone or something. This reaction tends to be biased since it only pertains to the individual’s experience.

Objectivity emphasizes verifiable aspects of an event. Objectivity involves the noting of facts without distortion by personal feelings or prejudices. It stresses description of what can be seen, heard, touched, and so on. An objective statement based on verifiable evidence might be “Bill is 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighs 145 pounds, and has blue eyes,” while a subjective statement of these same conditions could be “Bill is too short, overweight, and has unattractive weird-looking eyes.”

Subjectivity and objectivity represent opposite ends of a continuum. In the helping process there are disadvantages to each quality when carried to extremes. The helper who is too subjective can become overly emotionally involved with the client, as in the case of taking sides in marital counselling. In this sense the helper can run the risk of losing the ability to make appropriate decisions or judgments.

Pure objectivity alone is also not a desired quality. Objectivity refers to a detachment from one’s personal feelings. The purely objective helper can run the risk of being viewed by the client as cold, uncaring, aloof and uninterested in the client’s well-being. This can cause obvious difficulties in communication and build up feelings of resentment on the part of the client.

Either quality, when carried to extremes, can lead to difficulty in understanding people. The quality to be desired is an objective/subjective balance. A helper must have the ability to stand back and view a situation accurately but without becoming detached from personal feelings. Human services helpers need a blend of both qualities.

### **11.1.3 Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is the quality of knowing oneself. It includes knowledge of one’s values, feelings attitudes and beliefs fears and desires and strengths and weaknesses. The self is comprised of one’s thoughts about oneself. This means that there are literally hundreds of ideas and images that make up the sense of self. One’s values beliefs, ideas, and images become clear when one asks questions such as: What’s important to me? What aspects of me do I like or dislike? The self-concept can be regarded as the inner world in which one lives. In the helping process, the helper often expresses this inner world and makes it visible to the client.

The effective helper must be aware of what messages are being transmitted to the client through both word and action. It is only through self-examination that we can begin to understand what aspects of ourselves would be most beneficial to the helping process. Combs, Avila, and Purkey (1978) stressed the following:

Professional helpers must be thinking, problem-solving individuals. The primary tool with which they work is they. This understanding has been referred to as the self as instrument or self as tool concept. In the human services a helping relationship always involves the use of the helper’s self, the unique ways in which helpers are able to combine knowledge and understanding with their own unique ways of putting them into operation.

It is generally accepted among many professionals that if one wants to become more effective as a helper, it is necessary to start with self-awareness. Helpers who aspire to use self in an effective way must be aware of their patterns of personality and their needs. Helpers have a responsibility to be conscious of the ways in which their personalities and behaviours affect others. The helper's beliefs, values, and attitudes can have a powerful effect on the helping process.

### **11.1.4 Acceptance**

Acceptance is demonstrated by viewing the client's feelings, attitudes, and opinions as worthy of consideration. The accepting helper sees each person as having a fundamental right to think, act, and feel differently. From the humanistic perspective, communicating acceptance of the other person is vital to developing and maintaining the helping relationship. Communication of acceptance leads to feelings of psychological safety on the part of the client. In this setting, the client believes that no matter what he or she discloses, the counsellor will react in an accepting manner. As an accepting person the helper recognizes the uniqueness in each human being. Brill (1973) suggested that the basis of any relationship is acceptance of the individual's right to existence, importance and value. Out of acceptance should come freedom to be oneself to express one's fears, angers, Joy, rage, to grow, develop, and change without concern that doing so will jeopardize the relationship.

A major problem with understanding the quality of acceptance is that one can confuse acceptance of a client with approval of the client's behaviour. Accepting a person does not imply that one likes or approves of all the values or behaviours of that person. For example, a counsellor may be working with a heroin addict who is attempting to kick the habit. The counsellor may accept the client's feelings, experience and beliefs but not approve of heroin addiction.

### **11.1.5 Desire to Help**

Many proponents of the humanistic perspective believe that effective helpers have a deep interest in other people, and a desire to help, which causes them to receive satisfaction in promoting the growth and development of others. The feelings of self-satisfaction derived from seeing others make positive changes in their lives are a basic reward to the helper. This sincere desire to help is displayed and becomes readily observable in the helper's attitude toward his or her work. Just as people respond more favourably to a salesperson who evidences enthusiasm and interest in the product he or she is selling, so clients respond more favourably to a helper who is enthusiastic about and interested in helping. One caution should be noted in this regard: sometimes the helper's desire to help can extend too far, creating unnecessary client dependency on the helper for various tasks clients should take care of themselves.

Helpers accept as a social value the belief that people should help one another. When one devotes a considerable amount of time and energy to helping others, it demonstrates a basic belief that those being served do have the fundamental ability to change (Cowen, Leibowitz, & Leibowitz,

1968). Many professionals agree that a desire to help people is a basic value for those entering the human services field.

### 11.1.6 Patience

Patience is the ability to wait and be steadfast. It is refraining from acting out of haste or impetuosity. As a helper, one may often feel that it would be beneficial to a client to do a particular thing, confront a situation, and so on. Patience is based on the understanding that different people do things at different times in different ways, and for different reasons, according to their individual capacities.

Frequently, a helper must wait for a client to be ready to take a next step toward resolving a particular problem or toward achieving a desired goal. For example a helper might be helping a retarded individual to use eating utensils, a task that often involves a lot of repetition over a long period of time. People do not always proceed on a prescribed timetable. Human beings can be awesomely frustrating creature who often resist change even though the change is recognized as ultimately beneficial. An effective helper must have the patience to allow for the client's development and growth according to the client's needs and abilities.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed the characteristics of an effective social worker in solving problem. These characteristics; empathy, genuineness, self-awareness, acceptance, desire to help and patience must all be possessed by the social worker who wants to be effective in the problem solving process.

## Study Session 12

# Professional Self

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine how a social worker can make use of her professional self, ways to project positive qualities, formal/informal worker/client relationship.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this Study Session, you should be able to:

- 12.1 *explain* how a social worker can make use of her professional self.



## 12.1 Social Worker as a Professional

The human service worker demonstrates her competence as a helping person not only by mastering interviewing skills and other areas of human services knowledge about people and their problems. She also demonstrates her competence and ultimately increases her helpfulness to her client by the way in which she actually presents herself during her encounters with clients in helping interviews.

The helping person will present herself in a way that shows her to be an individual who is warm, interested, caring, optimistic, tolerant, genuine, non-judgmental, trustworthy, empathetic, responsive, and action oriented. Through her actions and responses in the helping interviews, she is able to take a lively interest in others and focus on them. She is not over identified with her client, but able to maintain a high degree of objectivity in her relationships with both the clients she serves and the other professionals with whom she deals.

Presenting one as a helpful professional goes beyond what one says and how one behaves during an interview. What a worker looks like is also indicative of her professional competence (or lack of it). Just like everybody else, a human service worker reveals a great deal about her self-esteem by her clothing, manner, speech, and other body language clues.

Every individual worker must, of course, decide for herself what style of clothes she will choose to wear to work and how she will conduct herself during interviews. It is a useful rule-of-thumb, however, for every worker to consider the effect of how she presents herself on her client in terms of how he is likely to perceive her. For example, if wearing jeans or

chewing gum or sitting in a lotus position during an interview is not likely to inspire a client's confidence in the worker's professional competence, it would obviously be more beneficial to adjust one's appearance accordingly.

Some workers balk at what they consider conventional attire and want to assert their individuality by dressing in the latest fad. In some unusual contexts, dressing unconventionally might be appropriate to the helping situation, although usually it is preferable to dress and behave in a manner that will not detract from the potential of the helping process. After all, the worker should not be so self-concerned that her attire is more important than the helping work to be done.

Related to the formality or informality of a professional appearance is the more general matter of the nature of the client-worker interaction in their helping relationship. Again, the worker must exercise her personal discretion in deciding just how formal or informal each helping interview will be. She must decide, for example, whether she and her client shall address each other by their proper names or move to a first-name basis. There is no hard-and-fast rule regarding the use of names. Again, the choice should be made on the basis of whether maintaining more formality would feel more comfortable to the client and, therefore, be more helpful to the problem solving. If, on the other hand, somewhat more familiarity between worker and client, as implied by the use of first names, would generate more meaningful exchanges, then this mode is preferable.

Without saying a word, the worker will be disclosing something about herself by her general appearance. And when she does engage in a dialogue with her client, she will reveal a good deal more.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed how a social worker makes decisions based on her professional discipline. She is ever aware that she needs to use herself in the most helpful manner. She, in effect, learns to discipline herself to do so.

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