

## **Chapter 2. The Helping Relationship**

### **CHAPTER REVIEW**

With a focus on the significance of communication, Chapter 2 explores the nature and characteristics of effective helping relationships. This provides a foundation for the subsequent chapters in which the knowledge about and practice of helping skills and theoretical frameworks are discussed.

The helping relationship is designed to meet the needs of the helpee, not the helper. The helper's abilities to hear and decode the helpee's verbal and nonverbal communication and to communicate accurate empathy to the helpee are essential components of an effective helping relationship. These skills underlie any type of helping relationship – professional, general human services, and nonprofessional. It is also necessary for the helper to be aware of his/her expectations, needs, values, beliefs, and skills, and to learn about those of the helpee.

How well one understands oneself influences how well one can understand others. Research indicates that helping relationships are enhanced by certain traits and characteristics of helpers, including: self-awareness of gender and cultural biases, beliefs, behaviors, and feelings; an ability to communicate clearly and with empathic understanding; honesty; congruence; knowledge of human behaviors; and ethical integrity. Hopefully, one is always learning and evolving. Thus, helpers learn to assess their self-understanding, knowledge base, and adaptability on a continual basis.

### **MAJOR TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

1. To help students learn about helpful and non-helpful traits, characteristics, and verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. To enable students to become more aware of their own behaviors and styles of communication.

### **ADDITIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Discuss with students the issues involved with answering personal questions that clients ask them. What is the difference between being dishonest and maintaining privacy? Discuss with the class what the concept of honesty means to a helper. What is the connection between congruence and honesty?
2. Ask students what personal issues they have which might get in the way of their being effective counselors. For example, for undergraduate students, who are often seniors, having other seniors talk about their anxiety about graduating may be difficult.
3. Have students discuss what they think are the necessary characteristics of an effective multicultural counselor? What are some ways that helpers can gain knowledge of the culture of their clients?
4. In the case of Anya, the Russian immigrant on pages 41-42 of the textbook, have students develop a list of appropriate questions for the counselor to ask.

## COMMENTS ON EXERCISES IN THE BOOK

The exercises in this chapter are designed to give students the opportunity to experience helpful and unhelpful behaviors and responses, as well as to observe nonverbal behaviors in different contexts. For exercise 2.2, you must provide crayons, drawing sheets, and blindfolds.

The scenarios provided in exercises 2.4 to 2.8 can be done at home or in class. There are comments at the end of the chapter for each scenario. Role-plays in class can be very useful. Have students try out different emotional reactions and substitute responses that they think are more effective. In 2.6, students may disagree about the effectiveness of the counselor. Some believe the client agrees too much with the counselor and is trying to please her. What do your students think? Ask your students how the interactions in 2.4 to 2.8 might have progressed if the counselor had been a different gender or ethnicity than the one presented.

## INTERNET ACTIVITIES

1. Have students search the term “psychotherapy effectiveness” on the Internet. What did they find?
2. Have students go to web sites of three managed care companies in your area and compare and contrast mental health benefits.
3. Ask students to search for different kinds of counseling services that are available on the Internet. Suggest they look at such topics as career counseling and psychotherapy services. What did they find?

## BOOKS AND FILMS THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR THIS CHAPTER

1. Have students watch popular movies such as: *Ordinary People*; *What about Bob?*; *Analyze This*; *Mumford*; *Girl, Interrupted*; *Prince of Tides*; *Prime*; *Antwone Fisher*; *A Dangerous Method*; and *Good Will Hunting*. What do they think about the process of therapy and the therapeutic relationship as shown in these movies? If you wish to choose other movies, a web site created by Dr. Roland Atkinson, Professor of Psychiatry at the Oregon Health & Science University, has more than 500 reviews from a psychological and psychiatric point of view: [www.psychflix.com/welcome.html](http://www.psychflix.com/welcome.html).
2. Have students watch an episode or two of the television show *The Sopranos* and discuss the therapeutic relationship between Tony Soprano and Dr. Melfi.
3. Have students watch several episodes of the television series *In Treatment*. Have them discuss the differences in Dr. Weston’s therapeutic relationships with at least two different clients.
4. Have students watch an episode of *Dr. Phil*. What type of relationship does he form with the people on his show? Do students think the relationship is therapeutic?
5. Suggest that students read *The Dancing Healers: A Doctor’s Journey of Healing with Native Americans* by Carl A. Hammerschlag (Harper, 1988), *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* by Anne Fadiman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998) and *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through*

*Madness by Elyn R. Saks (Hyperion, 2007)* to understand more about cultural differences in the healing process.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of a helping relationship is to:
  - a) meet the needs of the helper
  - b) meet the needs of the helpee \*
  - c) reassure the client
  - d) set goals for the client(page 27)
2. Formal relationships differ from informal relationships because in the formal relationship:
  - a) the helping relationship is secondary to another relationship
  - b) the relationship can occur any place
  - c) roles are stated or implied by position \*
  - d) there is less structure(page 28)
3. The primary difference between helpers and helpees are:
  - a) the helper has certain skills and knowledge \*
  - b) the helpee is embedded in many contexts
  - c) the helper has a set of attitudes and values
  - d) the helpee has expectations for the relationship(page 29)
4. Which of the following does empathy not include?:
  - a) conveying understanding
  - b) feeling the same way as the other person \*
  - c) understanding another's emotions
  - d) cultural awareness(page 31)
5. All of the following are true of personal values except:
  - a) they can have an impact on the effectiveness of a helping relationship
  - b) they are shaped by our culture
  - c) they must never be brought into the counseling session \*
  - d) they include what we think is unacceptable and acceptable behavior(pages 30-31)
6. Congruent counselors are:
  - a) self-aware \*
  - b) use up much of their energy being congruent, thus diminishing their impact as models
  - c) are not genuine
  - d) realize the importance of not expressing their values or beliefs to their clients(pages 43-44)
7. What are some of the areas that professional helpers need knowledge in?
  - a) psychological theory
  - b) sociological theory
  - c) anthropological theory
  - d) all of these \*(page 45)

8. Helpful verbal behaviors include all of the following except:
- a) summarizes for the helpee
  - b) gives advice \*
  - c) is nonjudgmental and respectful
  - d) reflects back and clarifies helpee's statement
- (pages 32-33)
9. The case of the girls with suspected homosexual tendencies exemplifies:
- a) the helper's incongruence
  - b) the helper's concreteness
  - c) the helper's lack of knowledge of development \*
  - d) the helper's multicultural sensitivity
- (pages 45-46)
10. Western models of psychotherapy are based on:
- a) individualism \*
  - b) values similar to non-Western values
  - c) an understanding of nondominant groups
  - d) cooperation
- (page 41)
11. Increased experience as a helper contributes to:
- a) reliance on one theory
  - b) increased trust in one's intuition \*
  - c) focus on specific problems
  - d) skepticism about new approaches
- (page 46)
12. Ethical integrity:
- a) is an unconscious decision
  - b) is unambiguous
  - c) differs according to theoretical orientation
  - d) can lead to uncomfortable feelings \*
- (page 46)
13. Which of the following best describes the helping process?:
- a) providing answers
  - b) developing a dependent relationship with the helpee
  - c) helping the client to help him or herself \*
  - d) focusing on problems to be solved
- (page 47)
14. Culturally sensitive helpers:
- a) support models that advocate for individualism and autonomy
  - b) work to create egalitarian helping relationships
  - c) use communication and counseling skills in a consistent fashion
  - d) recognize biases in many therapeutic models \*
- (pages 41-42)

15. In which of these ways can therapists avoid difficult topics?:  
a) responsive listening  
b) asking many questions \*  
c) using “I” messages and statements  
d) all of these (page 47)
16. A safeguard against controlling the communication process is:  
a) asking questions  
b) responsive listening \*  
c) silence  
d) an eclectic approach (pages 47-48)
17. A danger of the problem-oriented approach is:  
a) imposing personal values  
b) the need for self-disclosure  
c) avoidance of difficult issues  
d) lack of attention to strengths \* (page 48)
18. Psychoanalytic approaches:  
a) require a high degree of verbal ability \*  
b) work well with clients who are either verbal or less verbal  
c) work best with less verbal clients  
d) are similar to the behavioral approaches in type of client (page 48)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the differences between formal and informal relationships. (page 28)
2. Explain the following statement and give examples: “The helping relationship is embedded in many contexts.” (pages 29-30)
3. What makes a helper effective? (pages 27-49)
4. What are two of the common elements of helpful verbal and nonverbal behaviors? (page 28)
5. Give three examples of helpful and three examples of unhelpful verbal responses. (pages 32-34)
6. Give three examples of helpful and three examples of unhelpful nonverbal responses. (pages 32-34)
7. What are some of the cultural values influencing counselors? (pages 41-42)
8. How is congruence an important factor in effective helping relationships? (pages 43-44)
9. In what ways are self-aware helpers more likely than unaware helpers to be effective as helpers? (pages 40-41)
10. How does knowledge (such as about social, political, and economic dimensions) enhance the helping relationship? (pages 45-46)
11. What strategies might a helper use who wants to be liked (fears being disliked) by his/her clients? (page 47)
12. What does it mean to answer personal questions “within professional limits?” (page 42)
13. How does experience influence counselor effectiveness? (page 46)

14. Provide examples of possible ethical dilemmas that might face a helper with ethical integrity.  
(page 46)
15. Discuss the following statement: “The helper’s personal and cultural values influence significantly the effectiveness of a helping relationship.” (page 30)