

This booklet was produced to accompany the programme tape "COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES". It is expected that trainers using these materials will familiarize themselves with the video teaching suggestions before using them in a training session.

Produced by
COUNSELLING SERVICES

"Lindisfarne"

Wey Road, Weybridge,

Surrey KT13 8HR

Tel: Weybridge 46408

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HINTS FOR USING THE VIDEO

Trainers should always preview the tape before using it at a training session.

- familiarize yourself with the content of the tape.
- check the manual to be sure you understand what the tape is demonstrating.
- note any teaching points you might add to what the text presents.

Remember, these role plays are not perfect. Use the mistakes or instances of poor technique as teaching points.

Be sure to continue reminding trainees that the video shows only one way of doing it—all counsellors need to maintain their individuality and develop their own counselling style.

In counselling the situation frequently arises where a client has "unfinished business" with another person. In order for the client to resolve the issues with the other individual she must be able to express her feelings and deal with them. Some clients feel frustrated and helpless when trying to resolve problems with a deceased person or a living person with whom in-depth communication is not possible for one reason or another.

This film and accompanying materials offer some techniques that are helpful in terms of enabling clients to focus on and express feelings associated with unfinished business.

It is important to remember that prior to attempting a therapeutic technique several conditions must be met:

1. The counselling relationship has been well established.
2. The client sees the counsellor as someone who can be trusted.
3. The counsellor has confidence in her ability to use the technique and contain the strong feelings and reactions it may evoke—both in herself and in her client.

The client understands what the technique requires and why she is being asked to do it.

THE LETTER

One way of helping clients express their feelings, either to a deceased or living person with whom communications not possible is, to ask them to write a letter to the individual.

The purpose of writing such a letter is to help clients put feelings and thoughts about "unfinished business" into focus and perspective. It also gives clients an opportunity to express themselves in a way that may enable them to "let go" of the anger, guilt or frustration they have been feeling.

This technique should only be used after you have established a good counselling relationship with clients.

Clients should have worked through as many of their concerns or as much grief as possible and have reached the point of being able to deal with "unfinished

business" before being asked to write a letter.

It is important to ensure clients fully understand what you are asking them to do, why and how you feel it will help them.

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain to the client what you want him to do and why.
2. Discuss his feelings about writing such a letter.
3. Explain that you will not be asking him to share his letter with you but that he may if he wants to.
4. Tell him that you will discuss his experience and feelings with him at the next counselling session.

4. Once he has written his letter you should discuss his feelings and concerns about having done it with him. Share the letter with him if he indicates a wish to do so.

6. If a client feels unable to put his thoughts on paper do not pressure him— he may not be ready to face the feelings and thoughts that might come up.

—Discuss the reasons why he might be finding the task so difficult.

—Ask him to write the letter at a later date when he is more prepared to do so.

THE PROGRAMME:

In this sequence we will see a counsellor working with a client who is trying to resolve a situation with her dead mother. In an earlier session the client was asked to write a letter to her mother and express the feelings she had been unable to talk about before her

mother died.

SHOW THE PROGRAMME SEGMENT "THE LETTER" 13 and a half min .

AFTER THE SCENE HAS BEEN SHOWN:

Discuss with trainees their thoughts and feelings about what they saw.

POINTS TO INCLUDE:

1. The client was helped to resolve some of her concerns.
2. Writing the letter helped her to gain new insights into her relationship with her mother.
3. The experience raised new issues and concerns with which the client may need to deal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How might this technique help a bereaved person?
2. Might it be used as a means of reaching closure with or saying goodbye to a deceased person?

HOMEWORK:

A client should never be asked to do something she is unwilling to do or in which the counselor does not have confidence. In order for trainees to become familiar with this technique and the feelings and thoughts it evokes it is suggested that you ask trainees to write a letter to a person, either living or dead,

with whom they feel they have unfinished business. Their experiences can be shared at the next training session.

THE EMPTY CHAIR

The Gestalt "Empty Chair" technique usually evokes tremendous emotion and nearly always results in a sense of relief and release for the client. However, it should only be used under the following conditions:

1. The counsellor and client have established a trusting and secure relationship.
2. The counsellor explains to the client what the technique is about and why she is being asked to do it.
3. The client is fully willing to do the work.
4. The counsellor thoroughly understands the technique and is confident in her ability to cope with the strong feelings that may be evoked.
5. The client has reached a point in the counselling process where she is prepared to directly address issues with the other person.

PROCEDURE:

1. The client is seated facing an empty chair which symbolizes the person she wishes to address.

2. The client is asked to say (aloud) whatever she would like to say (have said) to the other person. All feelings are acceptable and permissible.

3. The counsellor is there for support but does not intrude on the client's experience.

4. Once the person has finished and has had time to collect herself she is asked to take the empty chair and respond to what she said in the manner in which the other person would respond, if that were possible. (In some cases this part of the exercise may not be appropriate).

5. The counsellor is present for support but not as an active participant in the process. She should remain quietly by until the client is prepared to talk to her.

6. This work is usually exhausting for both the client and the counsellor. A client will probably not be able to discuss her feelings about what happened until a future session.

SHOW THE PROGRAMME SEGMENT "THE EMPTY CHAIR".

18 and a half min.

AFTER THE SCENE HAS BEEN SHOWN:

Discuss with the trainees their thoughts and feelings about what they saw.

POINTS TO INCLUDE:

1. The client was surprised by the anger she still felt about the issues with her mother.
2. Being able to express her angry feelings helped her to work through them.
3. In answering back in the manner her mother would have done, this client was given an opportunity to look at the issues from another perspective. This enabled her to resolve her angry feelings.
4. The "Empty Chair" allowed the client to finally say things to her mother she had been unable to say to her before she died.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How might this technique help other bereavement situations?
2. Could you as a counsellor contain the very strong feelings that might be evoked when using this exercise?
3. In what circumstances would the use of this technique not be appropriate?

ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING GOOD-BYE

Once bereaved people have managed to work through their grief they must still say good-bye to the deceased

person. Until this has been done they have not completed the work. Following is another way of helping clients say good-bye:

1. For homework ask clients to make a list of 5 things they miss most about the dead person. They are also to list 5 things they do not miss about that person.

2. At another session have them say good-bye to each of the things on the list.