

**SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

MBA HRD – 406(a) Optional Paper

**SUBJECT NAME: Counseling Skills for
Managers**

UNIT-IV

TOPIC NAME: COUNSELING INTERVIEW

COUNSELING INTERVIEW

Opening the Counseling Session There is no doubt that the initial interview puts maximum demands upon the counselor's skill, knowledge, and abilities. How the initial interview is structured and developed will have a strong influence upon the subsequent developments and outcomes of a counseling relationship. Errors made in the first session are usually much more costly than those made after a good working relationship has been established. If the initial interview has developed toward goals as outlined herein, then the counselee will find he has been able to express and explore some of life's difficulties which have been bothersome or disturbing to him. He is likely to feel some progress has been made. The counselor should recognise that a major counseling goal has been achieved when, at the end of the initial interview, he feels he has established a helping or working relationship with the counselee.

Counseling Interview:

Strategies The counseling interview is a very common type of communication situation. In fact, we are all called upon to offer advice to others on a daily basis. These suggestions identify some of the skills necessary for effective counseling interviews:

- The counsellor performs the counseling role whenever called upon to offer advice on emotional, financial, academic, or personal problems. These situations are very important since they directly influence sensitive aspects of others' lives.
- Effective counseling skills begin with a thoughtful self analysis including an assessment of counsellor's own feelings and communication skills. Based upon this analysis, the counsellor must be realistic about his own counseling skills and not try to solve every problem encountered .
- The counsellor must also carefully consider the background of the client so that the counsellor's advice can meet that person's needs.

Counseling Interview: 2

- Based on the counsellor's analysis of own skills as well as the needs of the other person, the counsellor must decide whether to use the directive or nondirective approach. The directive approach is best when it is necessary for the counsellor to control the interview situation and the nondirective approach is best when the interviewee would best control the situation.
- Although the structure of the interview can vary, four stages are typically followed. First, the counsellor should establish rapport and create a helpful climate. Second, he should thoroughly assess the crisis/problem faced by the client. Third, the counsellor should probe more deeply into the client's feelings. Finally, the counsellor should come to some decision and offer potential solutions.
- A conducive interview climate must allow for trust, openness, and rapport between the client and the counsellor. The counsellor must also be an effective listener to truly understand the feelings of the client. When appropriate, the counsellor must ask probing questions to gather more information.

Counseling Interview: 3

- The counsellor should use a client centered approach and provide either highly directive or highly nondirective responses. Highly nondirective responses encourage the interviewee to continue analysing and communicating ideas. Highly directive responses provide the interviewee with directives and ultimatums. These forms of responses are two ends of a continuum, and can be thought of as extremes.

- After effective closure of the interview, the counsellor should carefully evaluate the interview so that he can further refine his skills.

THE COUNSELING PROCESS

Counselling is a process in which the counselor, or therapist, helps the client understand the causes for problems and guides the person through the process of learning to make good life decisions. Initially, counselling can be a bit painful, in that one may be suddenly come face to face with certain unpleasant aspects of one's own self.

The counselor's role is to guide the client through the process and not tell what the client should do. The clients are helped to help themselves. Let us now look at the processes in the counseling process and these are:

- Identify the need for counseling.
- Prepare for counseling.
- Conduct counseling.
- Follow up.

Identification of the Need for Counseling

It is important first step to identify the need for counseling. Whether the person concerned requires counseling at all and if so what is the reason for the same. Sometimes counseling may be needed by a child in the school who is unable to benefit from the teaching learning process that goes on in the school. In yet another case an adolescent facing self esteem problems or showing aggression or extreme anger at trivial things may need counseling to overcome the anger and aggression and restore the self esteem. In certain other cases an adult who has gone through a financial crisis in business may need counseling to overcome the depression that the person is facing. In yet other cases, there may be a marital problem or divorce situation which needs to be handled through counseling. In organisations and industries, counseling may be required to motivate the employees to work better and to their full potential or in some cases to overcome the workplace violence etc. Counselling for better interpersonal relationship is very much needed in an organisation where the work and performance of employees are affected due to lack of positive interpersonal relationship amongst various levels of staff.

Preparation for Counselling

Successful counseling requires preparation. To prepare for counseling, the following needs to be done:

- Select a suitable place.
- Schedule the time.
- Notify the person or the client well in advance.
- Organise information.
- Outline the counseling session components.
- Plan the counseling strategy.
- Establish the right atmosphere.

As for selecting a suitable place, counseling should be carried out in an environment that minimises interruptions and is free from distracting sights and sounds.

Preparation for Counselling (2)

Regarding the scheduling the time, when possible, the client should be counseled after deciding upon a mutually convenient timing. The length of time required for counseling depends on the complexity of the issue. Generally a counseling session should last less than an hour. If the client needs more time, a second session may be scheduled. Also the counsellor should select a time free from competition with other activities and consider what has been planned after the counseling session. Important events can distract a client from concentrating on the counseling.

For a counseling session to be client centered, the client must have time to prepare for it. The client should know why, where, and when the counseling will take place. Counseling following a specific event should happen as close to the event as possible. However, for performance or professional development counseling, clients may need a week or more to prepare or review specific products, such as support forms or counseling records.

Solid preparation is essential to effective counseling. The counsellor should review all pertinent information. This includes the purpose of the counseling, facts and observations about the client, identification of possible problems, main points of discussion, and the development of a plan of action. Focus on specific and objective behaviours that the client must maintain or improve as well as a plan of action with clear, obtainable goals.

Preparation for Counselling (3)

It is important to outline the components of the counseling session. For this, using the information obtained, the counsellor should determine what to discuss during the counseling session. He must note what prompted the counseling, what the counsellor aims to achieve, and what the role of the counselor is. It is important to identify possible comments or questions to help the counsellor keep the counseling session client centered and help the client progress through its stages. Although the counsellor never knows what a client will say or do during counseling, a written outline helps organise the session and enhances the chance of positive results.

The counsellor must establish the right atmosphere which promotes two way communication between a counsellor and a client. Some situations make an informal atmosphere inappropriate. For example, during counseling to correct substandard performance of a subordinate, the manager who functions also as a counsellor, may direct the client subordinate to remain standing while he remains seated behind a desk. This formal atmosphere, normally used to give specific guidance, reinforces the manager's rank, position in the chain of command, and authority. But in general counseling session this is not advocated.

Conduct of Counseling Session

While conducting the counseling session, the counsellor should be flexible. Often counseling for a specific incident occurs spontaneously as counselors encounter clients in their daily activities. Even when the counsellor has not prepared for formal counseling, he should address the four basic components of a counseling session. Their purpose is to guide effective counseling rather than mandate a series of rigid steps. Counseling sessions consist of:

- Opening the session.
- Discussing the issues.
- Developing the plan of action.
- Recording and closing the session.

Ideally, a counseling session results in a client's commitment to a plan of action. Assessment of the plan of action becomes the starting point for follow up counseling.

Open the Session: In the session opening, the counsellor should state the purpose of the session and establish a client centered setting. The best way to open a counseling session is to clearly state its purpose. For example, an appropriate purpose statement might be: “The purpose of this counseling is to discuss your personal relationship problem with your spouse and then to create a plan to enhance the relationship so that you can manage your problem without difficulty. If applicable, the counsellor can start the counseling session by reviewing the status of the previous plan of action.

Discuss the issue: The counsellor and the client should attempt to develop a mutual understanding of the issues. The counsellor can best develop this by letting the client do most of the talking. He can use active listening, respond, and question without dominating the conversation. The aim of the counsellor is to help the client better understand the subject of counseling, for example, interpersonal relationship, a problem situation and its impact on the client’s daily routine.

Develop a Plan of Action: A plan of action identifies a method for achieving a desired result. It specifies what the subordinate must do to reach the goals set during the counseling session. The plan of action must be specific. It should show the client as to how to modify or maintain his behaviour. It should avoid vague intentions such as “Next month I want you to improve your communication skills with your children. The plan must use concrete and direct terms. For example, the counsellor may state that the client will appreciate his wife’s cooking or any room arrangement that she has made. After coming back the next week for counseling session, the client will give a feed back to the counsellor and dependin g on what the feed back is the counsellor may be able to suggest certain skills that might work better.

Record and Close the Session: Although requirements to record counseling sessions vary, a counsellor always benefits by documenting the main points of a counseling session. Documentation serves as a reference to the agreed upon plan of action and the client’s accomplishments, improvements, personal preferences, or problems. A complete record is made of counseling aids in making recommendations for professional development, schools, promotions, and evaluation reports.

Follow Up

The counseling process does not end with the counseling session. It continues through implementation of the plan of action and evaluation of results. After counseling, the counsellor must support the clients as they implement their plans of action. Support may include teaching, coaching, or providing time and resources. The counsellor must observe and assess this process and possibly modify the plan to meet its goals. Appropriate measures after counseling include follow up counseling, making referrals, and taking corrective measures.