

# TERMINATING A COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIP

EDPY 442: Intro to Counselling  
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# Process of Counselling

1. Development/Building Phase
2. Understanding & Action Phase
  - “The Understanding and Action Phase”
  - Deeper working alliance
  - Goal oriented
3. **Termination Phase**

# Homework

- Advantages: Can motivate, keep clients focused, help evaluate progress or outcome, help celebrate.
- **Types of homework:**
  - Paradoxical
  - Behavioral (practicing a new skill)
  - Risk-taking (doing something that is feared)
  - Written (keeping a log or journal)
  - Bibliotherapy
  - Not doing anything (breaking habits)

# Maintenance: Prochaska's 5<sup>th</sup> Stage of Change

- Clients engage in various activities to prevent relapse and consolidate the changes that they made in the action stage.
- Maintenance is not static and can range in length from a few months to a lifetime as seen in some addictions.
- Counsellors can help clients in this stage by continuing to use interventions used in the previous stages and also assessing and preparing for situations that may cause them to relapse.

# Transference

- **Transference**—the client's projection of past or present feelings, attitudes, or desires onto the counselor
  - **Negative:** when client accuses counselor of neglecting or acting negatively toward him or her.
  - **Positive:** client's admiration of counselor

# Countertransference

- **Countertransference-** the counselor's projected emotional reaction to or behavior toward the client.
- **Overidentification:** Counselor loses his or her ability to remain emotionally distant from the client. E.g.: Both counselor and client has experienced sexual assault.
- **Disidentification:** Counselor becomes emotionally removed from client

# Countertransference

- Problems with transference and countertransference can interfere with the all aspects of the work in the counselling relationship.
- Like transference, countertransference has been used by some theories as a diagnostic tool to better understand client behaviours
- Useful to seek supervision if one suspects countertransference issues or at the extreme, refer client to some else.

# Termination of Counseling

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sv6emlOJeI>

- Discussion questions:
  - What is the client's response to termination?
  - What is the counselor's response to the client?
  - Based on the video, what are some of the issues that should be addressed at the end of counseling?



# Functions of Termination

- **An opportunity to experience closure**
- **A motivator for the work during counselling**
- **An opportunity to generalize new learning and skills**
- **An acknowledgement of growth or maturation**

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# Timing of Termination

When to terminate? No definite answer.

- Achievement of goals: Have clients achieved behavioral, cognitive, or affective contract goals?
- Consistency of progress: Can clients show that they have made progress in what they wanted to achieve. Or are they still having difficulties at times (good and bad weeks)?

## Timing of Termination (cont.)

- Helpfulness of counseling relationship: Is the counseling relationship helpful? If not, the counselor might consider outside referral.
- Changing of context of initial counseling relationship: Has context of the initial counseling relationship changed? E.g.: move, illness.

# Signals for Termination

- Verbal messages by the counselor and the client
- Decrease in the intensity of work
- More humor
- Consistent reports of improved abilities to cope
- Verbal commitments to the future
- Less denial, withdrawal, anger, mourning, or dependence.

# Concerns When Deciding to Terminate Counseling

- Initial problem has been reduced
- Stress-producing feelings have been eliminated
- Better coping ability
- Client can relate better to others
- Client is able to love and be loved
- Client has become productive
- Client can better enjoy life

# Preparing for Termination

- Clients should be prepared for termination ahead of time especially those with loss issues, fear of abandonment, dependency issues and attachment difficulties.
- One-sixth of the entire counseling services can be spent on termination.

# Client Resistance to Termination

Behavioral manifestations of resistance:

- development of new symptoms,
- asking for more appointments,
- asking for more time at end of session.



# Client Resistance to Termination (cont.)

To deal with resistance counselors can

- “prescribe” limited number of future session over a period of time
- Provide connection to other resources
- Establish plan in case of relapse

# Resistance to Terminate and Loss

- Good ways of dealing with loss:
  - make it gradual,
  - discover the significance that different activities have,
  - describe this significance to others,
  - enjoy what you have gained,
  - define continuity.

# Resistance to Terminate and Loss

- Bad ways of dealing with loss:
  - deny,
  - distort experience by overglorifying,
  - denigrate your relationships,
  - distract yourself,
  - detach yourself.

# Counselor Resistance to Termination

- 8 possible reasons:
  - 1) End of a significant relationship
  - 2) Counselor is anxious about client's ability to function
  - 3) Guilt for not being more effective
  - 4) Counselor's professional self-concept is threatened
  - 5) End of a learning experience for the counselor
  - 6) End of living vicariously
  - 7) Reminds of other goodbyes
  - 8) Conflicts about own individuation.

# Premature Termination

- Tendency is to blame the client.
- Establish that it is no one's fault.
- However, counselors should be aware of patterns of premature termination in their work.

# Client Reasons for Premature Termination

- To see whether the counselor really cares
- To try to elicit positive feelings from the counselor
- To punish or try to hurt the counselor
- To eliminate anxiety
- To express dissatisfaction (e.g., not being understood)
- To let the counselor know that the problem is solved

If the client wants to quit prematurely, counselors should set up an exit interview to:

- Resolve negative feelings
- Invite the client to continue the services if needed
- Connect to other resources
- Let them know the availability for future services

# Preventing Premature Termination

- Schedule regular appointments.
- Orient clients to counseling process.
- If possible, counselor who does initial intake should become the client's counselor.
- Send reminders to motivate attendance.



# Ending on a Positive Note

- **Guidelines for a good ending**
  - Allow clients to express their thoughts and feelings about the services
  - Review the major events and connect them to the present
  - Acknowledge the positive changes (accomplishments)
  - Request follow-up contact

# Other Issues Related to Termination

- **Follow-up**
  - Short term (<6 mo.) and long term (>6mo.)
  - Face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, mail
  - A way of showing accountability
- **Referral**
  - *why, how, when, and who*
- **Recycling:** involves re-examining the counseling process. Revise and reinvest.