

Supportive Counseling

Elements of Supportive/Empowerment Counseling

Definitions

Empowerment Counseling: to help the victim/survivor gain the skills and confidence to exercise power over their own life

Supportive Counseling: to assist the client through the crisis period by teaching and reinforcing adaptive coping skills.

The Victim/Survivor Knows What is Best for Her/His Life

- The helper's role is to provide information and articulate options; to assist the victim/survivor in developing skills such as problem-solving.
- The victim/survivor can identify and articulate goals.

The Power Component Between Advocate and Victim/Survivor Should be Equalized

- The advocate shares information in a way that does not hinder the victim/survivor from holding and expressing different values and goals.
- The advocate demystifies the helping process, by explaining the role of a clarifier as: support and teacher who want to help the victim/survivor set and achieve goals, and by explaining the ways in which the development of their relationships can strengthen the victim/survivor in other relationships.
- The advocate assists the victim/survivor in becoming aware of his/her own power by highlighting the power the victim/survivor has in all areas of life, thus providing an antidote to the feeling of powerlessness engendered by the battering/abusive relationship.
- The advocate builds trust and support while identifying and analyzing problems, changing problems to goals, exploring alternatives and implications, and planning a course of action.

Experiences Create a Special and Different View of the World

- By sharing experiences, we identify common feelings and perspectives which foster a connectedness among us.
- These personal experiences, when shared, constitute a social consciousness which in turn creates political strength.
- Consciousness-raising is a method by which we can understand, articulate, and appreciate our world view and our connectedness.

Anger is Elicited and Accepted as an Appropriate Response to Living in this Culture

- It is legitimate to be angry at the deprivation, the discrimination, the violence, and the invisibility we encounter.
- Sharing our anger decreases self-blame and feelings of depression.
- Anger can be redirected into a force for changing the system.

Healing is Aided by Political Consciousness and Action

- The advocate focuses on the actions to be taken, rather than focusing exclusively on introspection and self-realization.
- The advocate models the ways in which we can network and support each other.

Validating and Normalizing Victim Response and Feelings

- It is important to remember that as advocates we will always respect the victim's right to choose and make their own decisions. We may not agree with their response, but it is more important to give them the information and let them choose. Our role is to support- not take away their options, whether we agree with them or not.

A victim/survivor experiences many emotions such as fear, isolation, distorted personal reality, confusion, anger, etc. Our job is to support and affirm them and to also let them know whatever emotions they are having are normal; they have the right to express them and that it is okay to express them.

USEFUL RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS

Responses:

You seem to be saying...

I think I hear you saying...

It seems like...

When you say... you seem to feel...

If may be helpful if...

Questions:

May I help you?

That is what I'm here for; would you like to talk about it?

Have you discussed this with anyone?

What was his/her/your reaction to that?

How did that make you feel?

I am not sure I understand. Can you repeat that for me?

[HOTLINE] I don't have that information for you now, but if you'd like, I can try to find out for you. Is it okay if I give you a call back?

Helpful Hints for the Crisis Counselor

There are certain active listening techniques which are valuable in telephone counseling. It is important that the survivor knows we are listening and understanding what he or she is saying and feeling, and that we will help them clarify what they're feeling and thinking.

- For the survivor who has difficulty talking, the best way to start is, "How are you feeling?"
- It helps the survivor to be told that this experience will cause a disruption in his/her life.
- During the period of impact, the survivor is hypersensitive to any action or statement which you might make and often fears pressure from you, even when they are asking for advice. Simply give the information and/or offer alternatives. The decision should be theirs.
- Assure the survivor that they have not been singled out for an attack but what has happened to them has happened to other people. They are not alone.
- If the survivor feels guilty because they did not fight back, assure them that at the time it was the right decision. They reacted in a way which they thought would save his/her life. They did the right thing at the right time.
- Assure the survivor the someone on the hotline is available to talk whenever they wants to call back.
- Remember- the best tool is that you care! Just listening and indicating that you understand is important to the survivor. By trying to share their feelings of the moment, he/she is helping themselves.
- The use of your voice is important. Speak in a way that will convey interest and calm. Remember, you can't depend on eye contact, so use your voice.
- The use of first names makes the person feel they are a person to you.
- Let the person know how they sound. This helps clarify their thoughts. "You sound angry" helps. "You are angry" may lead to an argument.
- Letting them know that their feelings are part of an event rather than proof of their disturbance is helpful.
- If they feels guilty about their anger, assure him/her they have has a right to be angry.

As helpers, it becomes important to realize that you too have feelings and they can be drained. Be open about these feelings with your colleagues; share the experiences and failures. You will find this will help you understand your reactions, to find new ways to deal with situations, and to realize often there are no answers and you did everything you could. Most of the time, you will find yourself helping and growing.

ABC Model of Crisis Intervention

A Achieve contact

- **Introduce yourself and your role**
- **Ask permission**
- **Create a bond**

B Boil down the problem

- **Ask about physical injuries – *Are you safe now? Do you feel safe?***
- **Use your listening skills – reflect, paraphrase, active listening**
- **Focus on now – *What are you most concerned about right now?***
- **Summarize**

C Cope with the problem

- **Client has the solution**
- **Don't promise safety – you can't guarantee safety**
- **Reinforce their ideas; empower them – small choices help people regain control**
- **Give resources if requested – *How can I be helpful?***

Effective Communication Skills

Verbal

Accepting

- "Yes."
- "Uh huh."
- "I follow what you said."
- "I hear you."

Offering General Leads

- "Go on."
- "And then...?"
- "Tell me about it."
- "Would you like to tell me?"

Validating

- "I believe you"
- "Thank you for reaching out"

Offering Self

- "I will listen to you."
- "I'll stay here with you."

Maintain Focus

- "What are you *most* worried about?"
- "What can we do right now?"

Encouraging Formulation of a Plan of Action

- "Have you thought about what you want to do now?"
- "If you had your choice, what would you do?"
- "What can I do to help you?"

Non-Verbal

Accept Silence

- Resist the urge to speak simply because there is a pause in the communication.
- No one has all the answers. "I don't know why either" can sometimes be comforting.

Eye Contact

- Effective eye contact consists of seriously and consistently looking at a person while talking or listening.
- Looking blankly at a person or looking away shows distraction and disinterest.

Facial Movements and Body Language

- An open posture signifies acceptance and a readiness to listen. Remain relaxed and at a comfortable distance.
- Smiling, nodding, and frowning when appropriate lets a person know that you are really interested in what they are saying and that you support them.

***Remember:** Both verbal and nonverbal cues send messages to those we may be trying to help. When we are assisting someone who has been hurt or victimized, we need to convey support in every possible way.

Roadblocks to Communication

Ordering

- Directing, Commanding
- You must... You have to...

Warning

- Promising, Threatening
- You had better... If you don't, then...

Moralizing

- Preaching, Obliging
- You should... You ought... It is your responsibility...

Advising

- Giving suggestions or solutions
- What I would do is... Why don't you... It would be best for you...

Logic

- Arguing, Teaching, Lecturing
- Do you realize... Here is where you are wrong... Yes, but...

Judging

- Criticizing, Disagreeing, Blaming
- You are not thinking straight... You are acting foolishly...

Praising

- Agreeing, Evaluating Positively, Approving
- The same thing happened to me!... You're right...

Name-calling

- Ridiculing, Shaming
- Well, I'm not surprised this would happen to someone like you...

Analyzing

- Interpreting, Diagnosing
- What you need is... Your problem is... What you really mean is...

Over-Reassuring

- Sympathizing, Consoling, Supporting, Promising
- Don't worry... You'll feel better... It's not so bad...

Investigating

- Probing, Interrogating
- Why... Who... What... How... Where... When...?

Diverting

- Withdrawing, Distracting, Humoring
- We can discuss it later... That reminds me...

AVOID JUMPING TO ASSUMPTIONS.

AVOID HASTY JUDGMENT.

Wait until all of the facts are in before making a judgment. Try to be aware of your own feelings toward the speaker, the subject, the occasion, etc. to eliminate bias or prejudice.

AVOID CLASSIFYING THE SPEAKER.

Don't try to fit everything the speaker says into what makes sense coming from "that type of person."

Negative Body Language

Tense Body- (usually an indication that someone is uncomfortable) stiff upper body, tight neck, rigid movement, wrinkled brow, jerky body movements

Arms Folded in Front- creates a barrier, expresses resistance to what is being said. if coupled with crossed legs, this can allude to anger or resentment. It is a closed gesture.

Arms Behind Head, Leaning Back- (in an unfamiliar relationship) this posture gives off the sense of power and control over the situation; arrogance

Hands Clapsed in Front, Palms Facing the Table- indicated someone expressing power and control over a situation

Hands on the Face- a hand over one's mouth is a closed gesture, leaning on one's elbow with the chin in the hand can convey/indicate boredom

Leaning Away- avoiding contact with the other person, expresses distrust of others and/or fear of getting close

Leaning Into- not regarding the other person's personal space

Facial Expressions- expressions that show a lack of respect for the other person, like frowning, scowling, and gawking

Eye Contact- rolling your eyes or staring off into space shows a lack of interest. Minimal eye contact could mean that you are not being honest with the other person

Fidgeting- moving around a lot, playing with things, and drumming of fingers are usually signs of impatience, boredom, or nervousness

Yawning- shows boredom and confusion, could also indicate that the other person is talking too much

SIGNIFICANT OTHER INFORMATION SHEET

- 1) Effective Communication Between the Survivor and the Significant Other
 - a) Be patient, approachable, and an effective listener.
 - b) Give the survivor unconditional acceptance and love.
 - c) Encourage the survivor to express her/his feelings, respect their need for confidentiality. You may have to wait until the survivor is ready to discuss her/his feelings, but let them know you are there if they need to talk.
 - d) When the survivor is ready, discuss the impact of the rape on your relationship.
 - e) Consider relationship counseling; crisis centers provide such services at little or no cost.
 - f) If unsure what the survivor needs, ask the survivor. Often what the survivor needs is a supportive person to listen. Don't undervalue listening.

- 2) Family Members Should Avoid:
 - a) Threatening revenge on the offender; this will cause the victim further stress and worry.
 - b) Expressing extreme anger in the presence of the survivor.
 - c) Trying to solicit support for the survivor from others if the survivor is not prepared to discuss the incident. (You may feel the need to seek support for yourself even if the survivor isn't ready to do this.)
 - d) Overprotecting the survivor; it may make the survivor feel powerless, keep her/him from using their own coping resources, and may cause an unhealthy dependency on others.
 - e) Encouraging continual distraction of survivor; this will slow down the healing process.

Family members and friends can work together with survivors to provide a safe and supportive climate where the healing process can begin.