



## EDPY 442: Introduction to Counselling

Additional Notes: Disability and Mental Health Counselling

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## Nature of Disability

- Consider the word, "disability". What does that refer to? What constitutes a disability?
- By definition, a disability is when an individual is limited in some capacity (e.g., physical, mental) in comparison to the majority/norm.
- The notion of disability may be:
  - unique to all individuals (i.e., how does one consider themselves if they have a disability?)
  - determined by society, culture, and law
  - considered a limitation by others

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## Types of Disabilities

- Physical/Medical disabilities include individuals with:
  - spinal cord injuries/paralysis
  - neurological dysfunction or injury
  - burn survivors
  - amputations
  - disabling medical conditions such as MS, Parkinsons, etc
  - visual and hearing impairments
  - HIV/AIDS
- Mental Disabilities
  - ADHD (inattentive/hyperactive type)
  - Cognitive impairments (MR, Alzheimer's and Dementia)

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## Issues in Disability Counselling

- Individuals with disabilities may not be in counselling for their disability specifically, but rather for issues indirectly related to their disability such as:
  - frustration and anger related to their experiences
  - hurt and pain from the attitudes of others
  - encountering rejection, exclusion, and/or overcompensation and sympathy from others
  - societal judgment, criticism, and prejudice
  - changes in peer and/or sexual relationships

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## Phases in the Therapeutic Relationship

Phase one: Pre-therapy interactions/referral process

- Speak with the client and determine setting and logistical needs (e.g., equipment, size of room etc)

Phase two: Building trust

- Discuss structure and process of counselling which may take longer due to nature of disability (i.e., use of voice enhancer to communicate)
- Establish rapport and therapeutic alliance

Phase three: Moving beyond the disability to the client's concern

- Work with the client towards their goals
- Consider treatment approaches that are appropriate given the client's disability
- Work towards empowering the client

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## Mental Health Counselling

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## Overview of Mental Health Counselling

- Originally referred to counselling in mental health settings such as hospitals, but now refers to counselling that involves: psychodiagnosis, psychopathology, psychopharmacology and treatment planning
- Is interdisciplinary by training and in practice
- Mental health counsellors work closely with medicine, nursing, social work, psychiatry, and psychology
- Note: There is a lot of overlap in what mental health counsellors do and other professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists etc.

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## Theories and Functions

- Theoretically and technically eclectic as a profession
- 2 main functions:
  - 1) Primary prevention and promotion of mental health
    - Involvement and outreach with the community
    - Promotion of education and awareness
    - Early intervention and assessment with those "at risk" for disorder and pathology
  - 2) Treatment of disorders and dysfunction
    - Counselling and psycho-education regarding prevention of moderate and severe mental health issues

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