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 5th 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.