



THE RELATIONAL SKILLS MODEL

Midwinter and Dickson (2015)

PHASES OF THE RELATIONAL SKILLS MODEL

1. Setting up the relationship
2. Developing the relationship
3. Working with the relationship
4. The established relationship
5. Maintaining and ending the relationship

SETTING UP THE RELATIONSHIP

This phase is about:

- contacting and meeting the client,
- getting to know the client,
- communicating with the client
- contracting with the client.

Initial core skills:

- Attending skills
- Active listening
- Contracting

DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

This phase enables the helper to create an environment where the client feels safe enough to bring his/her own story and issues. The focus is on:

- Developing the relationship
- 'Problem identification'
- Assessment

Additional core skills:

- Presence and communication of the core conditions
- Paraphrasing
- Summarising
- Identifying and reflecting feelings, content and meaning
- Asking questions

WORKING WITH THE RELATIONSHIP

As the relationship becomes more established, the emphasis shifts to exploring the issues in more depth and creating an empathic understanding of the client's situation. The focus is on:

- challenging and creating new meaning
- Identifying different possibilities and perspectives

Enhanced Skills: The skill of challenging:

- Confronting
- Use of self-disclosure
- Immediacy and silence
- Clarifying
- Reassessing
- Probing
- Giving feedback and sharing information

THE ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP

The helper and client are able to clarify and focus on likely changes and work collaboratively to:

- make plans
- set goals
- consider and evaluate possible strategies and directions.

Intuitive and learned skills:

- Deeper empathy
- Focusing
- Use of metaphor and hunches
- Drawing together themes
- Clarifying and developing goals
- Action planning

MAINTAINING AND ENDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Some models end with the 'goal setting' and 'planning' stages. However, M & D suggest there is often a further phase where clients need ongoing support to manage and integrate changes into their everyday life. If the relationship develops into this phase, further skills can be introduced to support and encourage internalisation of the work that has been done. The focus is on:

- Implementing and maintaining change
- Supporting self-management strategies

Embedded Skills:

- Encouragement, support and affirmations
- Review, monitor, evaluate and facilitate ending
- Signposting/referring on
