

Critically evaluate and reflect on your use of the qualities of the helping relationship within your submitted skills practice.

In this essay, I will evaluate and reflect upon the use of the skills learned through the course of the past several months while practicing those skills in recorded training sessions held during the module; for the purpose of this essay the evaluation will be based on a session chosen by myself. However, before beginning to do so, there is a need to give some brief background information in order to enable the reader to have a better understanding of the occurring theme; in the chosen session, the client is working the education sector as a primary school teacher who is voicing her thoughts regarding the difficulties the teachers are facing in the workplace and has been considering a change of career due to these difficulties.

To begin with, before the start of the main part of the session, it is essential to inform the client of the 'Contract'. The 'Contract' includes confidentiality, ethical issues and time boundaries; those key points help to set safety regulations and mutual understanding for both the client and counsellor in the event of unprofessional behaviour and breaking moral conduct. Further, the session was initiated by communicating the policies, limitations and

moral guidelines to the client — which included the presence of the observer, being filmed and the purpose of it; reporting the client to the appropriate authorities in case of endangerment and time limitations — and checked if they had any questions. In addition, although it may appear as a standard procedure and learners may find it trivial, it is there as the first in building and ensuring the counselling environment is safe for the client.

Furthermore, in the ‘Person-Centred’ therapy — like the one about to unfold — it is important to remember and execute the three core foundations: empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence; the first session can be quite intimidating for the client as they enter an unknown environment where feelings of anxiety for the new occurrence that is about to unravel which intensifies they are experiencing at the time. Next, it is the counsellor’s job to develop an atmosphere where the client’s distress will be reduced to help them feel calm and reduce the additional anxiety of taking the first step towards support. Once the opening of the session was over, I asked the client “What would you like to talk about?” by doing that, the reins are given to the client for them to take control of the subject to establish a description of their worries and feelings concerning the experience(s) they want to recount.

“A person enters person centered therapy in a state of incongruence. It is the role of the therapists to reverse this situation. Rogers (1959) called his therapeutic approach client-centered or person-centered therapy because of the focus on the person’s subjective view of the world.” (McLeod, 2019)

More, the client at the beginning of their story said they had some frustrations which were caused by her workplace and not much later mentioned their mother’s confusion

between themselves and their sibling “It sort of started off when my mum said to me at some point ‘ Oh, you’d love to be a teacher you always wanted to be a teacher...” which briefly led me to think that the session might not be about the implications of their workplace, yet possibly the unsureness or a plausible loss of self since it was not the client’s dream to become a teacher — as the mother said — but the client’s sibling. However, I carried on listening to the client, provided them with the time and silence needed to tell their story and without interrupting them; as a result, this gave the opportunity to the client to gradually built up the first part of their narrative and myself to get a better understanding of the situation.

Moreover, once it appeared the client had stopped telling their story a decision was made, that it was an appropriate time to check with the client my understanding of it by paraphrasing and summarising key points such as the aforementioned confusion in order to check if the client had any further feelings or thoughts about it, the years of experience, the work position at the time, the obstacles at work — not being able to do their job properly as they are being criticised and complained to by the parents and the school’s higher-ups on a regular basis — the clash between their teaching approach and the institution’s; and acknowledged the fulfilment of the job. Consequently, the use of the word “tailored” for the paraphrasing was the replacement for the client’s chosen word (want) as it aided them to continue the subject in more detail and confidence.

Later on, the client moved on to mentioning some examples where parents were hindering her work, to mention a few incidents between children where the blame is put on the other child(ren) by the parent, cannot give constructive/productive criticism or feedback without complains, the amount of homework children. Further, by listening to the client it was apparent that they cared about doing the job right but the parents do not seem to approve of it. Further, by an estimation of the pace and the content was fitting to ask a question which

would aim to challenge the client, the question being “You don’t have to answer this question, would you say that to some extent you’re looking for the parents’ approval?”. In addition, by phrasing the question that way an opportunity was given to the client to proceed with the direction desired by them which would be to either speak about the approval of the parents or go on a different direction, as well as having a boundary set by them.

Then, the client said that they did seek the parents approval, but a mutual line of communication at appropriate times (e.g parent councils) does not seem to be establishing; that seemed to frustrate the client which has amplified to some extent thoughts of changing career due to the contradictory reaction they get. Therefore, the client was left feeling frustrated as resolving the issue has not been attainable; a career change was surfacing more so after summarising the previous comment in a brief manner and observing client’s body language to check if there were any signs of inclining to keep the focus on the workplace’s problem the following question was asked “If you were to change your career, have you thought of what you would like to do?” More, this question helped the client to focus on what they would while identifying the issues more clear, in detail and thinking of ways to help solve them.

Furthermore, upon reflecting on client’s feelings the goal was also to assist them in recognising their strengths by their own words and with the addition of personal perspective; as the client was referring to the hardships the current curriculum was bringing on the students it felt as if the client might want to be a teacher but wants to stay in the education sector to treat the students according to their age instead of dealing with them like the student are machines. After, a miracle question “If you were to change something, what would you change?” was used to enable the client to conceive of a future where the problems mentioned would be gone and bring about positive emotions and thoughts by imagining the difference

made that change can make.

“The Miracle Question is a goal setting question that is useful when a client simply does not know what a preferred future would look like... By using the Miracle Question and asking each person what a better life would look like, the system sees perhaps for the first time, what others need from each other.” (Howes, 2010)

Equally important is to be able to analyse and evaluate the client's thoughts — as well as oneself's — in a style where they can feel that the worries, questions, thoughts have been listened to; Gibbs' reflective cycle contains six to assist counsellors and individuals with a structured framework to learn from experiences; two of those steps are the analysis and evaluation. However, sessions are time restraints and sometimes that can stand as an obstacle to the counsellor depending on how sensitive content of the client's story is; those limitations can hinder the pacing of the session as there is a need to listen and observe to determine what the client's need is.

‘It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated and it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively.’ (Gibbs, 1988)

Moreover, in retrospect everyone has room for improvement; during the session used as a device for this essay there are areas to be improved. First, it would be beneficial to be more aware of the way the education system in UK/Wales function to be able to have a better understanding of the situation. Second, to a certain degree it appears halfway through the session as if I was being complacent in a way by the tone of my voice which the client could have perceived and felt unwelcome and not properly heard, a softer tone would have been more helpful. Third, halfway into the session the silence on my part may have not been managed in a satisfactory style for the client as there was not enough time to let their thoughts sink in and allow them to process any further emotions they could have experienced.

In conclusion, the perception I had while watching video was that although there were things that could have been handled better, there were also positive aspects. To name a few: active listening was in place and it evident from the paraphrasing, summarising and reflecting based on the client's story; acceptance, as their story was not questioned or challenged but met with unreserved positive regard and authenticity; pacing was moderate to empower the client to enable them to feel comfortable and communicate their narrative without any interruption that could discourage them and questioning was implemented after paraphrasing and summarising in order to build-up a line of communication between myself and the client.

References:

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