
UNIT 1 THE COUNSELING SETTING AND THE ROLE OF COUNSELORS IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human beings by nature are complex being who are often encompassed with myriads of problems, issues and serious pressing matters bombarding his or her existence on a daily basis. Every person resort to some kind of suggestion or advice at various points in life to ensure that good decisions are arrived at. Therefore Guidance and Counseling has been practiced right from time immemorial in an informal manner, today it is well established. Guidance and Counseling provides a platform where these enormous problems can be solved and lasting solutions are provided. It aims at helping individuals understand themselves and their environment and mobilise their resources in order to resolve their problems and/or modify attitudes and values so that they can function effectively in the society. In a nutshell Guidance and Counseling helps the client to attain a level of self actualisation through a professional counselor specially trained to render such services without age or gender discrimination both at counselor and counselee. In this unit we are delineating the concept of guidance and counselling, explain the features of counselling and guidance. We then present what kind of set up is required for counselling and guidance and describe the qualities required of a counsellor. Then we elucidate the counselling goals and analyse the role of counsellor in each stage of counselling.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of Guidance and Counseling;
- Explain the features of a counseling Setup;
- Elucidate the qualities of an effective counselor;
- Describe the counseling Goals;
- Explain the stages of counseling process; and
- Analyse the role of counselor in each stage.

1.2 DEFINITION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

Counseling is an interactive process conjoining the counselee who needs assistance and the counselor who is trained and educated to give the assistance (Perez, 1965).

“Counseling has also been defined as a process which takes place in a one to one relationship between an individual beset by problems with which he cannot cope alone and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties” (Hahn and Maclean).

Patterson (1959) characterised it as a process involving interpersonal relationships between a therapist and one or more clients by which the former employs psychological methods based on systematic knowledge of the human personality in attempting to improve the mental health of the latter.

Definition of counseling given by Gustad (1953) is considered to be very comprehensive, indicating both the scope and function of counseling. According to him ‘Counseling is a learning oriented process, carried on in a simple, one to one social environment in which the counselor professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client by methods appropriate to the latter’s needs and within the context of the total personnel program, to learn how to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly perceived, realistically defined goals to the end that client may become a happier and more productive member of society’.

Definition quoted above concurs on several points:

Counselor to be a professional

Counseling is a process that brings about sequential changes over a period of time leading to a set goal and relationship between counselor and counselee is not causal and business like rather characterised by trust, warmth and understanding.

According to Jones Guidance involves personal help given by someone; it is designed to assist a person to decide where he wants to go, what he wants to do or how he can best accomplish his purpose; it assists him to solve problems that arise in life.

Traxler considers guidance as a help which enables “each individual to understand his abilities and interests, to develop them as well as possible and to relate them to life-goals, and to finally to reach a state of competence and mature self-guidance as a desirable member of the social order.

1.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

Guidance focuses on helping individuals choose what they value most whereas counseling focuses on helping them make changes.

According to Arbuckle guidance focuses on educational, vocational and occupational problems and in Counseling the emphasis is the social, personal and emotional problems of the individual.

1.4 COUNSELING SETTING

1.4.1 Physical Setting

Counseling may take place anywhere but some kind of physical setting may promote and enhance the counseling process better than others. Benjamin (1987) and Shertzer and Stone (1980) emphasise that among the most important factor that influences the counseling process is the place where counseling occurs. Though there is no universal quality that a room should have certain optimal conditions within the room where counseling is to be rendered can provide a conducive environment to both counselor and counselee.

The optimal condition include a room with quiet colors, lighting that is neither too flashy and bright nor too dull and depressing clutter free with harmonious

3) Describe a counseling setting.
4) What kind of seating arrangement should be there for counseling?
5) Describe the proximity between the counsellor and client.

1.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELOR

The personal and professional qualities of counselors are very important in facilitating any helping relationship, and thereby bringing about therapeutical transformation in another person (i.e. the client).

Okun (1982) notes that “It is very hard to separate the helper’s personality characteristics from his or her levels and styles of functioning, as both are interrelated”.

Individuals who possess the following characteristics may become successful counselor.

1.5.1 Self-Awareness

It means to be aware of oneself i.e. one’s own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, strengths, weaknesses, biases, behaviours and their effect on others. Counselor’s who are self aware are likely to have clear perception of their own and clients’ needs and accurately assess both. Such awareness helps counselors’ to be honest with themselves and others and build trust and communicate clearly and accurately..

1.5.2 Empathy

The empathic behaviour is the ability of a counselor to stand in the shoes of the client i.e. to see the things from the point of view of the client. The quality of empathy is a must for the counseling process to succeed. Rogers (1961) describes *empathy* as the counselor's ability to "enter the client's" phenomenal world – to experience the client's as if it were your own without ever losing the as if quality.

Empathy has two components: Primary empathy is the ability to respond in such a way that it is apparent to both client and counselor that the counselor has understood the client. Advanced empathy "is a process of helping a client explore themes, issues, and emotions new to his or her awareness".

1.5.3 Unconditional Positive Regard

Rogers came up with a term called, 'unconditional positive regard' to refer to 'necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change' in the counseling relationship. Rogers emphasised that the counselor's positive feeling for the client must never be conditional in nature. Counselor should have non-judgmental, positive and genuine dispositions towards the client irrespective of the client's feelings or emotions.

1.5.4 Genuineness

Genuineness on part of counselor is very important. In its most basic sense it means "acting without using a façade" functioning without hiding behind the veneer of one's role or professional status. A genuine interest in the client is a must for the counseling process to succeed. Rogers (1958) suggests that the counselor should be a real person to his/her clients.

1.5.5 Warmth

The quality of being warm refers to a situation, where a person shows interest in other individual/group. 'Cold' individuals rarely become good counselors. There is an element of support involved in being warm. Warmth implies attentiveness as well as patience to listen. A word of caution here, a too warm counselor may lead towards the development of over-dependence on the part of the client. The ideal feeling of being warm is the one which demonstrates that the counselor is non-judgmental and is honestly interested in his/her client.

1.5.6 Attentiveness

Empathy is fostered by attentiveness – the amount of verbal and nonverbal behaviour shown to the client. Verbal behaviours include communications that show a desire to comprehend or discuss what is important to the client. (Cormier and Cormier, 1991). These behaviours (which include probing, requesting clarification, restating, and summarising feelings). indicate that the counselor is focusing on the client.

Equally important are the counselor's nonverbal behaviours.

Egan (1990) summarises five nonverbal skills involved in attending and which conveys to the client that the counselor is interested in and open to him/her.

Skills are abbreviated as SOLER

S: Face the client *squarely*; that is, adopt a posture that indicates involvement.

O: Adopt an *open* posture. Sit with both feet on the ground to begin with and with your hands folded, one over the other.

L: Lean toward the client. However be aware of the clients space needs.

E: Maintain *eye* contact. Good eye contact with the clients indicates that the counselor is attuned to the client. For other less eye contact may be appropriate.

R: As counselor incorporates these skills into his /her attending or listening skills, he or she should *relax*.

1.5.7 Concreteness

It can be termed as a type of skill. It is an ability to listen, to what is being said by the client, instead of what is being implied. Concreteness in counseling is essential, if the counseling process has to succeed. A counselor possessing the skill of 'concreteness' does not go for details (regarding psychological explanations) of what the client is speaking about, but instead tries to understand what the client is trying to express. Any quick, preconceived or initial judgment about what the client is saying is not particularly helpful. In fact, it may be counterproductive. The concept of concreteness almost integrates all the important elements of the counseling process. A concrete counselor, invariably, listens to and accepts what the client is saying and does not quickly make his judgments.

1.5.8 Objectivity

To remain objective in the counseling process means to be able to stand back and observe whatever is happening from a neutral frame of reference and not distorted by perceptions, biases and expectations.

1.5.9 Open Mindedness

Open mindedness means freedom from fixed preoccupations and an attitude of open receptivity to whatever the client is expressing. The open minded counselor is able to accommodate the client's values, feelings and perceptions even if they are different from his or her own. Open-mindedness also implies the ability to listen, to respond, and to interact with the client free from the constraints of imposing value criteria. As per Anderson, Lepper and Ross (1980) if the counselor is not open-minded he will persist in believing incorrect things about a client, even in the face of countervailing evidence

1.5.10 Sensitivity

Sensitivity is a prime factor in contributing to counselor effectiveness. It implies that the counselor makes a deeper and spontaneous response (cognitive and emotional response) to the client's needs, feelings, conflict, doubts and so on.

1.5.11 Non Dominance

The non dominant counselor is one who is capable of sitting back and allowing the client to initiate and direct the course of counseling interview. Counseling requires counselor to be able to listen to whatever the client expresses and listening is possible only if the counselor controls any dominating tendencies.

1.5.12 Confrontation

Counselor's ability to confront should not be understood in a negative connotation. In confrontation the counselor challenges the client to examine, modify, or control

4) Describe SOLER.
5) Describe confrontation and sense of humour.

1.6 COUNSELING GOALS

Broadly speaking goal of counseling is to help individuals overcome their immediate problem and also equip them to meet future issues/problem. Counseling to be meaningful has to be specific for each client as it involves his/her unique problems and expectations. A statement of goal is not only important but also necessary, as it provides a sense of direction and purpose in the counseling process. It establishes a congruency between what is demanded or sought by the client and what is possible or practical.

Though specific counseling goals for each client are different and unique involving a consideration of the client's expectations as well as the environmental aspects the overall goals of counseling may be separated into the following categories.

1.6.1 Developmental Goals

Developmental goals are those wherein the client is assisted in meeting or advancing his or her anticipated human growth and developmental (that is socially, personally, emotionally, cognitively, physical wellness and so on).

1.6.2 Preventive Goals

In this the counselor helps the client to avoid some undesired outcome.

1.6.3 Enhancement Goals

In case the client possesses certain special abilities or skills, it can either be identified or further developed through the assistance of a counselor.

1.6.4 Remedial Goals

Remediation involves helping a client to either overcome and/or treat an undesirable development of his/her life.

1.6.5 Exploratory Goals

It implies examining options, assessing skills and trying new and different activities, environment relationships etc.

1.6.6 Reinforcement Goals

Reinforcement is used to recognise conditions wherein clients resort to appropriate ways of doing things, thinking and/or feeling

1.6.7 Cognitive Goals

Cognition involves acquiring the basic foundations of learning and cognitive skills.

1.6.8 Physiology Goals

Physiological goals ensure acquiring the basic understanding and lifestyle habits for good physical health

1.6.9 Psychological Goals

It represents developing good social interaction skills, learning emotional control, developing positive self-concept and so on. (Gibson, Mitchell and Basile 1993)

1.7 FUNCTION OF COUNSELING GOALS

Goal serves three important functions in the counseling process:

First Goal serves as a motivational factor in counseling.

Secondly Goal can have an educational function in counseling as it helps clients to acquire new responses and

Third goal meet evaluative function in counseling whereby client's goal help the counselor to select and evaluate different counseling strategies appropriate to achieve the client's goals. Hackney and Cormier (1996)

1.8 ROLE OF COUNSELORS IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

The counseling process implies continuous change that take place or rather which should take place in the client in order to promote personality change in a desired direction. The kind of change that the counselor aims to bring through counseling is briefly

- a) Awareness on the part of the client;
- b) Behavioural change in a desired direction through which client can achieve his or her goals; and
- c) Understanding the clients potentialities, limitations and how to utilise them best in achieving the desired goal.

Counseling process and the role of counselor is by and large same for all problems and for all individuals. However there is a subtle difference in the role a counselor plays while giving vocational counseling and when handling emotional issues.

In vocational and educational counseling the major emphasis of the counselor is on collecting the factual information. The counselor helps the client to understand the information in a proper perspective. He tries to help in rational problem solving processes, clarifying self concepts, values etc. In this context counselors are often concerned with the appropriate choice in educational spheres.

On the other hand while counseling the individuals with personal and emotional problems the counselor assumes somewhat different role. In this context information and planning in logical terms do not play central role. Here the counselor helps the clients to

- a) express their feelings, clarify and elaborate them as related to the problem
- b) explore feelings and personal resources
- c) make the client aware of desirable action for change
- d) plan action in collaboration with the client and
- e) help client implement the most appropriate action.

Overall it can be inferred that overall emphasis of vocational and educational counseling is on cognitive aspect whereas counseling related to personal issues lays stress on affective aspect.

Thus, though counseling goals may differ as per the needs of the client the counseling process follows a specified sequence of interactions or steps. Hackney and Cormier (1996) identified the stages or steps as follows:

- Establishing relationship with the client
- Problem identification and Exploration
- Planning for problem solving
- Solution application and termination.

Each of these stages is further elaborated:

1.8.1 Establishing Relationship with the Client

The core of the counseling process is the relationship established between the counselor and the client. The Counselor takes the initiative in the initial interview to establish a climate conducive to develop mutual respect, trust, free and open communication and understanding in general of what the counseling process involves.

Both the counselor's attitude and verbal communications is significant to the development of a satisfactory relationship. Verbal communication includes attentive listening, understanding and feeling with the client.

The quality of counselor client relationship determines the counseling outcomes. Factors that are important in the establishment of counselor client relationship are positive regard and respect, accurate empathy, and genuineness. To ensure these conditions the counselor needs to have openness: an ability to understand and feel with the client as well as value the client.

It is by means of this relationship that the counselor elicits and recognises the significant feelings and ideas that determine the behaviour of the client.

Counselor client relationship not only serves to increase the opportunities for clients to attain their goals but also be a potential model of a good interpersonal relationship, one that clients can use to improve the quality of their relationships outside the therapeutic setting. The counselor helps the client make effective interpersonal relationships and free him from unrealistic aspirations. In this the counselor plays the part of a teacher.

Pepinsky and Pepinsky (1954) define the relationship “as a hypothetical construct to designate the inferred affective character of the observable interaction between two individuals”. He emphasised the affective or emotional element in the relationship.

Counselors main responsibility always remains to meet the clients need as much and possible. The counseling relationship seeks to assist the clients in assuming the responsibilities for his or her problem and its solution. This is facilitated by the counselor’s communication skills, the ability to identify and reflect clients’ feeling and the ability to identify and gain insight into the clients concerns and needs.

Establishment of a conducive relationship between client and counselor is important to be achieved in the initial counseling process as it often determines whether or not the client will continue for counseling.

Goals of initial counseling interview include:

Counselor’s Goal

- Establish a comfortable and positive relationship.
- Explain the counseling process and mutual responsibilities to the client.
- Facilitate communication.
- Identify and verify the client’s concern that brought him/her to the counselor.
- Plan with the client to obtain assessment data needed to proceed with the counseling process.

Clients Goal

- Understanding the counseling process and his/her responsibilities in the process.
- Share and explain reasons for seeking help.
- Cooperate in the assessment of both problem and self.

1.8.2 Problem Identification and Exploration

After the establishment of an adequate relationship, the clients become more receptive for in depth discussion and exploration of their concern.

In this phase counselor continues to exhibit attending behaviour and put forward questions to the client to facilitate continued exploration and elicitation of information of the client’ concerns. Questions that might embarrass, challenge, or threaten the client are avoided as this would hinder the process of information elicitation from the client.

Counselor working in close harmony with the client with due understanding and regard tries to distinguish between the surface and deeper or complex problems.

Counselor also tries to ascertain whether the problem stated by the client is the actual problem that has led client to seek help. This may be a time for information gathering. The more useful information the counselor gathers the more accurate assessment of clients need could be done. It is therefore important for counselors to recognise the various areas of information to be gathered. Usually the desired information could be grouped under three headings: time dimension, the feeling dimension, and the cognitive dimension. Brief description of each dimension is indicated as follows.

- i) **Time Dimension:** includes the clients past experiences which had major impact on his/her life. Present dimension would cover how well the client is functioning currently specially those current experiences that had an impact enough on the client to seek counseling. Future dimension would include future demands, goals and how the client plans to achieve them.
- ii) **Feeling Dimension:** includes emotions and feelings the client has towards oneself (self concept) and significant others.
- iii) **Cognitive Dimension:** includes how the client solves problems, the coping styles, the rationality used in making daily decisions and the client's capacity and readiness for the learning.

At this point counselors may use certain standardized test to diagnose the problem and sub problem. The counselor tries to collect as much relevant information as possible and integrate it into an overall picture of client's needs and concerns. Counselor shares this conceptualisation with the client as well as one of the counselor's goals during this stage is to help the client develop a self-understanding of the need to deal with a concern/problem – the need for change and action. The counselor continues to promote the client's understanding of action plans for resolving problems.

The steps or stages counselor follows for problem identification and exploration are as follows:

- 1) **Define the Problem:** Counselor with the corporation of client tries to identify the problem as specifically and objectively as possible. He also tries to identify the components or contributing factors, severity of the problem and its duration.
- 2) **Explore the Problem:** At this stage information needed to fully understand the problem and its background is gathered. The counselor may take a detailed case study or administer standardized psychological measures to collect the required information.
- 3) **Integrate the information:** In this step the counselor systematically organises and integrates all the information collected into a meaningful profile of the client and his problems. The Counselor also begins to explore the changes that are required and obstacles that exist for these changes to materialise.

1.8.3 Planning for Problem Solving

Once the counselor determines that all relevant information regarding the client has been gathered and understood in proper perspective and client has also developed awareness and has gained insight into the fact that something needs

to be done about a specific problem, counselor moves on to develop a plan in collaboration with client to remediate the concern of the client. The sequence of steps that the counselor usually follows to devise a plan is as follows:

- 1) **Define the problem:** It is important that both client and counselor view the problem with similar perspective and have the same understanding of its ramification.
- 2) **Identify and list all the solutions:** At this juncture, appropriate brain storming needs to be done for all possibilities. Efforts from both the sides (client and counselor) are required, but the client should be allowed to list as many possibilities as he/she can think off. In case some obvious solutions are overlooked, the counselor may suggest to the client “Have you also thought of _____? None of the possibilities should be eliminated just on face value.
- 3) **Analysis of the consequences of the suggested solutions:** Here the counselor encourages and suggests the client to identify the steps needed for the implementation of the suggested solutions. This process is important as it enables the client to assess the pros and cons of each proposed solutions and its consequences.
- 4) **Prioritize the solutions:** After weighing out the pros and cons of each possible solution, the client with the help of the counselor list the solutions with the best possible outcome down to least likely to give desired outcome. After finalising and selecting the best solution the client moves on to the application and implementation.

Client may not be able to smoothly follow the above mentioned steps and may have difficulties in arriving at basic insight, implications and probabilities, whereas this may be easier for the counselor. Hence the counselor guides the client towards realising these understandings. The counselor may use the techniques of repetition, mild confrontation, interpretation, information and obvious encouragements to facilitate client’s understanding.

1.8.4 Solution Application and Termination

In this final stage the counselor encourages the client to act upon his or her determined solution of the problem. During the time the client actively involves in implementing the problem solution, the counselor maintains contact as a source of follow up, support and encouragement as the client may need the counselor’s assistance in the event things do not go according to plan.

Once it is determined that the counselor and the client has dealt with the client’s concern to the maximum possible extent, the counseling process is terminated. Termination refers to the decision, one-sided or mutual, to stop counseling. (Burke, 1989). The counselor usually concludes the counseling by summarising the main points of the counseling process.

<p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>1) How do you establish relationship between client and counsellor.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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2) Describe problem identification and exploring.

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3) How do you plan for problem solving?

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4) Describe solution application and termination.

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5) Fill in the Blanks

- a) Vocational Counseling lays emphasis on _____ aspect.
- b) The optimal distance between counselor and counselee is considered to be _____ inches.
- c) Counseling related to personal problem lay stress on _____ aspect.
- d) _____ goals represents developing good social interaction skills and learning emotional control.
- e) Three functions of counseling goals are _____, _____, and _____.
- f) _____ means free from fixed preoccupations.
- g) _____ is the ability of a counselor to stand in the shoes of the client.

6) Match the following

- 1) Guidance
- a) giving a funny, unexpected response to a question situation

2) Termination	b) Client's skills, are either identified or further developed through the assistance of a counselor.
3) Advanced empathy	c) enables each individual to understand his abilities and interests, and relate them to life-goals, to reach a state of competence.
4) Enhancement Goals:	d) refers to the decision, one-sided or mutual, to stop counseling
5) Humor	e) is a process of applying psychological methods based on systematic knowledge of the human personality in attempting to improve the mental health of the latter.
6) Counseling	f) is a process of helping a client explore themes, issues, and emotions new to his or her awareness.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

Counseling is the heart of the counselor's activity. It aims at helping the clients understand and accept themselves as they are so that they are able to work towards realising their potential.

Counseling may occur in any setting but some circumstances are more likely than others to promise its development. Counselors need to be aware of the physical setting in which the counseling takes place. Clients may adjust to any room, but certain qualities about an environment such as the seating arrangements, proximity between client and counselor make counseling more conducive.

Counselor seeks to identify and explore the client's problem with the objective of establishing counseling goals. Goals need to be established as it provides a sense of direction and purpose in the counseling process.

The counseling process initially focuses on relationship establishment. Certain qualities of counselor such as conveying of empathy, positive regard, being open-minded may enhance the counseling relationship. The counselor with the client explores the reasons for seeking help. Such disclosures leads to the planning and problem solving stage and finally to the applying of the solution and termination of the counseling relationship. Although these stages tend to blend into each other, they serve as a guide to a logical sequence of events for the counseling process. The effective application of the process is dependent upon the counseling skills of the counselor.

1.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define Guidance and Counseling. Point out the differences between the two.
- 2) Briefly explain the characteristics of a counseling set up.
- 3) Why is it necessary to possess certain characteristics to become an effective counselor?
- 4) What are the nonverbal indicators that reflect that the counselor is attentive towards the client?
- 5) What are the goals of Counseling?
- 6) Discuss the role of counselor in the counseling process.
- 7) Why is it important to have counseling goals?
- 8) What characteristics one should possess to become good counselor.

1.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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1.12 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blanks

Cognitive

30 to 39

affective

Psychological

motivational, educational and evaluative,

Open-mindedness

Empathy

Match the following

1c, 2d, 3f, 4b, 5a, 6e.