

Counselling Skills at Work

– Activity Summary –

1. Introductions and Ice Breaker

The ‘name game’, an activity to help participants get to know each other and practice active listening and retention skills, both essential elements of counselling skills.

2. The Counselling Contract

An exercise to check out participants’ feelings about the term ‘counselling’, to introduce the importance of *confidentiality* within the learning environment and the workplace; and devise and agree on individual learning contracts.

3. Counselling or Counselling Skills?

A questionnaire (true/false) designed to clarify the crucial differences between being a counsellor and using counselling skills, including working definitions of the terms ‘counselling’ and ‘counselling skills’.

4. What are Counselling Skills? Why and When Would You Use Them?

An activity designed to check out participants’ existing knowledge and preconceptions about counselling skills and consider how the skills might be used.

5. Coaching or Counselling Skills – What’s the Difference?

Exercises designed to clarify the differences between the power relationship of coaching and the equal relationship of counselling; including ways that counselling skills can be applied within the context of coaching.

SELF-AWARENESS

6. What do I Value?

A questionnaire and discussion to encourage participants to consider their own values, beliefs and attitudes in order to recognize that all individuals perceive situations differently. Helps participants to appreciate seeing issues from the other person’s point of view, without making judgements – a key requirement for the effective use of counselling skills.

7. The Ideal Helper

This exercise helps participants identify the qualities, behaviours and conditions that are required to be able to use counselling skills effectively and form helping relationships.

CORE SKILLS

8. Active Listening

Exercises to demonstrate the importance of real listening. To identify and practice the skills and behaviours required for active listening, consider the environmental and physical conditions and be aware of potential barriers.

9. Questioning and the Value of Summarizing

Activities to show the value and pitfalls of using open questions in a counselling skills context and the benefits, for both parties, of summarizing information.

10. How to use Counselling Skills Effectively

A series of activities designed to enable participants to use a range of counselling skills, including mirroring, rephrasing, reflecting and focusing.

11. Counselling Style

An exercise to give participants the opportunity to respond to a number of situations using counselling skills; to compare their responses with those of other group members and consider their own personal style and its impact on others.

12. Using Counselling Skills – The Steps

Exercises providing an opportunity to examine situations that require action, helping others to plan and achieve goals using counselling skills within a three-step approach.

MANAGING CHANGE

13. The Individual in Times of Change

An activity that allows participants individually to examine how they have reacted to and coped with major changes in their lives; to consider how counselling skills might be used to assist individuals during times of change, for example downsizing, restructuring, survivor syndrome, etc.

14. Recognizing and Managing Stress

How to recognize stress in yourself and others; what stresses individuals, including stress in the workplace. How counselling skills can be used to help individuals manage stress and when to refer people for professional help.

MANAGING PEOPLE

15. Performance Management

Exercises and role-plays to show the value of using counselling skills to give equal responsibility and ownership of performance to the individual; including preparation and giving constructive feedback.

16. Poor Performance

Exercises to identify when counselling skills could be used to assist with performance problems, and the ethical considerations and potential conflicts within the context of disciplinary and grievance issues. This also includes the application of counselling skills in problem areas such as harassment and alcohol/drug abuse.

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

17. Avoiding the Pitfalls

Identifying situations that require professional counselling help and how to avoid getting into difficulties. The warning signs and how to handle them; how to refer individuals for professional help without causing further problems or suffering guilt feelings.

FEEDBACK

18. Giving and Receiving Feedback

This activity provides a framework for giving constructive feedback within the learning environment (structured critique) and within the workplace, and how to receive feedback from others. It also gives participants practice at using counselling skills to give feedback.

PRACTICALS/ROLE-PLAYS

19. Counselling Skills Practice

Each participant practices using all the counselling skills learned with a partner and receives feedback from their group, using structured feedback sheets.

REVIEW

19. Where Are You Now? Where Do You Want to Be?

An activity to review the high and low spots of the counselling skills exercises, to consider personal learning and development needs and how these might be met and produce individual action plans.