

Lab 5: Skills for Exploring Thoughts

Goals:

1. To give helpers an opportunity to attend and listen to clients.
2. To encourage helpers to focus on the most important part of the client's statements.
3. To practice using restatements and open questions to help the client explore thoughts.

Exercise 1: One-Word Restatements

The helper repeats the single most important word or phrase the client has said. For example, if the client says, "I am having a terrible dilemma. I just found out my best friend's boyfriend cheated on her. I don't know whether I should tell her because she would be so hurt," the helper might say, "dilemma" or "best friend." Continue for eight to ten client-speaking turns.

Exercise 2: Practice Formulating Restatements

1. In a large group, the group leader verbally gives an example of a client statement (keep it simple, brief, and not very emotional). Each student writes a restatement and then reads his or her restatements out loud. Continue with examples until the leader is certain that students understand and can deliver restatements.
2. Still in a large group, the leader asks one student to be the client and talk about something easy—something about which he or she does not have many feeling (suggested topics: cars, politics, weather, technology, hobbies, extracurricular activities). After the "client" talks for a while, the students all write down a restatement. Once everyone is done writing, the leader asks them in turn to deliver their restatement to the client. The client should respond as he or she would if talking to this person.

Exercise 3: Practice Formulating Open Questions for Thoughts

Do the same as for Exercise 2 but with open questions for thoughts.

Exercise 4: Practice Integrating Skills in Role-Play

Students should be arranged in groups of three, with lab leaders monitoring the groups. Within groups, choose one person to be the helper, one to be the client, and one to be the observer.

Helper's and Client's Tasks during the Helping Exchange

1. The helper introduces him or herself.
2. The client talks briefly on a topic about which he or she does not have a lot of strong feelings/emotions.
3. The helper listens attentively during the client statement without thinking of what she or he is going to say next. After the client statement, the helper pauses, takes a deep breath, thinks of what to say, and then either restates what the client said (using fewer words and focusing on the most essential part of the statement) or asks open questions about thoughts. For this exercise, the helper focuses on content rather than feelings. Remember to use appropriate attending behaviors throughout the exercise.
4. Continue for five to ten turns.

Observer's Task during the Helping Exchange

Take notes about the helper's attending behaviors. Write down each helper statement in sequence and note whether it is a restatement, an open question, or other.

After the Helping Exchange

1. The helper talks about how it felt to do restatements and ask open questions.
2. The client says how it felt to receive restatements and open questions. The client also gives feedback to the helper about what was most and least helpful.
3. The observer gives feedback to the helper about the use of restatements, open questions, and attending skills. Given positive feedback first and then only one piece of negative feedback (go back and read about feedback in Chapter 1).

Switch Roles

Keep doing role-plays as described above until everyone has had a chance to be the helper, client, and observer at least once.

Large Group Go-Round

Going around the circle one at a time, each person should say first what they did well. In a second go-round, each person can say what they are going to continue to work on and how they might do that.

Personal Reflections

- How did you handle any anxiety you might have experienced giving restatements and open questions about thoughts?

- In the past, students have had difficulty formulating short concise restatements, focusing on content instead of feelings, figuring out what to focus on in the client's statements, talking too much, and keeping the focus on the client. Which of these experiences did you have? How might you handle such challenges?
- What did you learn about yourself in trying to be a helper?
- What difficulties did you have combining skills?