

## **Lab 6: Skills for Exploring Feelings**

*Goal:* For helpers to learn to help clients explore their feelings. The focus is on learning how and when to use reflections of feelings, disclosures of feelings, open questions about feelings, and the two-chair technique for feelings. An additional goal is for students to hear how others phrase the skills.

### **Exercise 1: Awareness of Own Feelings**

In a large group, the leader asks each student to say feeling words to reflect about how she or he is currently feeling. Students should practice using feeling words that they would not typically use so they can broaden their feeling word vocabulary. See Exhibit 8.2, Emotion Words Checklist (or download the PDF from the web forms), for ideas, but remember to add words to personalize the list.

### **Exercise 2: Formulating Reflections**

1. In a large group, the leader role plays a brief emotionally laden example of a client problem. Each student writes down a reflection of feeling. The leader asks the group members to take turns delivering their reflections. The leader continues with examples until students grasp the concept of reflections.
2. Still in a large group, the leader asks one student to play a client and talk about something easy that he or she has some feelings about (suggested topics: academic issues, career, pets, problems at work, roommate issues, problems with health, romantic relationships). After the “client” talks for a while, the students all write down a reflection of feelings. Once everyone

is done writing, the leader asks each one in turn to deliver their reflection of feelings to the client. The client should respond as he or she would if talking to this person.

### Exercise 3: Formulating Disclosures of Feelings

This exercise is the same as Exercise 2, except that it focuses on disclosures of feelings.

### Exercise 4: Open Questions about Feelings

This exercise is the same as Exercise 2, except that it focuses on open questions about feelings.

### Exercise 5: Exploring Feelings

Divide into groups of three students. Everyone takes turns with each role (helper, client, and observer).

#### *Helper's and Client's Tasks During the Helping Exchange*

1. The client talks briefly about a topic for which he or she has strong (but not overwhelming) feelings.
2. After the client finishes speaking, the helper gives either a reflection of feelings, a disclosure of feelings, or an open question about feelings. Helpers should take their time, pause, and then consider how the client is feeling, what nonverbal behaviors reveal about feelings, and how they would feel if they were the client. Keep the intervention short and simple.
3. Continue for five to ten turns. Vary which skill you use.

### *Observer's Task During the Helping Exchange*

Take notes about the helper's attending behaviors and manner of delivery of the skills. Write down each exact intervention to provide a record for later discussion. Note the client's reactions to the interventions.

### *After the Helping Exchange*

1. The helper should talk about how it felt to try to help the client explore feelings.
2. The client should talk about how it felt to be the recipient of the interventions. Discuss specific interventions that were more and less helpful.
3. The observer should give lots of positive feedback to the helper about her or his attending behaviors and interventions, and then give one idea for what she or he could do differently.

### *Switch Roles*

Keep doing role-play roles 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

- What did you learn about yourself when delivering reflections?
- What would you do if a client started to cry?

- In the past, some students have had a hard time selecting the most important feeling; some have become overwhelmed by lengthy client descriptions and could not differentiate “the forest” (feelings) from “the trees” (all the words); some were worried about hurting the client if they gave a “bad” reflection; some had difficulty figuring out the feelings if the client did not explicitly state feelings; and some had trouble when clients were very articulate about their feelings because they did not want to repeat the client’s feeling words. What was your experience?
- Are there particular feelings (e.g., anger, guilt) that you have difficulty using with clients because of your own discomfort or problems?
- In the past, many students have reported that their confidence dropped dramatically after beginning to learn helping skills but then increased with practice. What pattern do you see emerging with regard to your confidence as a helper?