

Lab 10: Immediacy

Exercise 1

Goal: To help students learn about immediacy from their personal experience.

Instructions: In a large group, the lab leader asks the group members to reflect on their experiences here and now in the group. Group members talk about things such as their comfort level in the group and who talks the most in the group. The lab leader should monitor to make sure that everyone has a chance to talk (e.g., going around the circle can be a useful way to make sure that everyone talks) and that the tone is kept positive.

Review: Go around the circle and have group members talk about how it felt to reveal immediate feelings.

Exercise 2

Goal: For helpers to practice immediacy in the context of the other helping skills. This lab is meant for advanced students who are seeing “real” clients. In this lab, I recommend forming groups of four to six people. I suggest that a helper who is currently seeing a client present a case. The helper plays the part of the client so the helper can portray how the client behaves (and also gain more empathy for the client by playing the client). A second group member plays the role of the helper. Other group members can provide ideas to the helper about other possible ways of intervening or take over the role of helper if the helper gets stuck. Each group should have a designated lab leader (other than the helper) to organize and coordinate the session.

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

1. The client (played by the actual helper) role-plays how the actual client presents him- or herself, trying to portray the client's behavior that makes it particularly difficult for the actual helper to respond therapeutically. The actual helper should not provide any introductory material, talk about the actual client, or the history of the helping interaction prior to the role-play, because the idea is for group members to respond naturally, without receiving potentially biasing information.
2. The helper should respond for several speaking turns using the exploration skills (open question, restatement, reflection) until she or he has formed some rapport and has experienced an inner reaction to the client.
3. When the interactional patterns are at least somewhat clear, the lab leader should ask the helper to pause for a moment.
4. Everyone (except the client) can write down an immediacy statement. Each helper can ask themselves, "What am I feeling right now?" "What is going on in the relationship?" "How much of this is due to my own personal issues?"
5. Each helper should give an immediacy statement and allow the client time to respond.

Observers' Tasks During the Helping Exchange

Everyone should observe all the interactions and note which ones seemed particularly helpful or unhelpful and why. How does the helper present the immediacy statement? Does the helper take responsibility for her or his feelings? How does the client respond to the immediacy statement? How does the relationship between the helper and client appear? How would you feel in each role?

After the Helping Exchange

The client can talk about reactions to hearing the immediacy intervention. The helper can talk about how it felt to use immediacy. Observers can provide feedback about their observations and perceptions of the interaction.

Switch Roles

Exercise 3

Goal: To integrate the exploration and insight skills. Students should pair up. One person will be the helper and one the client.

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

1. Clients should talk about something that they do but they don't know why they do it, or about something that confuses or puzzles them.
2. Helpers should use exploration skills (open questions, restatement, and reflection of feelings) for five to ten minutes to help the client explore.
3. Once they have established some rapport, helpers should begin using insight skills (challenge, interpretation, self-disclosure, and immediacy) when appropriate, interspersed with exploration skills.

After the Helping Exchange

Clients can talk about their reactions. Helpers can talk about their intentions and their perceptions of the client reactions.

Switch Roles

Personal Reflections

- How do you feel about dealing with interpersonal conflict?
- For the helpers who played the roles of their clients: What did you learn about your clients? How did your feelings change toward the clients? Describe any new ideas you learned for dealing with your clients.
- How would you respond to a client who wanted to give you feedback?