

Lab 12: Steps of the Action Stage

Goal: To teach helpers about how to do the steps of the action stage for two types of action.

Exercise 1: Behavior Change

Divide into groups of four to six people, with one person taking the role of the client. The other people will alternate in the role of helper. A lab leader should direct the flow of the session.

Helpers are encouraged to bring in a sheet outlining the steps (Exhibit 15.1) so that they remember what to do in each step.

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

1. The client should talk about something that she or he understands (at least somewhat) and that she or he wants to change (e.g., increasing amount of study or exercise).
2. Helper 1 should ask the client to explore (using primarily open questions, restatements, and reflections of feelings) for about five to ten minutes.
3. Helper 2 should then take over and do the insight stage for five to ten minutes. The helper should intersperse challenges, interpretations, disclosures, and immediacy with open questions, restatements, and reflections of feelings (thinking carefully first about his or her intentions).
4. When the client has gained some insight. Helper 3 should take over and do Step 1 (identify a specific problem) with the client.
5. Helper 4 should do Step 2 (explore idea of action) with the client.
6. Helper 5 should do Step 3 (assess previous change attempts and resources) with the client.
7. Helper 6 should do Step 4 (generate options together) with the client.

8. Helper 7 should do Step 5 (evaluate options) with the client.
9. Helper 8 should do Step 6 (choose an option) with the client.
10. Helper 9 should do Step 7 (assign homework) with the client.

If a helper has trouble with any of these steps, the lab leader can prompt her or him about what to do or ask if another helper can take over.

Processing the Helping Exchange

The client can talk about what the experience was like and which steps were most helpful. The helpers can talk about how they felt trying to do the different steps. The lab leader can give specific behavioral feedback about the helpers' skills during the different steps.

Exercise 2: Decision Making

Using the same format as in Exercise 1, the group does decision making.

Personal Reflections

- What are your strengths and areas that need improvement in terms of doing the action steps?
- Were you able to maintain empathy with the client while going through the steps?
- How comfortable are you with implementing the four types of action (relaxation training, behavior change, behavioral rehearsal, decision making)?
- How could you apply the behavioral principles to improve your skills as a helper?
- Which skills (e.g., probes for action, direct guidance) of the action stage were easier or more difficult for you to use?