

Lab 8: Challenge of Discrepancy

Goals: For helpers to continue practicing exploration skills (reflection, restatement, and open questions) and then to challenge once they have established a supportive relationship and identified discrepancies.

Instructions: In groups of four to six, one person will be the client and another person will be the initial helper. The rest should be ready to take over as helper or give backup to the helper. Everyone will take turns being the client. 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 talks about something that he or she feels conflicted or confused about (e.g., future career choices, lifestyle issues). The client should plan on being at least moderately disclosing, although clients always have the right not to disclose when they are uncomfortable doing so.
2. The initial helper starts by using exploration skills to help the client explore. If one helper gets stuck, another helper can take over to facilitate a thorough exploration.
3. After several minutes of exploration, the group leader stops the helper and asks each person in the group to try a reflection of feelings. (Quite often students have forgotten to do reflections of feeling, and this is an excellent opportunity to affirm the importance of this intervention.) The client should respond to each person.

4. The group leader then asks each person (except the client) to write down a challenge. Helpers can ask themselves whether they hear any “sour notes,” discrepancies, or defenses. Once all helpers have written challenges, they take turns delivering their challenges to the client, who responds briefly to each challenge.

Processing the Helping Exchange

After everyone has had a turn and the client has responded, the client can talk about which challenges were most helpful and why. Clients should be as open and honest as possible so helpers can learn what they did well and what they did not do so well.

Switch Roles

Personal Reflections

- What issues did using challenges raise for you?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses in terms of using challenges?
- How can you deliver challenges that clients can hear and absorb without being too aggressive or too passive?
- Describe what your intentions were for challenging and whether your clients reacted as you hoped.
- What role did your culture play in your giving or receiving challenges?