

Lab 9: Facilitating Client Insight

Goals: For helpers to practice using the exploration skills (reflection, restatement, and open questions) and then learn to engage the client in the interpretive process.

Exercise 1

In groups of four to six people, one person should be the client, one person should be the initial helper, and the rest can wait to take over as helper or give ideas to the helper. Each person should take a turn 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 a problematic reaction to a specific situation that he or she would like to understand. In other words, the client should talk about an event to which he or she had a strong reaction but did not understand why the reaction seemed out of proportion to the situation. For example, perhaps the client was driving along, and someone swore at him and he became instantly enraged. Or perhaps the client was sitting in a classroom discussion and suddenly, for no obvious reason, felt like crying. The client should plan on being at least moderately disclosing—although, of course, clients always have the right to say that they do not want to disclose further.
2. The initial helper uses exploration skills (open questions, restatement, and reflection of feelings) for several minutes to help the client explore the problem. If the initial helper gets stuck, switch helpers to ensure a thorough exploration of the problem.

3. After several minutes of exploration, each group member should give a reflection of feelings, with the client responding to each reflection.
4. Each group member should ask an open question for insight (e.g., “What do you make of X?” “You mentioned Y, how does that fit with Z?”)
5. Stop and have group talk about client (ask client to sit quietly and listen but not interrupt). Help group conceptualize what is going on with client and what might be helpful.
6. The group leader asks everyone (except the client) to write down an interpretation. Helpers can ask themselves, “What do I hear the person saying underneath the words?” “What are the themes in what the client is saying?” “What might be the reason for the client’s feeling?” “What things might be connected to this problem?”
7. Each group member delivers his or her interpretation and allows time for the client to respond.
8. Everyone writes down a disclosure of insight. Helpers ask themselves, “When I was in a similar situation, what contributed to what I was doing? What did I learn about myself and my motivations that might be helpful to this client?”
9. Each helper in turn delivers a disclosure and gives the client a chance to respond.

Processing the Helping Exchange

After everyone has a turn and the client has responded, the client can talk about which interventions were most helpful and why. Helpers can talk about which interventions felt most comfortable and effective.

Switch Roles

Do another practice session with a different client, initial helper, and other helpers.

Exercise 2

Students should pair up, with one person as the helper and one as the client.

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

1. The client talks about a common problematic experience (e.g., schoolwork, adjustment to college, or problems with friends).
2. The helper uses exploration skills (open question, restatement, and reflection of feelings) for about 10 minutes, allowing the client to explore.
3. The helper spends about 10 minutes giving some insight skills (challenge, open question for insight, interpretation, disclosures of insight), following up the insight skills with restatements and reflections of feelings.

After the Helping Exchange

The client can talk about his or her reactions to the insight skills. The helper can talk about his or her intentions and perceptions of the client reactions.

Personal Reflections

- How did you feel giving probes for insight, interpretations, and disclosures of insight?

- Were you able to phrase the insight interventions so the client could hear them? Describe any discrepancies between the reactions you expected from the client and the actual reactions that the client had.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses in engaging the client in the interpretive process?
- How did you feel about receiving insight interventions as a client? What factors about the delivery of these interventions influenced your feelings?
- What role does culture play in your ability to give and receive interpretive interventions?