

WEB FORM F

USING THE HELPING SKILLS SYSTEM FOR RESEARCH

This section presents materials that can be helpful to researchers who would like to use the helping skills system in research. This material is adapted from previous manuals of the Hill Counselor Verbal Response Category System (Hill 1986, 1992; Hill et al., 1981). In this form, I discuss collecting data, unitizing transcripts, training judges, and determining inter-judge agreement. At the end, I provide a practice transcript that judges can use for training. In this form, I do not discuss using the Helper Intentions List, Client Reactions System, or Client Behavior System, nor do I discuss coding attending or nonverbal skills. For more details about coding and process research, see Hill (1986, 1992), and Hill & Lambert (2003). I have been experimenting with judging the quality of interventions in addition to helping skills, and interested researchers can contact me about my work in this area.

METHOD

Collecting Data

I have found that transcripts are necessary for making judgments about helping skills. Although it is possible to code helping skills from listening just to tapes, it is difficult to ensure that judges are responding to the same segment of the session; judges often hear different things, which lowers the agreement levels. Hence, a verbatim transcript must first be created (which typically requires that one person type the transcript and another proofread by listening to the tape).

Unitizing Transcripts

Once a transcript is created, it must be unitized because people do not typically talk in neat sentences. Therefore, to code speech, it is necessary to force what people have said into some kind of unit. This system requires that speech be broken into response units, which are essentially grammatical sentences. The rules that I use have been adapted from Auld and White (1956). A unit is indicated in a transcript by a slash (/). Two judges first code all transcripts independently (without consulting each other). Agreement should be computed for the independent codings. Agreement should be above 90% because codings are relatively easy if judges follow the rules listed below. Judges should discuss all discrepancies and agree on final judgments. The rules are as follows:

1. A grammatical sentence consists minimally of a subject and a verb. More specifically, the unit consists of an independent or main clause, standing by itself or occurring with one or more dependent or subordinate clauses. A clause is a statement containing a subject and a predicate, with or without complements or modifiers. Judges should be careful not to try to interpret what the sentence means but should attend carefully to clauses and conjunctions.

I define an *independent or main clause* as a clause that expresses a completed thought and can stand alone as a sentence. When two independent clauses are joined together by *coordinating conjunctions* (and, or, nor, but), or by *conjunctive adverbs* (accordingly, also, besides, consequently, hence, however, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus, still, yet), they are considered separate units.

I define a *dependent or subordinate clause* as a clause that does not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone as a sentence. There are several types of dependent clauses: (a) an adjective clause—acts as an adjective; modifies a noun or a pronoun (e.g., The report *that he submitted* was well documented); (b) a relative pronoun clause—begins with relative pronouns (who, whom, what, whose, which, that) that act as either subject or object of the verb in the clause (e.g., He got *what he wanted*); (c) a noun clause—acts as a noun within the sentence (e.g., *Exercising at night* helped her sleep better); and (d) an adverbial clause acts as an

adverb in the sentence (e.g., I was astonished *when I heard the news*).

Independent and dependent clauses are joined together by conjunctions. There are several types of conjunctions: (a) Subordinating conjunctions (after, although, as, as is, as long as, as though, because, before, if, so that, then, unless, when, whenever, where, wherever, while, and whereas) always introduce an adverbial clause, joining it to the rest of the sentence.

Subordinating conjunctions generally confer meaning to the subsequent clause, whereas coordinating conjunctions do not. Therefore, subordinating conjunctions can join dependent clauses (usually adverb clauses) or fragments. (b) Coordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, nor) can join independent clauses or fragments. (c) Correlative conjunctions (either–or, neither–nor, both–and, not only but [also], whether–or) precede dependent clauses or fragments and are always used in pairs.

2. Independent clauses can be distinguished from dependent clauses: (a) when two independent clauses are connected, the second is introduced by a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb; and (b) dependent clauses are introduced by subordinating conjunctions or by pronouns such as *who*, *which*, or *that*.
3. Some combinations of words without an expressed subject and predicate can make complete sentences (and therefore units). These are called elliptical sentences. Examples: "Speak"/ (a command), "Good"/ (an exclamatory sentence), "What?"/ (a question), or a response to a question. Helper: "What room did they give you?"/ Client: "The same as before."/
4. False starts do not count as separate units. For example, "And Wednesday night, uh, I more or less ... I didn't high-pressure him"/ counts as one unit. "And Wednesday night, uh, I more or less..." is not scored as a separate unit.
5. Utterances lacking some essential feature of a complete sentence because of an interruption by the other speaker or a lapse into silence are considered separate units whenever the meaning is clear. Example: "And he would ask her to write the..."/ (the meaning in this sentence is clear even though the last word or two is not spoken). However, when the speaker has not said enough to make his or her meaning clear, we consider the utterance a false start rather than a unit (e.g., "The little girl ..." would not be considered a unit).
6. Minimal verbal encouragers (e.g., "um-hmm") and silences are not counted as separate units unless they are responses to direct questions.
7. Phrases such as "you know" and "I guess" are not usually considered separate units. Example: "Some, you know, very serious thing may be, you know, happening."/ (all one unit). Similarly, stutters, uhs, ahs, etc. are not separate units. However, the phrase "right?"/ or "is that right?"/ at the end of a sentence is considered a separate unit because it asks for confirmation and is typically a separate action.
8. If one independent clause is interrupted parenthetically by another independent clause, each is scored as a separate unit. Example: "I decided to go ... well, really what happened was she asked me ... to the concert." In this case, the clause "well, really what happened was she asked me" is a separate unit which interrupts the other unit, "I decided to go to the concert." Hence, in this case there are two units.

Selecting and Training Judges

At least three and preferably four or five judges should be used for coding transcripts into helping skills. The reason for using more judges is that these judgments are difficult to make; having more opinions typically leads to better final judgments. I typically select upper level undergraduates or graduate students who have high grade-point averages, are motivated to learn about helping skills, and are detail oriented, because they are more likely to be able to perform and enjoy the task.

To train, judges should read through this book to get an overview of the skills, reread the helping skills system (Web Form E) to learn the definitions of the skills, and then code the practice transcript and discuss discrepancies in codings. Each response unit should be coded into one and only one helping skill. After they have completed the practice transcript, judges should go through several real transcripts independently and code each helper response unit into one of the 12 helping skills (the transcripts in Chapter 18 could be used). After independent coding, judges should come together and discuss their codings and resolve discrepancies. Judges should continue training until they reach high rates of agreement (two of the three judges, three of the four judges, or four of the five judges agree on 80% of the codings for all the response units within a one-hour transcript). Training (not including reading this book) usually requires about 20 hours. The judges are now ready to code actual transcripts. The judges should do all codings independently, preferably apart, so they do not influence one another. Judges should meet frequently during the judgment process to discuss and resolve discrepancies. Frequent meetings can build morale and prevent drift of judgments. Judgments that the majority of judges agree on during the independent judgments (two of three, three of four, or four of five) are considered the consensus judgment—those for which there is no consensus must be discussed and resolved. During discussions, make sure that one person does not dominate and persuade others. Every participant should have a chance to talk openly and have her or his opinions heard.

Determining Agreement Levels Among Judges

Judgments about the helping skills are nominal (yes or no) and hence the most appropriate statistic for agreement is a kappa statistic because it reflects percentage agreement corrected for chance agreement (Cohen, 1960; Tinsley & Weiss, 1975). Kappas should be calculated for each pair of judges, so you end up with three kappas if you use three judges (report the average kappa). You should compute the kappas on all the data or a large representative sample of the data used for the study. You can determine kappas for the 12 major categories (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.), or including all the subcategories within some of the categories (3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 8a, 8b, 8c, 10a, 10b, 10c, 11a, 11b, which would yield 20 categories). Please note, however, that it is harder to obtain adequate kappas ($>.60$) when using 15 categories. You need kappas to be above .60, so if you obtain above .60 for the 12 categories but not for the 15 categories, report the data using 12 categories. Note that when categories occur infrequently, it is more difficult to obtain high kappas. You can also obtain kappas for individual categories by comparing it to all other categories combined.

To compile the data to calculate kappas, you first need to create a table that summarizes the co-occurrences of categories used by the two judges. To do this, make a table that has the number of columns and rows representing the number of categories that you are using. Then go through the codings and make hash marks (/) in the relevant boxes (e.g., if Judge 1 coded the first response unit as category 1 and Judge Two coded it as category 3, you would put a hash mark in the box formed by column one and row three).

Calculate a percentage for each box by dividing the number of hash marks in the box by the total number of categorizations in the table. Table 1 shows the hypothetical data for two judges who each categorized 100 response units into four categories. The formula for kappa (Tinsley & Weiss, 1975) is $K = P_o - P_c / 1 - P_c$ where P_o = the proportion of ratings in which the two judges agree, and P_c = the proportion of ratings for which agreement is expected by chance. The total proportion of agreement P_o is obtained by adding the figures in the diagonal (.18 + .18 + .24 + .10 = .70). The expected chance agreement (P_c) is obtained by summing the product of multiplying the rows by their respective columns:

(.20 x .30) + (.30 x .20) + (.30 x .40) + (.20 x .10) = .26. Hence, by filling the numbers into the formula, we

get $(.70 - .26)/(1 - .26)$ or $.44/.74 = .59$. Kappa can vary from -1.00 to 1.00. A kappa of 0 indicates that the observed agreement is exactly equal to the agreement that could be observed by chance. A negative kappa indicates that the observed agreement is less than the expected chance agreement. A kappa of 1.00 indicates perfect agreement between judges.

Table 1. Hypothetical Proportions of Categorizations by Two Judges to Determine Kappa

	Judge 2 scores		Judge 1 scores		Row total
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	
Category 1	.18	.00	.02	.00	.20
Category 2	.00	.18	.12	.00	.30
Category 3	.06	.00	.24	.00	.30
Category 4	.06	.02	.02	.10	.20
Column total	.30	.20	.40	.10	

PRACTICE TRANSCRIPT

Instructions for Unitizing

The transcript is presented first with no punctuation so you can practice unitizing. Put a slash (/) after each grammatical sentence (see earlier directions) for the helper's statements. Check your unitizing against the transcript **shown later**. For every slash shown in the transcript, you should mark whether or not you have one. Considering that there are 57 slashes in the transcript, you should agree on at least 51 before you proceed further. For each instance that you disagree with the transcript, go back to the rules and try to understand the discrepancy.

Transcript

- Helper:** Thanks for coming today my name is Judy I am beginning to learn helping skills we have 20 minutes to talk today you should talk about whatever is on your mind

Client: I've been feeling down lately. I'm having a lot of trouble getting motivated. I haven't felt like going to class. Nothing really interests me.
- Helper:** Give me an example of what happened the last time you didn't go to class oh but first what is your major?

Client: I haven't really decided on a major because I haven't found anything that interests me.
- Helper:** So you haven't decided yet are you living on campus?

Client: I'm living at home and I feel a lot of pressure on me. I would like to live in the dorm but my parents won't pay for it and I don't have the money myself. I mean my parents live right near campus and they say why should you live in a dorm when we live so close that you can easily walk. You might as well save money.
- Helper:** It seems to you like your parents are forcing you to live at home.

Client: Yeah, it sure does and I really resent it. I think I would feel so much freer in a dorm. I feel restricted at home, like they're watching every move I make, and I don't feel free to come and go as I please.

5. **Helper:** You feel stifled it sounds like you also feel uncomfortable because your parents are so restrictive.
Client: Right, but I'm not sure how to deal with it. They do provide me with a place to sleep and help me out a little with school. I feel like I ought to be grateful to them.
6. **Helper:** You started fidgeting a lot just then and your voice got real soft I wonder if you feel a little upset did I get that feeling right?
Client: Well, I guess I feel bad, like I'm not a good son. I feel like they're giving me so much and all I do is want more.
7. **Helper:** How do you feel about that?
Client: I was really angry last night when they told me that they really didn't want me to leave. They got all upset when I even brought up the topic, especially my mom.
8. **Helper:** I wonder if both you and your parents are having trouble separating because of your changing role as you're growing up maybe they're not quite ready for you to leave home because they're anxious about having an empty nest and I wonder if you have a hard time leaving because you're afraid you'll hurt them I wonder what you think about what is causing the problem between you and your parents
Client: That could be true. You know, I'm an only child and my parents are older. They built their whole world around me.
9. **Helper:** On the one hand, it's hard to leave them but on the other hand, you want to go out and lead your own life.
Client: Well I want to move out, but I don't want to hurt them.
10. **Helper:** When I left home my parents were quite upset and I felt terrible and guilty what is it like for you?
Client: Yeah, well, I don't know. It seems so difficult to figure all this out.
11. **Helper:** How do you feel about the situation?
Client: I feel guilty about wanting to leave them. But I also feel angry that they don't want to let me grow up. I know they've got problems, but they should work them out on their own. What do you think I should do?
12. **Helper:** You should move out you could have a talk with your parents and tell them how you feel.
Client: Well I could try it. If I wanted to get into the dorms, do you know how I'd go about it?
13. **Helper:** The housing office on campus would have all that information they're located on the other side of campus.
Client: I should call them I guess. Do you really think I should move out?
14. **Helper:** I can see that you would like me to tell you what to do but I'm a little anxious about giving you advice because I don't know enough about you and your situation you are the one who has to decide whether to move out.
Client: I'm afraid of making a mistake, so I'd like to hear what you think.

15. **Helper:** I feel a bit surprised that you want me to tell you what to do I wonder if you also rely on your parents to tell you what to do too and then get angry at them when they do?
Client: I never thought of that before. You might be right. I do get passive and then they tell me what to do. And I certainly do get angry at them. I guess we have some bad patterns that have been established over the years. I'll think about that. But I would still like to know whether you think I should move out?
16. **Helper:** I can tell you that when I had problems with my parents I talked to them and then I moved out it was important for me to talk to them to keep our relationship good but I felt really scared when I first sat down to talk with them because I was afraid they would get angry in my opinion it will probably be hard on all of you at first but most young people need to leave home and strike out on their own even if it is hard.
Client: Well, thanks for your help.
17. **Helper:** What do you think you'll do?
Client: Maybe I'll talk with my parents.
18. **Helper:** Let's try it right now the research shows that it is easier to do it outside once you have practiced doing it in a helping session what I'd like you to do is pretend that your parents are right here and tell them that you want to move out.
Client: Okay. Mom and Dad. I just want to tell you that, well, I guess I would like to move out maybe sometime soon.
19. **Helper:** That was a good start but you hesitated several times and your voice got real soft try to say it louder and state exactly what you want.
Client: Mom and Dad: I have decided to move out.
20. **Helper:** That sounds real good your voice was loud and clear and you stated exactly what you wanted try doing that when you talk to them you know I want to tell you that I am really enjoying working with you because you are so eager to change how do you feel about the work we did today?
Client: I feel really good. You gave me a lot to think about. I'm not sure yet what I'll do, but I feel more confident that I'll be able to work it out with my parents.
21. **Helper:** Terrific bye now I hope you enjoy the rest of the day.
Client: You too. Bye.

Instructions for Judging Helping Skills

Place each response unit (indicated by a slash) in the following practice transcripts into one and only one of the helping skills (use the spaces in front of the helper statements to indicate your judgment). After you have judged every response unit, look at the correct responses at the end. Please note that I am trying to illustrate all the skills here, rather than trying to present a transcript where the helper is particularly effective. Use the following numbers for the helping skills (note that attending skills are not coded in this transcript):

1 = approval and reassurance

2 = closed questions

3a = open questions about thoughts; **3b** = open questions about feelings; **3c** = open questions for insight;

3d = open questions about action

4 = restatement

5 = reflection of feelings

6 = challenge

7 = interpretation

8 = self-disclosure

9 = immediacy

10a = information about the process of helping; **10b** = data, facts, or opinions; **10c** = feedback about client

11a = process advisement; **11b** = directives

12 = other

Scoring

1. / / / / **Helper:** Thanks for coming today./ My name is Judy./ I am beginning to learn helping skills./ We have 20 minutes to talk today./ You should talk today about whatever is on your mind./
Client: I've been feeling down lately. I'm having a lot of trouble getting motivated. I haven't felt like going to class. Nothing really interests me.
2. / / **Helper:** Give me an example of what happened the last time you didn't go to class./ Oh, but first, what is your major?/
Client: I haven't really decided on a major because I haven't found anything that interests me.
3. / / **Helper:** So you haven't decided yet./ Are you living on campus?/
Client: I'm living at home and I feel a lot of pressure on me. I would like to live in the dorm but my parents won't pay for it and I don't have the money myself. I mean my parents live right near campus and they say why should you live in a dorm when we live so close that you can easily walk. You might as well save money.
4. / / **Helper:** It seems to you like your parents are forcing you to live at home./
Client: Yeah, it sure does and I really resent it. I think I would feel so much freer in a dorm. I feel restricted at home, like they're watching every move I make, and I don't feel free to come and go as I please.
5. / / **Helper:** You feel stifled./ It sounds like you also feel uncomfortable because your parents are so restrictive./
Client: Right, but I'm not sure how to deal with it. They do provide me with a place to sleep and help me out a little with school. I feel like I ought to be grateful to them.
6. / / / / **Helper:** You started fidgeting a lot just then/ and your voice got real soft./ I wonder if you feel a little upset./ Did I get that feeling right?/
Client: Well, I guess I feel bad, like I'm not a good son. I feel like they're giving me so much and all I do is want more.
7. / / **Helper:** How do you feel about that?
Client: I was really angry last night when they told me that they really didn't want me to leave. They got all upset when I even brought up the topic, especially my mom.
8. / / / / **Helper:** I wonder if both you and your parents are having trouble separating because of your changing role as you're growing up./ Maybe they're not quite ready for you to leave home because they're anxious about having an empty nest./ I wonder if you have a hard time leaving because you're afraid you'll hurt them./ I wonder what you think about what is causing the problem between you and your parents?/
Client: That could be true. You know I'm an only child and my parents are older. They built

their whole world around me.

9. / / **Helper:** On the one hand, it's hard to leave them,/ but on the other hand, you want to go out and lead your own life./
Client: Well, I want to move out, but I don't want to hurt them.
10. / / **Helper:** When I left home, my parents were quite upset and I felt terrible and guilty./ What is it like for you?/
Client: Yeah, well, I don't know. It seems so difficult to figure all this out.
11. / **Helper:** How do you feel about the situation?/
Client: I feel guilty about wanting to leave them. But I also feel angry that they don't want to let me grow up. I know they've got problems, but they should work them out on their own. What do you think I should do?
12. / / **Helper:** You should move out./ You could have a talk with your parents and tell them how you feel./
Client: Well, I could try it. I if I wanted to get into the dorms, do you know how I'd go about it?
13. / / **Helper:** The housing office on campus would have all that information./ They're located on the other side of campus./
Client: I should call them I guess. Do you really think I should move out?
14. / / / **Helper:** I can see that you would like me to tell you what to do,/ but I'm a little anxious about giving you advice because I don't know enough about you and your situation/you are the one who has to decide whether to move out./
Client: I'm afraid of making a mistake, so I'd like to hear what you think.
15. / / **Helper:** I feel a bit surprised that you want me to tell you what to do./ I wonder if you also rely on your parents to tell you what to do too and then get angry at them when they do?/
Client: I never thought of that before. You might be right. I do get passive and then they tell me what to do. And I certainly do get angry at them. I guess we have some bad patterns that have been established over the years. I'll think about that. But I would still like to know whether you think I should move out?
16. / / / / **Helper:** I can tell you that when I had problems with my parents, I talked to them and then I moved out./ It was important for me to talk to them to keep our relationship good./ But I felt really scared when I first sat down to talk with them because I was afraid they would get angry./ In my opinion, it will probably be hard on all of you at first./ But most young people need to leave home and strike out on their own even if it is hard./
Client: Well, thanks for your help.
17. / **Helper:** What do you think you'll do?/
Client: Maybe I'll talk with my parents.
18. / / / **Helper:** Let's try it right now./ The research shows that it is easier to do it outside once you have practiced doing it in a helping session./ What I'd like you to do is pretend that your parents are right here and tell them that you want to move out./
Client: Okay. Mom and Dad. I just want to tell you that, well, I guess I would like to move out maybe sometime soon.

19. / / / / **Helper:** That was a good start./ But you hesitated several times./ and your voice got real soft./ Try to say it louder and state exactly what you want./
Client: Mom and Dad: I have decided to move out.
20. / / / / / **Helper:** That sounds real good./ Your voice was loud and clear./ and you stated exactly what you wanted./ Try doing that when you talk to them./ You know, I want to tell you that I am really enjoying working with you because you are so eager to change./ How do you feel about the work we did today?/
Client: I feel really good. You gave me a lot to think about. I'm not sure yet what I'll do, but I feel more confident that I'll be able to work it out with my parents.
21. / / / **Helper:** Terrific./ Bye now./ I hope you enjoy the rest of the day./
Client: You too. Bye.

Answers to Practice Transcript

- 1 = 12, 10b, 10b, 10a, 11a
2 = 3a, 2
3 = 4, 2
4 = 4
5 = 5, 5
6 = 10c, 10c, 5, 2
7 = 3b
8 = 7, 7, 7, 3c
9 = 4, 6 (Note that although the whole intervention is a challenge, two separate codes are necessary because there are two separate units; by itself, the first unit is a restatement and the second is a challenge.)
10 = 8a, 3a
11 = 3b
12 = 1 lb, 1 lb
13 = 10b, 10b
14 = 9, 9, 6 (see note for response 9)
15 = 9, 7
16 = 8c, 8c, 8a, 10b, 10b
17 = 3a
18 = 11a, 10b, 11 a
19 = 1, 10c, 10c, 11a
20 = 1, 10c, 10c, 1 lb, 9
21 = 1, 12, 12

Note: Two (if there are three) or three (if there are four) judges should agree with at least 51 of the 57 judgments shown above, and you should understand the reasons for your lack of agreement with every response before you go on to the next stage (judging helping skills in transcripts of real sessions). (I expect higher agreement levels on this practice transcript than I would on transcripts of real sessions because these helper responses were created to be easier to judge.)

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