

Psychological Therapies

Personal Assessment of the Counsellor

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Introduction

In Humanistic Therapies the quality of the dialogue is all-important. The efficacy and outcome of the therapeutic relationship is determined by ‘what goes on’ between the therapist and the patient interactions; this is fundamental for all Humanistic Therapies:

Gestalt

Integrative Therapy

Person Centred Approach (PCA)

Counselling Psychology

Psychosynthesis

In all these therapies, the therapist is responsible for his/her behaviour towards the patient. During training trainees undertake mandatory **Personal Self-Development** to increase their **Self-Awareness** of ‘how’ they are interacting and behaving in relation with other people.

Personal Self-Awareness

Humanistic training institutes vary in how trainees are assessed for personal self-awareness, which essentially comprises of the Rogerian Core Conditions:

Congruence, Empathy and **Unconditional Positive Regard**. It is these factors that promote the eventual bond between therapist and patient and maintains the therapeutic alliance.

Videotapes of trainees' interactions in training modules, placement therapeutic sessions and self and peer assessment of videos are important for the development of self-awareness. The training is tough and many trainees are unable to continue due to personal issues, which ironically, may have incurred an interest of pursuing a career in therapy.

Counsellor Rating Scales may be used to assess self-awareness on some courses such as Client Centred Therapy or PCA and other fields such as teaching and social work. The scales can be used for assessment of therapists' work during supervision.

Counsellor Rating Scales

The evolving theory is that :-

1. The relationship is all important in human growth and development.
2. Constructive relationships can be defined in terms of a list of factors.
3. These factors are, at least to a reasonably workable degree, observable and measurable.
4. **The absence of these factors produces relationships which can cause people to deteriorate, just as their presence helps people grow.**

Source: Carkhuff, Amida Trust http://www.amidatrust.com/article_carkhuff.ht

Unconditional Positive Regard

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) surrounds a warm, non-judgemental attitude towards others, being non-critical, non-directive, receptive and acceptant of other's life experience. When therapists are self-accepting of their own idiosyncrasies this engenders self-respect and automatic respect of others.

Genuine UPR cannot be learnt and comes gradually with self-development in the presence of another person who experiences UPR and congruence.

Unconditional Positive Regard - Counsellor Rating Scale

There are 5 levels of attainment for Unconditional Positive Regard.

The first level for **Unconditional Positive Regard** measured by Counsellor Rating Scale.

Unconditional Positive Regard: Level 1

The counsellor makes overt judgements of the client, either to praise or disapprove. She/he imposes her own values and beliefs and communicates a sense that the client is unable to function without help.

Source: Janet Tolan © 1998

<http://www.neuroleptic-awareness.co.uk/downloads/CounsellorRatingScalesJT-1.doc>
www.goodreads.com/author/show/586690.Janet_Tolan

Unconditional Positive Regard - Counsellor Rating Scale

Example of Unconditional Positive Regard Level 1 – the lowest level of attainment:

Client: I can't wait to get out of school I'm so excited. I just want to get out and get started on my career. I know I'm going places.

Counsellor: What's the matter? Don't you like school?

... the therapist shows a complete lack of respect and warmth for the client and is evaluative.

Source: C. H. Patterson **RESPECT (UNCONDITIONAL REGARD)** From: 'The Therapeutic Relationship', Monterey, CA: Brooks /Cole. 1985. pp.59-63.

http://www.sageofasheville.com/pub_downloads/RESPECT_%28UNCONDITIONAL_POSITIVE_REGARD%29.pdf

Unconditional Positive Regard - Counsellor Rating Scale

Level 5 is the highest level of attainment for **Unconditional Positive Regard**.

Unconditional Positive Regard: Level 5

The counsellor's deep respect for the client is evident throughout. She/he is able to maintain this respect, and remain congruent, even when the client seems to be attempting to destroy the relationship. She/he is fully trusting of the client's actualising tendency and of him/herself (the counsellor) in the relationship. She/he is able to offer a wide range of empathic and congruent communications in such a manner that the client is able to take or ignore them according to need.

Source: Janet Tolan © 1998

<http://www.neuroleptic-awareness.co.uk/downloads/CounsellorRatingScalesJT-1.doc>
www.goodreads.com/author/show/586690.Janet_Tolan

Unconditional Positive Regard - Counsellor Rating Scale

Example of Unconditional Positive Regard Level 5 – the highest level of attainment:

Introduction:

James was 18 years old and difficult to work with because he was alienated, suspicious and angry. The following extract occurred 30 minutes into the first counselling interview. Much of the preceding time he had been taken up with James taunting the counsellor: asking her if she had any training, why she was ‘so very old’, and laughing at the clothes she wore. The counsellor had not found the 30 minutes easy by any means, but had been intent upon outlasting James’s barrage. As time went by James escalated his attack until he climaxed it with:

James: Okay – you tell me how I should get a job...go on... ..tell me... ‘advise’ me that’s your job after all...go on...earn your money you charlatan!’

Counsellor: [*after a long pause*] It feels like you’re pushing me more and more...like you really want to fight or something like that.

Unconditional Positive Regard - Counsellor Rating Scale

Example Level 5 continued:

James: Yes. You're ---- right I want to fight --- you're just like all the rest ...a do-gooder who's only in it for herself. I bet you like me to think of yourself as a 'good person who helps people'. Well I think you are a ----- . I think you're 'no good---go on earn your money you bitch!

Counsellor: [after a long silence] 'I do feel hurt...I feel sad as well [silence] what do you feel?...do you feel hurt as well?' [Long silence]

Appraisal:

The client's "... defensiveness repelled other people, because as a shield to the outer world it hid who they really were as people. Unconditional positive regard involves not being deflected by the defensive shield but waiting, continuing to value the worth of the person and thereby earning the right to be allowed behind the shield."

Source: "Person-Centred Counselling in Action" Mearns & Thorne.

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Person_Centred_Counselling_in_Action.html?id=KPLaDdxdp84C

Empathy

Empathy is conveying the therapist's understanding of the patient's subjective perspective so the patient recognises the therapist's understanding. So the patient might exclaim, "Exactly" or "You've hit the nail on the head". When the patient feels understood by the therapist he/she is able to progress to the next pressing subjective issue.

A therapist's understanding is akin to what it is like to be in the patient's shoes, without losing site of the therapist's own ground and perspective.

The ability to be empathetic can be learnt and is integral to the helping relationship.

Empathy - Counsellor Rating Scale

The Counsellor Rating Scale for **Empathy** has 0-3 levels of attainment.

Example of Empathy Level 0 – the lowest level of attainment:

Client statement:

He treats me like a baby - looking after me all the time, mollycoddling me all the time...suffocating me! He fails to realise that since I've come to university I am not such a baby any more... I'm independent ..I'm strong!

Counsellor response: Level 0

Men are all the same - you're better rid of them!

“The response shows no evidence of understanding of the client’s expressed feelings. It may be a comment which is irrelevant to the client’s feelings, or perhaps a judgemental response, advice giving, hurtful or rejection.” “This is more the kind of response which a friend or acquaintance might give if she does not really want the client to go deeper into her feelings.”

Source: “**Person-Centred Counselling in Action**” Mearns & Thorne

Empathy - Counsellor Rating Scale

Empathy Level 3 is the highest level of attainment:

Example of Empathy Level 3:

Counsellor response: *I see your anger that he doesn't understand that you're changing...that seems really strong...but I also wonder ...you look as though you're trembling ..is that you anger or is there something else going on in you as well?*

In the actual counselling session from which this extract is taken, the response elicits a long silence from the client as it touched the level of her awareness. Following this silence the client responded with what was to prove a very powerful discovery:

yes:...yes I am scared I'll loose him ...

“The response shows an understanding of the client beyond the level of the clients immediate awareness. As well as communicating comprehension of the surface feelings and responses of the client, the listener is showing an understanding of *underlying* feelings. This is sometimes called 'addictive empathy', but is more commonly referred to as a depth reflection.”

Source: “[Person-Centred Counselling in Action](#)”, Mearns & Thorne.

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Person_Centred_Counselling_in_Action.html?id=KPLaDdxdp84C

Congruence

Congruence surrounds authenticity, genuineness and transparency in dialogue and an awareness of feelings as they arise from within and the ability to make an informed choice to verbalise feelings.

A trainee who is incongruent can attain congruence by committing to personal self-development with another person who experiences unconditional positive regard and congruence.

"The trust which the congruent counsellor earns is that of a person who is willing to be fully present as a real, alive, relating human being who is not concealing".

Congruence:

"This condition refers to at least in part the counsellors fitness to help"

Source: Sanders P. Chapter 6: **THE COUNSELLOR IS READY TO HELP.**

(2006) Person-Centred Counselling PCCS BOOKS: Ross on Wye.

<http://www.pccs-books.co.uk/products/the-person-centred-counselling-primer/#.UQ5hhWejeSo>

Congruence - Counsellor Rating Scale

There are 1 – 5 levels for measuring congruence in the Counsellor Rating Scale:

Example of Congruence Level 1 – the lowest level of attainment:

Client: I don't think you like me.

Counsellor: Of course I like you.

[Silence]

In this example the counsellor was perfectly aware of the fact that she did not like the client very much, but she lied.

Client: You seem angry with me today.

Counsellor: No, I'm not tired...its just I've had a lot on my plate today.

[Silence]

The counsellor was unaware that she was angry, which leads to more client confusion.

Source: “Person-Centred Counselling in Action” Mearns & Thorne.

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Person_Centred_Counselling_in_Action.html?id=KPLaDdxdp84C

Congruence - Counsellor Rating Scale

Congruence: Level 1

The example shows that “The therapist is clearly defensive and there is explicit evidence of considerable discrepancy between what she/he says and what she/he experiences. There may be striking contradictions in the therapist's statements and the content of her/his statements may contradict voice qualities and non-verbal cues.

Source: Carkhuff, Amida Trust http://www.amidatrust.com/article_carkhuff.html

Congruence - Counsellor Rating Scale

Example of Congruence Level 5 - the highest level of attainment:

Introduction:

The 19-year old client, Pete, had been showing considerable progress over the previous sessions, but since the last meeting he has been rejected by a new girl friend. This seems to have thrown him back into his former feelings of inadequacy.

Pete: So once again I've got ditched....she didn't want me either ...I've lost again – failed again ... she's *gone* just like the rest. I don't blame her...its not her fault.

Counsellor: I know- it's you 'poor you'- rejected again-like always!...[pause] I'm sorry that was sarcastic of me...I was taking a 'dig' at you - Oh! [*shaking herself vigorously*] I got really wound up with what you were saying- it sounded so hopeless, so inevitable, so defeating and it happens again and again. Its like I wanted to shake you and say 'Don't be such a wimp – you don't need to sink into self pity – you can be more than that!'

Congruence - Counsellor Rating Scale

Example Level 5 continued:

Pete: But it's not my fault!

Counsellor: Then whose is it [in a raised voice] ?!

Pete: OK, it's my fault [head bows – looks sullen]. [Silence]

Counsellor: [speaking really slowly]; I feel pretty bad about my self 'battering' you like that. I don't think that was clever of me and I don't think that was helpful of me. I think I reacted so strongly because I do care about you – and was so frustrated that once again, after it looked like you had gained so much, when one thing went wrong you slipped right back down again. I guess I'd got a bit too desperate on your behalf, and that made it difficult for you. How do you feel?

Pete: [Pause] I feel frustrated too – I'm annoyed with myself too- I'm more annoyed with my self as you are! I can't believe that I've dropped into 'poor me again' when one thing goes wrong. That's why this is such a big thing for me - not because of the girl – but maybe I hadn't changed as much as I thought I had.

Source: "[Person-Centred Counselling in Action](#)" Mearns & Thorne

Congruence – Counsellor Rating Scale

Appraisal of level 5 example:

“...the counsellor would not have been very proud of the first half of the interaction.....Such flashes of annoyance would not be regarded as therapeutic use of congruence; the counsellor had got over-involved and is simply venting her frustration on the client.... the counsellor shows responsibility to the client and recovers the situation by being fully congruent in her third and final statement.”

Source: “[Person-Centred Counselling in Action](#)” Mearns & Thorne

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Person_Centred_Counselling_in_Action.html?id=KPLaDdxdp84C

Congruence – Counsellor Rating Scale

In Level 5 Congruence:

“Therapist is freely and deeply him/herself in the relationship. Therapist is open to experiences and feelings both pleasant and hurtful without defensiveness or retreat into professionalism. Therapist accepts and recognises contradictory feelings. Therapist is clearly being him/herself in all his/her responses whether personally meaningful or trite. Therapist need not express personal feelings but whether he is giving advice, reflecting, interpreting or sharing experiences, it is clear that he is being very much him/herself so that verbalizations match inner experiences.”

Source: Carkhuff, Amida Trust http://www.amidatrust.com/article_carkhuff.html

Summary

Due to the ongoing self-awareness during training and in supervision, whether ongoing assessment, or by the use of Counsellor Rating Scales, Humanistic trainees attain high levels of self-awareness.

Qualification is dependent upon trainees achieving the higher levels of attainment of self-awareness; this ensures vulnerable patients are protected from psychological abuse from qualified practitioners.

All qualified practitioners who do not undertake personal self-development are in the position of unwittingly abusing patients psychologically.

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