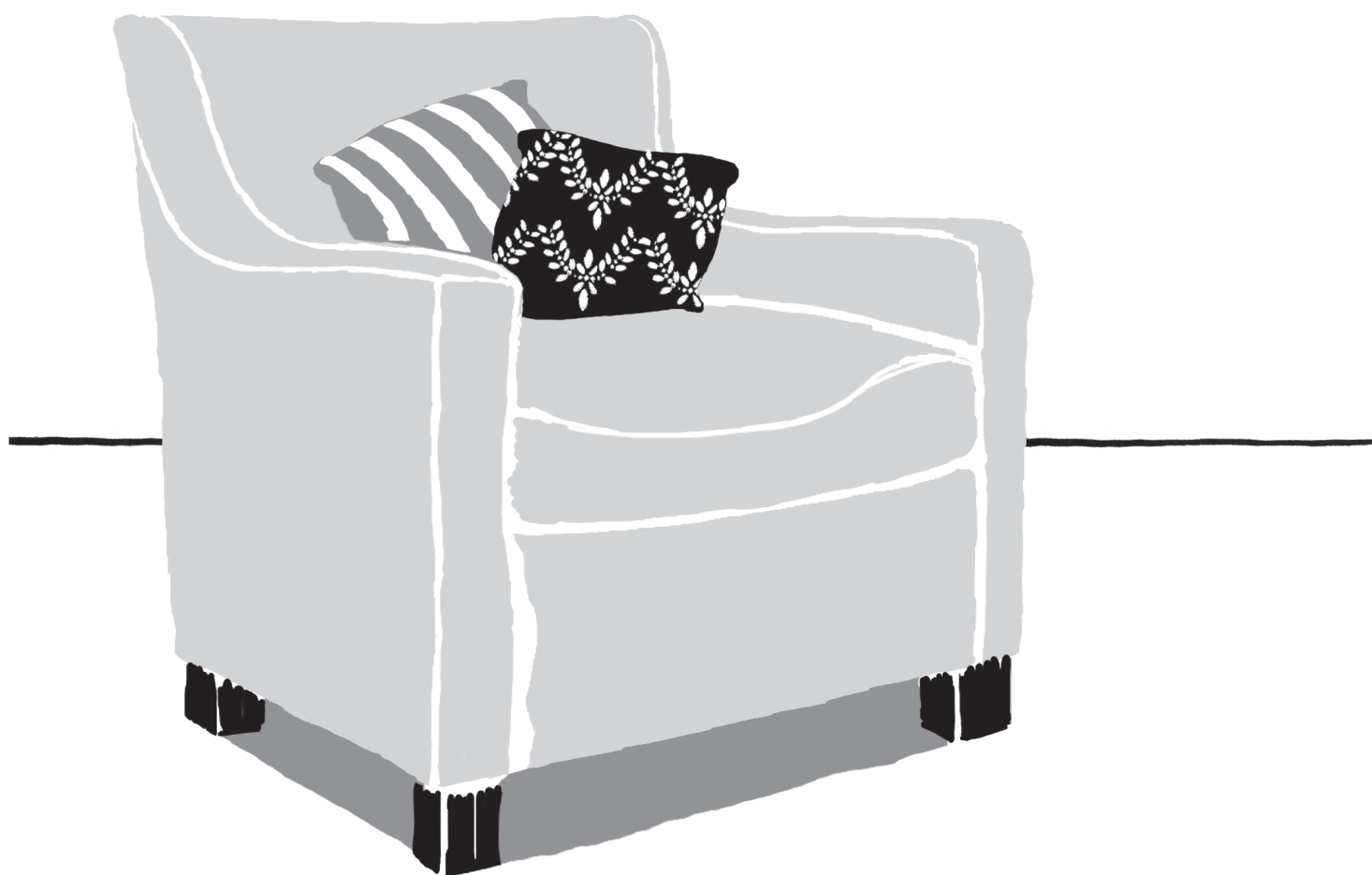


your evening class

COUNSELLING



workbook 01

teach[®]
yourself





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Lesson 02

What is counselling?

In this lesson you will:

- consider what counselling is
- consider what counselling is not
- learn how to avoid basic counselling errors
- understand the aims of counselling and the counsellor
- consider what other forms of giving help there are.

Introduction

In Lesson 02 we hope to help you to understand exactly what counselling is, and what it is not. There are many misconceptions about the nature of counselling, but if you can establish a real understanding now of exactly what it is, this will lay firm foundations for the rest of the course. For example, some people believe counselling is about offering advice, but in fact counselling should not be used to advise people as to what they should or should not do.

■ Exercise 2.1

Why would it be a mistake to use counselling to advise people as to what they should do or not do?

Write down as many reasons as you can think of.



Now listen to CD 1, Track 5 to check your answers. You will also hear role-plays of two possible versions of the same counselling session. The first role-play is an example of poor counselling practice and the second is an example of good practice.

Are you surprised by what you have already learned about counselling? Whether you are simply striving to develop your listening skills or you wish to become a counsellor, it is very easy to stray into advice-giving waters.

■ Counselling misconceptions

Here are some more misconceptions about counselling.

- Counselling is only for people who are mentally unstable.
- Counselling is an activity for self-absorbed people.
- Counselling is a crutch for weak people.
- Counselling may make the client feel judged in some way.
- Counselling is an activity in which an expert analyses the client.

■ Exercise 2.2

Can you add any more misconceptions to this list?

Were you able to think of any misconceptions to add? You could have added, for example, ‘counselling is something that only deals with major problems in people’s lives’, or ‘counselling is an opportunity for the counsellor to “compare notes” with the client by revealing personal information’.

What counselling is

Tip

The word counselling comes from the Middle English *counseil*, from Old French *conseil*, from Latin *cōnsilium*; akin to *cŷnsulere*, to take counsel, consult.

(source: Wikipedia)



Now listen to CD 1, Track 6, which will consider in more detail what counselling actually is, in the context of the misconceptions listed above.

■ Exercise 2.3

Counsellors often hear the comment, 'Why would I need counselling? I can just talk to my friends about my problems.'

How would you answer this question? Write down some of your own ideas.

- 1 What do you see as the main purpose of counselling?

- 2 What reasons might people have for seeking counselling?

- 3 What do you consider counselling provides?

■ Some features of counselling

- Counselling is an activity designed to help people, and is intended to be therapeutic.
- It involves two people: the person who is to be helped (the client) talking to the person who is doing the helping (the counsellor).
- It is usual for counselling to be carried out only by people who have undergone training, hold qualifications and have a depth of experience in counselling.
- Counselling invariably takes place in a confidential setting, enabling the client to feel free to talk about whatever issues concern them.

- Counselling provides an opportunity for the client to explore thoughts and feelings, attitudes and beliefs, fears and anxieties, dreams and goals.
- Counselling can help a client to think through their options for making changes to their life and to their lifestyle, thus enabling them to work towards finding solutions to issues and problems, and towards achieving greater satisfaction in their life.
- The counsellor helps the client to identify choices for the future and supports the client in making these happen. The counsellor's aim is to help clients recognize how they would realistically like their lives to be, and then to help them actualize or achieve these aims.

Tip

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) defines counselling thus:

The term 'counselling' includes work with individuals and with relationships which may be developmental, crisis support, psychotherapeutic, guiding or problem solving. The task of counselling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully.'

■ Exercise 2.4

Think about the various aspects of a counsellor's role. What do you think the role involves? Write a list of your ideas below.

Compare your ideas with the list below.

What a counsellor does

A counsellor should:

- listen effectively to what the client is saying
- pause the client when it is useful and appropriate
- facilitate the untangling of thoughts, feelings and worries about a situation
- offer their insights into how the client acts, thinks and feels
- help the client express their emotions in their own way
- help the client work out their own solutions to problems
- help the client accept what cannot be changed
- help and support the client while they do this
- use a variety of different techniques to help the client explore what is important to them.

■ The aims of counselling

You may or may not be aware but there are many different types of counselling called ‘theoretical models’. We will look at these different models in detail in this course and particularly in your theory book. However, no matter what counselling model is followed, there are some basic aims that all counsellors hope to achieve. These include:

- Insight – an understanding of the origins and development of emotional difficulties, leading to an increased capacity to take rational control over feelings and actions.
- Self-awareness – becoming more aware of thoughts and feelings and developing a more accurate sense of how a person is perceived by others.
- Self-acceptance – the development of a positive attitude towards oneself, ‘warts and all’, which accepts human fallibility and doesn’t give ratings to specific weaknesses, but rather accepts them or works on them.
- Self-actualization – moving in a direction to fulfil potential.
- Enlightenment – assisting the client to arrive at a greater level of personal insight.
- Development of the client’s social skills – learning and mastering social and interpersonal skills to improve the client’s personal and professional interactions with others.

- Cognitive change – modifying or replacing negative and destructive thoughts with alternative, better-balanced and more rational views.
- Behavioural change – identifying patterns of behaviour that fail to achieve desired outcomes, and testing alternative behaviours for more positive outcomes.
- Systemic change – introducing change into the way in which social systems (e.g. families) operate.

■ Exercise 2.5

Do you have a fairly clear understanding of the aims outlined above? If there is anything that you don't understand, or aren't especially familiar with, do a little research using books (including the theory book that accompanies this course) and the internet.

Other forms of helping

In order to be clear about what counselling is and what it is not, you need to have some knowledge of other forms of helping.

■ Exercise 2.6

Apart from counselling, can you think of other ways there might be to help others, ones that also use listening, communication and counselling skills?

Note your ideas below.



Now listen to CD 1, Track 7 to hear some ideas about other ways to help people.

Whether you decide to pursue a career in counselling or not, we hope that the skills that you learn in this course will be useful in your everyday life.

Summary

In this lesson you have learned:

- what counselling is and what it is not
- what a counsellor does
- what a counsellor aims to achieve
- how to avoid some basic counselling errors
- some ways to help people other than counselling.

Lesson 02 Worksheet

Answer the following questions without looking back at the lesson in the workbook or listening to the CD again.

- 1 Write a short paragraph on the main features of counselling, and how it differs from other helping roles, such as advising, mentoring, befriending etc.

- 2 Write down what you believe to be the main aims of counselling and of the counsellor.

Now check back through your workbook and listen again to the audio tracks for this lesson to see how accurate you were, and to remind yourself of anything you could not remember.