

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

EGC 804



Techniques of Counselling Module 1

EGC 804 Techniques of Counselling Module I

Course Developer/Writer

Dr. Augustine Chinweuba Ukwueze & Dr. Aminu Kazeem Ibrahim, National Open University of Nigeria

Course Editor

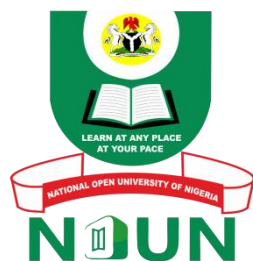
Prof. Soji Aremu University of Ibadan

Programme Leader

Prof. U.S.A Osuji, National Open University of Nigeria

Credits of cover-photo: Henry Ude, National Open University of Nigeria

National Open University of Nigeria - University Village, 91 Cadastral Zone, Nnamdi Azikiwe Express Way, Jabi Abuja, Nigeria



www.nou.edu.ng centralinfo@nou.edu.ng

oer.nou.edu.ng oerunit@nou.edu.ng OER repository

Published in 2021, by the National Open University of Nigeria

© National Open University of Nigeria 2021



This publication is made available in Open Access under the [Attribution-ShareAlike4.0 \(CC-BY-SA 4.0\) license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the Open Educational Resources repository nouonline.net of the National Open University of Nigeria.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of National Open University of Nigeria concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of National Open University of Nigeria and do not commit the organization.

How to re-use and attribute this content

Under this license, any user of this textbook or the textbook contents herein must provide proper attribution as follows: “First produced by the National Open University of Nigeria” and include the NOUN Logo and the cover of the publication. The repository has a version of the course available in ODT-format for re-use.

If you use this course material as a bibliographic reference, then you should cite it as follows: “Course code: Course Title, Module Number, National Open University of Nigeria, [year of publication] at nouonline.net

If you redistribute this textbook in a print format, in whole or part, then you must include the information in this section and give on every physical page the following attribution: Downloaded for free as an Open Educational Resource at nouonline.net If you electronically redistribute part of this textbook, in whole or part, then you must retain in every digital file (including but not limited to EPUB, PDF, ODT and HTML) the following attribution:

Module I

Unit I Overview of the Concept and Principles of Counselling

1.0 Introduction

In EGC 802 (Counseling Theories), various approaches or theories of counseling were extensively discussed. As a follow up, this course highlights the various techniques of counseling that can be applied by counsellors while attending to clients' problems. However, to grasp the in-depth knowledge of this course, it is wise to revisit the meaning and principles of counseling as a foundation stone which were discussed in EGC 802. Human beings seek attention from fellow human beings when in distress and in the end, have their problems solved especially if the right experts were consulted. This helping situation involves counseling by professionals who are trained in the field and clients who may present a myriad of problems yawning for solutions.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of counseling
- enumerate the types of counseling
- highlight the principles of counseling
- discuss the characteristics of a practicing and professional counsellor.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Meaning of Counseling

In our society, people always turn to their relations, friends and other adults for help whenever they experience personal problems (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). Such problems could be educational, social, emotional, vocational and psychological. Traditionally, people seek to solve these problems through pieces of advice from parents, relatives, religious leaders, village heads, societal leaders, teachers, native doctors, school heads, and peers.

However, problems confronting human beings are much more than what mere words of advice can solve. In the contemporary time, many people seek for assistance from helpers (religious leaders, elders, traditionalists, etc) who are not professionally trained to do so. This professional process of assisting people in solving their problems is called counseling. This involves a complex process of providing solutions to the myriads of scientific and technological problems facing every nation and the people. Such services could be provided for in schools and non-school settings like industries, hospitals, corporate institutions and agencies. In such settings, many conditions on the job could create emotional tension in the employees which could lead to job dissatisfaction, resistance to change, alienation,

frustration, conflict, psychological stress and eventually low productivity and poor morale which therefore, call for counseling (Akinade, Sokan and Osarenren, 2005).

Perez (1965) defines counseling as an interactive process co-joining the counselee, who is vulnerable and who needs assistance, and the counsellor who is trained and educated to give this assistance, the goal of which is to help the counselee learn to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment. Durojaiye (1986) sees counseling as an interaction between a counsellor and a person in a perceived temporary state of indecision, confusion, malfunction, habit disorder, distress or despair to resolve the confusion and offer solutions to behaviour disorders as identified in order to live adjusted life. Anagbogu (1988) is of the opinion that counseling functions to facilitate normal development and prevent great frustrations, anxieties and stress. Makinde (1988) sees counseling as a service designed to help an individual analyse himself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment to what new decision he has made or has to make. According to him, this is achieved through consultation, discussion, deliberation, exchange of ideas, advice or process of decision making. Akinade, Sokan and Osarenren (2005) sum up the definitions of counseling as provided by several experts as a number of procedures used in assisting an individual in solving problems which arise in various aspects of his life or in assisting him to maximise his overall personal development so that he could be more effective, satisfied and more useful to the society in which he lives.

Counseling is therefore defined variously by various authors or experts with a common front. All the definitions point to the fact that counseling is an interactive process. It is a mediating relationship between two persons. Its aim is to resolve a conflicting problem disturbing one of the persons who is vulnerable and seeks for assistance.

3.2 Types of Counseling

Basically, there are two types of counseling. They are individual counseling and group counseling. In the definitions of counseling, you were told that there is always a contact either physically or otherwise between a counsellor and a counselee or counselees in the process of finding solutions to problems presented by the latter. When this interaction involves a counsellor and a client in a counseling session or sessions, it becomes individual or individualised counseling. Anagbogu (1988) defines individual counseling as a one-to-one relationship that is highly personalised, private and confidential. It is therefore an encounter that often leads to better self-concept and individual fulfillment. Characteristically, individual counseling is highly specialised and offers the counsellor the opportunity to provide therapeutic relationship capable of changing personality growth. The counselee in individual counseling is provided with the opportunity and enabling environment to respond to the social setting based on his inner drives. According to Onah (2002), individual counseling involves direct communication between a counsellor and a counselee as well as non-verbal communication in the form of gestures, glances, facial expressions, and nodding of the head to enable the counselee achieve self-understanding, insight into his problem and exploration of his opportunities. Individual counseling interaction/relationship can last for several sessions depending on the nature of problems presented by clients.

Onah (2002) is of the opinion that individual counseling is predicated upon the fact that:

1. The counsellor must be willing to accept the relationship.
2. The counsellor must possess the appropriate skills, personal attitudes, training and expertise required of a professional counsellor.

3. The counsellor must maintain the confidential nature of the interaction without divulging any aspect of his discussions with his client.
4. The relationship must create room for the immediate and long-term needs of counselees.
5. The counsellor must be available and accessible each time a client needs his assistance.

On the other divide of counseling is group counseling. Akinade, Sokan and Osarenren (2005) define group counseling as an interaction that involves more than one person having counseling session or sessions with the counsellor. According to Anagbogu (1988), group counseling is a process of interaction that occurs in a large group that facilitates development of healthy attitudes and behaviour in a way that individuals who participate in it gain new information, new orientation to problems such as vocational, occupational, academic or social problems. Group counseling is therefore a process of rendering counseling service to two or more counselees at a time.

Characteristically, membership of a group counseling session ranges from two to a maximum of twelve counselees to one counsellor. Problems discussed in group counseling are highly personal to members than those discussed elsewhere like in group counseling (Onah, 2005). For instance, a couple may decide to see a counsellor over a problem that is causing emotional or physical disturbance in their family under group counseling and have their problem resolved. Such a problem may be infertility, dwindling source of income or interference from in-laws of both sides. As a dynamic interpersonal process that focuses on conscience and behaviour, group counseling can also be used to treat ineffective study behaviour, excessive shyness, stage fright, gynaecological issues (like irregular or painful menstruation, low sperm count and premature ejaculation), poor relationship with the opposite sex and other behaviour related disorders. Onah (2002) concludes that the main thrust of group counseling is to influence attitudes, stamp out bad habits and treat other personal problems of members.

According to Federal Ministry of Education (FME,2000), counseling as a guidance service is classified into several areas of specialisation. They are:

- educational counseling
- vocational counseling
- psychological counseling
- social counseling
- rehabilitation counseling
- marital counseling.

In a school setting, educational counseling, vocational counseling, psychological counseling and social counseling are carried out for the benefit of students and staff. In settings outside the school, rehabilitation and marital counseling are carried out. The FME (2000) explains each of them thus:

Educational counseling: This involves activities that help in solving students' learning problems. The scope of this area of counseling includes development of effective study habits, enhancement of effective examination skills, utilization of various bodies and facilities for placement, and encouraging interaction between staff and students for better understanding of each others' needs.

Vocational counseling: This deals with problems of selection, training for and adjustment to occupation. It covers provision of occupational information and facilitation of appropriate choice of subjects and careers.

Social counseling: This is about with personality development and adjustment, development of positive interpersonal relationships, encouraging good personal grouping and provision for family and moral education, encouraging positive attitude to work and academic activities.

Psychological counseling: This aspect of counseling deals with personal problems and life adjustment. It covers reduction of maladaptive behaviour among students, encouraging socially desirable behaviour, provision of referral services, and encouragement of healthy interaction between the home and the school.

Rehabilitation counseling: This is a process by which the physically handicapped and maladjusted individuals like drug addicts, ex-convicts, teenage mothers, abused children, the sexually abused, commercial sex workers, and sociopaths are restored to normalcy. It also deals with problems arising from life disruption due to natural disasters, accidents, and wars/terrorism.

Marital counseling: This is also an aspect of counseling that deals with problems associated with selection of marriage partners. It also covers areas of finding solutions to problems of married life such as domestic violence, divorce and single parenthood. Like in rehabilitation counseling, marital counseling can be handled through seminars, workshops, individual and group counseling, ego-boosting techniques, enlightenment, brainstorming, reformatory services and effective referrals to specialized areas.

In the earlier discussed areas of counseling in schools, the counseling techniques required in tackling problems arising from such environment are excursions, collection and dissemination of career/vocational information, career talks, discussion, individual counseling and leadership training. Other techniques include interviews, checklists, observation, psychological testing, systematic desensitisation, questionnaires and relationship dyad. The combination of these activities and strategies depend on the age of the clients and the nature of problems presented for solution.

3.3 Principles of Counseling

The basic principles of counseling here are the operational rules and ethics in the practice of counseling profession which relate to the degree of uniformity in the process of assisting clients. One of such principles is that counseling is usually a team work that involves the counsellor and his client or clients as well as other stakeholders in an organisation. In a school setting for instance, the stakeholders involved are the administrators, teachers, parents, students, community leaders and others.

Essentially, the counsellor must possess appropriate training, skills and expertise for effective counseling. Secondly, he/she must see confidentiality as a major tool in counseling if he/she wishes to succeed in assisting his clients. Thirdly, there must be rapport between the counsellor and his/her client which must be rooted in mutual understanding, respect, cordiality, warmth and genuine interest. Thus, the counsellor with his/her specialised skills uses appropriate techniques that can enable clients evaluate or appraise themselves inwardly and come up with self-understanding in order to make wise and realistic decisions. Establishment of rapport starts as soon as a client steps into a counsellor's office with a

friendly welcome and courtesy from the counsellor. The counsellor has to be realistically sensitive to his/her clients' mood on entry into the office through good and assuring facial expression.

3.4 Characteristics of a Counsellor

Counsellors as specialists in helping enterprise are considered to possess features that distinguish them from other professionals. Basically, counsellors are trained individuals whose characteristics are such that increase their effectiveness while discharging their professional duties. Akinade, Sokan and Osarenren (2005) identified such characteristics as:

1. **Warmth:** This is the ability to like people, become receptive to people, friendly and to be able to communicate such feelings to them so that they can equally reciprocate the same gesture.
2. **Patience:** A counsellor is expected to be tolerant and capable of accepting his clients without limits or discriminations.
3. **Confidentiality:** This is the ability to keep secrets. A good counselor owes his clients the responsibility of keeping whatever transpired during their counseling encounter intact. Information should not be divulged for any reason except with the consent of the client involved and for his benefit.
4. **Empathy:** A good counsellor should be able to feel or put himself in the position of others during counseling in order to understand their view points, feelings, thoughts and actions.
5. **Above average intelligence:** Counseling is not meant for people below average intelligence since it is a problem-solving venture. The counsellor should be intelligent enough to engage in mental ability or activities that can enable him unravel his clients' problems and proffer acceptable solutions to them.
6. **Relative emotional freedom:** A good counsellor is one who alienates himself/herself from severe emotional problems to enable him/her handle his/her clients' problems. He/she should not be the type that will shed tears when his/her client is doing so in the course of presenting his/her problem.

Other characteristics of a counsellor include: humility, honesty, love, truthfulness, and ability to handle psychological testing. A counsellor should be highly trained in the art of counseling as none of the above skills are inherently inborn but acquired through training. He/she needs not to be religious as his/her faith might be different from that of his/her client which invariably will be a setback in an attempt to solve counseling problems as presented.

4.0 Conclusion

Counseling is an interactive process that involves providing assistance in solving human problems. Counseling can be individualised or group oriented depending on the nature and requirements of problems presented for solution. There are also some areas of specialisation in counseling such as educational, vocational, psychological, social, rehabilitation and marital counseling. Every counseling relationship is rooted in empathy, warmth, love, trust, confidentiality, rapport, and genuine interest. A good counsellor is one who possesses the above qualities and above all, capable of interpreting and providing solutions to his clients' problems.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you learned about the meaning and principles of counseling. Specifically, the unit treated the definition/description of counseling, types of counseling, principles of counseling and characteristics of practicing counsellors. This general overview of the concept and principles of counseling forms the theoretical framework upon which subsequent discussions will be anchored.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Counseling is defined variously by different authors. Give five different definitions of counseling and give a brief of their common features.
2. Mention five areas of counseling and briefly discuss with examples, any three of them.
3. Mr. Joel Musa Adebayo is interested in becoming a professional counsellor. What are the special attributes that can qualify him to practice his chosen career successfully?

7.0 References/Further Reading

Akinade, E. A., Sokan, B. O. & Osarenren, N. (2005). *An Introduction to Guidance and Counseling: A Basic Text for Colleges and Universities*. Yaba-Lagos: Derate Nigeria Limited.

Anagbogu, M. A. (1988). *Foundations of Guidance and Counseling for Colleges and Universities*. Awka: Academic Publishing Company.

Durojaiye, M. O. A. (1986). "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Guidance and Counseling in Nigeria." A paper presented during the 10th annual national conference of the Counseling Association of Nigeria.

FME (2000). *Blueprint on Guidance and Counseling for Educational Institutions in Nigeria*. Abuja: Arts and culture education.

Makinde, O. (1988). *Fundamentals of Guidance and Counseling*. London: Macmillan Publishing Limited.

Onah, P. C. (2002). *The School Guidance Programme: Theory and Practice*. Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers.

Perez, J. (1965). *Counseling: Theory and Practice*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wilson.

Unit 2 Counseling Approaches

1.0 Introduction

In unit 1, you were introduced to the concept of counseling as an interactive process for assisting individuals in solving their problems so that they can live adjusted life. To achieve this, there is always a path or roadmap which is conceptualised here as an approach. It is the way a particular task, problem or order is carried out to achieve a desired result. Several fields of human endeavour have different approaches as path ways to solve different problems. In counseling, there are thousands and one approach as there equally exist numerous experts. Hence, a large number of experts have utilised several approaches and methodologies to develop theories that explain how counseling should be professionally handled in order to solve clients' problems. Information culled from <http://www.onlinecounselingservice.co.uk/therapy-methods> indicates that there are about twenty four different counseling and psychotherapy approaches designed to assist people in solving their problems. These approaches have different techniques which are not mutually exclusive depending on the therapist and the nature of the problem to be solved.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain different approaches of counseling through which different counseling techniques are derived
- differentiate clearly between two or more counseling approaches.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Types of Counseling Approaches

Counseling approaches fall under three main categories which include behavioural, psychoanalytic and psychodynamic and humanistic approaches or therapies. The behavioural group focuses on cognitions and behaviours based on man's thoughts and actions. The belief here is that change can occur through reconditioning of thoughts and behaviour.

The psychoanalytical and psychodynamic approaches focus on man's unconscious relationship patterns from childhood. Scholars in this school of thought believe that unconscious thoughts are responsible for emerging behaviour of man.

The humanistic approach is all about self-development in the "here and now". Man is assisted here to recognise his strengths and weaknesses and make him responsible for his behaviour. These three broad categories of counseling and psychotherapeutic therapies could give rise to Adlerian, behavioural, brief, cognitive analytic, cognitive behavioural, eclectic and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapies or approaches that are explained in this unit. Below are brief explanations of these approaches.

Adlerian Therapy: This approach was propounded by Alfred Adler. The main thrust of the therapy is a therapeutic relationship that is co-operative, encouraging and practical in

quest to assist man to explore his unique lifestyle and worth. The therapy exposes individuals to the understanding of their habitual behaviour. The counseling techniques employed here are dialogue, insight, encouragement, re-orientation and enablement.

Behavioural Therapy: This approach is focused on man's response to his environment. His behaviour is therefore learnt based on his contact with the society. Such learned behaviours can be unlearned using reconditioning technique, reinforcement, social modeling, explanations and encouragement. The application of any of these techniques requires analysis of client's past in order to determine his present behaviour unlike in the Adlerian approach.

Brief Therapy: This approach combines the cognitive and behavioural approaches within a small setting. Sessions are usually brief with follow-ups after some specific period of time. Clients are treated here with assignment, direct teaching or instruction, explanation and observation.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT): This approach combines cognitive and psychotherapeutic approaches to encourage clients to use their own resources to develop their skills. These acquired skills are needed by them to change their destructive patterns of behaviour. This involves the treatment of negative thoughts using various techniques of counseling. Such techniques include directive, insight interpretative, supportive and forcing conformity techniques.

Cognitive Therapy: This is slightly different from the CAT as it uses the power of the mind to influence behaviour while the former encourages clients to utilise their own potentials in developing skills that can alter undesired behaviour. Cognitive therapists believe that past experiences are germane to self-perception thereby altering man's attitude, emotions and ability to deal with challenges. Man is assisted to identify, question and alter his negative thoughts. Also, treatment is structured and directed as in CAT. Hence, techniques that are usually applied under this approach are direct instruction, teaching, encouragement, forcing conformity and changing the environment from where the client draws his inspirations from.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: This therapy believes that man tends to form self-concept that affects the behaviour he displays. Such concepts can be positive or negative and can be influenced by man's environment. Human beings are saddled with cognitive triad (Sincero, 2011) which includes the self, the world and the future. These are all negative thoughts in man where in the self, he sees himself as rubbish. In the world environment, he sees the world as an irrational place with a lot of deceit, and in the future, he sees himself doomed with little or no hope (Sincero, 2011). Here, clients are taught how to change their thoughts and expectations. One of the counseling techniques employed in cognitive behavioural therapy is the relaxation technique. Others include teaching, explanation, assertive training, and enhancing awareness techniques.

Eclectic Approach: This is selection of what is particular to the client from a wide range of methods. Proponents of this approach believe that no single approach works better than all others for a particular problem. To them, both affective-impulsive and rational-intellectual challenges in man are dealt with using various resources to develop problem-solving behaviour. Makinde (1988) believes that eclectic approach works towards replacing emotional-compulsive behaviour inherent in man using intellectual resources. Techniques of eclectic counseling include deliberate action, re-education, training and selective treatment.

Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR): This approach involves simulation using eye contacts to elicit the right information. It allows a natural processing of traumatic cases as well as reoccurring negative memories. Post-traumatic stress disorder is amenable to treatment using EMDR. The best known techniques of therapy here are simulation and relaxation.

Existential Approach: This approach focuses on the belief that life has no significant meaning except if it is created. It advocates that an individual has to strive to attach meaning to life by developing his potentials. Hence, counseling is all about making man to achieve sense of life via a personal world view in addition to willingness to face challenges of life. The existential approach uses flexible techniques like insight, knowledge, decisive action, commitment; explanation and discussion to enable clients discover meaning for their existence.

Gestalt Approach: This approach sees man as a whole organism that cannot be separated from the environment. Counseling is aimed at integrating attention and awareness. The therapist on his part endeavors' to assist the client to understand how he behaves at a particular time and at the same time, tries to unravel what the client avoids in his life encounter. The belief is that the client's response to life experiences is contained in his thoughts, feelings and actions. He is assisted to gain self-awareness through the analysis of his behaviour and body language in order to give expression to repressed feelings. The counseling technique that Gestalt therapists can use are acting out, dream analysis, body expressions, changing questions to statements, personalizing pronouns to own experience, and awareness enhancement strategy.

Human Givens Approach: This model is a holistic, scientific and practical approach aimed at assisting clients in realising facts about the beliefs and ideologies they hold. As a dynamic and interactive organism, man is bound to encounter problems as a result of societal beliefs and ideologies. The therapists here assist him in engaging in realistic evaluation of self and his beliefs in order to live adjusted life. The counsellor using this approach employs explanation, cognitive restructuring, awareness creation and disputation to counsel his clients.

Humanistic Psychotherapy: This approach emphasises personal growth or awareness where man explores his feelings and takes charge of his thoughts and actions. The approach is not entirely on dysfunctional behaviour but about self-development and enhancement of potentials to achieve life adjustment. It is also a holistic approach that is non-directive or client-centred in philosophy. The client is aided to use his creative instincts to explore and solve his personal problems. Techniques of counseling that can be applied here are verbal and non-verbal or motor channels, unconditional remarks, positive regard, empathic statements, and non-committal expressions.

4.0 Conclusion

Various counseling approaches have different but interwoven techniques of counseling aimed at getting to the root of clients' problems. The few approaches of counseling discussed in this unit are by no means exhaustive. The most important thing is to understand that they are formidable indices for effective tackling of clients' problems. This could be achieved if only we understand fully the tenets of each of them and apply them in line with their philosophy of application. As a result, many counsellors practice integrative

approach where they blend some types of techniques in order to achieve the goals set to solve clients' problems. This approach is explained in Unit 3 of this module.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, three basic counseling approaches that are part of psychological therapies were discussed. They include behavioural therapies, psychoanalytical and psychodynamic therapies as well as their various techniques were explained in details. However, further readings of counseling theories in EGC 802 will enhance better and deeper understanding of some of the approaches discussed in this unit.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Highlight the differences between cognitive analytic therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy.
2. Outline the techniques of counseling that a counsellor using existential approach to counsel a client with disoriented personality can apply in handling the problem.

7.0 References/Further Reading

“Methods, Models and Approaches to Counseling and Psychotherapy.” Retrieved on March 3, 2013 from <http://www.onlinecounselingservice.co.uk/therapy-methods>.

Sincere, S. M. (2011). *Cognitive Learning Theory*. Retrieved on Sept 27, 2012 from <http://www.experiment-resources.com/cognitive-learning-theory.html>

Unit 3 Methods, Techniques and Strategies of counseling

1.0 Introduction

In every counseling encounter or session, there seems to be confusion about the use of such terms like methods, techniques and strategies of counseling. These three concepts have often been used loosely by counsellors as one entity or in an interwoven manner as a means of counseling clients. This unit therefore provides the opportunity to understand fully, the meaning of each method, technique and strategy, how and when to use each of them in counseling and their interrelatedness especially as they apply to counseling theories.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the concept of methods as it applies to counseling
- discuss the concept of techniques in relation to counseling
- explain the concept of strategies as it relates to counseling
- establish the relationship among methods, techniques and strategies in the field of counseling.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Concept of Counseling and its Method

Counseling is a process whereby a counsellor helps one to understand himself/herself and the causes of his/her problems. The client is helped to make good life out of a confusing state of life. Counseling as a purposeful, private conversation arising from the intention of one person to reflect on and resolve a problem in living and the willingness of another person to assist in that endeavour (McLeod, 2011) needs varying methods to accomplish. A counseling method may be either direct or indirect. It is direct when it involves the counsellor dishing out information in order to assist his clients in solving their problems. He uses more of cognitive skills to work on beliefs of his clients considered to be inappropriate. He is more of an advice giver to some extent but not enforcing his feelings on them.

The counsellor here gives reasons to counselees why certain information or idea is important or unimportant through the explanation of the content and applications of the facts presented. The cognitive theories of Sorenson (1964), Beck (1976) and Ellis (1962) among others make use of direct method of counseling.

Experts in counseling often use method as an overall terminology that covers theories and models of counseling. Some others see method as everything that counsellor does in the process of counseling his/her clients. Others believe that method is a way of explaining a concept during counseling. Be that as it may, method is defined by Lawal and Oyeleye (2003) as an orderly arrangement of activities and systematic procedure of doing things. According to them, methods set guidelines for the patterns of behaviour in an activity.

Hence, method in this regard is a systematic process through which counsellors approach their clients' problems in order to solve them and enable them live normal life. A method is a counsellor's approach to counseling which describes how he intends to proceed with counseling a client sitting before him. He is guided by a process of presenting information to answer questions posed by his client(s) during counseling. He tries to tackle his clients' problems or facts, concepts and generalisations systematically in order to achieve a good result.

The indirect type of method of counseling involves situations that give counselees the opportunity to decide the skills or knowledge needed to solve their problems. The counselees decide and provide solutions to their problems while the counsellor acts as a mere facilitator. The counselees do most of the talking while the counselor helps to put together some of the points raised by the counselees. The advantage of indirect method of counseling is that counselees are given the opportunity to think, reason, analyse and make options from available alternatives without being coerced. The Rogerian approach or client-centred theory of counseling is a typical counseling theory that makes use of indirect counseling method in solving clients' problems.

Carl Rogers was born on January 8, 1902 in Oak Park, Illinois, USA and died at the age of 85 years on February 4, 1987 in California, USA. He was one of the pioneer and founding fathers of research in Psychotherapy in America. He was honoured for his pioneering research with the Award for Distinguished Scientific Contribution by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1956. He propounded the Client-Centred Therapy as a cognitive approach to counseling. In 1945, he set up a counseling centre at the University of Chicago and was elected the President of American Psychological Association (APA) in 1947.

3.2 The Concept of Counseling Technique

Another key confusing concept in counseling is the concept of technique. Several people confuse technique with method of counseling. The term technique is described as a specific activity and action required to carry out assignment. It is simply a process of activity through which a counsellor gets his counselees to solve their problems during counseling sessions. Counseling techniques are specific actions or activities and processes a counsellor can apply to achieve the goal of a particular counseling method. For instance, an action that facilitates a change of state or behaviour is a counseling technique. Hence, the use of induction to achieve relaxation of the conscious mind and thoughts of clients which allows a deeper focus on other areas that give greater access to the unconscious mind is a specific action to alleviate stress. Induction is thus a counseling method of solving problem arising from stress.

In a typical counseling encounter, a counsellor can use questioning, periodic summarisation, feedback, confrontation and positive assertions as his counseling techniques to progressively solve his clients' problems. The cognitive therapists for instance make use of direct instruction, teaching, encouragement and forcing conformity techniques of counseling to influence behavior through the power of the mind. The behavioural therapists on the other hand use reconditioning, reinforcement, social modeling, explanation and encouragement techniques of counseling to analyse clients' past in order to determine their present behaviour and proffer solutions to problems presented by clients. The eclectic therapists on their own employ deliberate action, re-education, training, and selective treatment techniques of counseling while working on various approaches to solve clients' problems.

3.3 The Concept of Counseling Strategy

When confronted with burning issues, man plans and executes appropriate ways of dealing or solving such problems. In the same manner, a nation ravaged by terrorism often maps out plan for successful checkmating of terrorists within the territorial boundaries of that nation. Strategies are plans for using skills to accomplish a task (Shukla, 2005).

In the same way, for counsellors to be successful in solving their clients' problems, planning to successfully solve the problems and enable the client live normal life is very important. Hence, counseling strategy is a step taken by a counsellor in organising specific actions of counseling. Counseling technique is the sequencing of a given selection of techniques of counseling for the purpose of achieving a particular method of counseling. The process of sequencing techniques of counseling by counsellors to effectively and efficiently use counseling methods to achieve desired behaviour is therefore the strategy that the counsellors have applied.

A counsellor using behavioural method can apply a combination of counseling techniques such as reinforcement followed by re-education and later, modeling to achieve a desired behaviour. This systematic approach in order to get to the destination successfully describes the strategy that the counsellor mapped out and executed to solve his clients' problems. This calls for a variety of counseling skills demanded of trained counsellors to practice as professional counsellors.

3.4 Relationship among Methods, Techniques and Strategies of Counseling

The concepts of methods, techniques and strategies of counseling are not mutually exclusive as they are related activities employed by counsellors to carry out their counseling functions in order to achieve a better result. However, one can still differentiate them from one another. It is also expected that a professional counsellor should be able to apply each of them appropriately in the course of assisting his clients in solving their problems.

Thus, despite that, methods, techniques and strategies of counseling mean different things, each of them is needed for effective counseling to take place and become successful. Method is a counsellor's approach to counseling as techniques are the specific activities performed in the process of counseling while the use of methods and techniques systematically during counseling relationships is the strategy. For instance, if a counsellor uses the cognitive approach of counseling to solve youth restiveness, he will need to select some activities (techniques) such as explanation, discussion, reinforcement and cognitive restructuring to achieve his counseling goals and objectives. His strategy in this regard will involve the sequential selection of these techniques from one technique to another one until a successful counseling process is achieved. Hence, methods, techniques and strategies describe how counseling relationship is going to be carried out beginning from method to some specific techniques and strategies for employing the techniques chosen in order to assist clients in realizing their dreams.

4.0 Conclusion

The discussion in this unit centered on tripartite concepts of methods, techniques and strategies of counseling with method as the umbrella concept that covers the rest. The explanations given in this unit became imperative so that counsellors can engage in effective

counseling with better picture of the meaning and expectation of each concept in order to achieve maximally during counseling sessions. As counsellors, it is important to note that every single method of counseling depends on the techniques and strategies employed while using that particular method. Hence, counsellors are obliged to be conversant with the tenets of each of the three concepts while carrying out their counseling duties.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you read and discussed the meanings of methods, techniques and strategies of counseling. Also discussed is the relationship among the three concepts which suggests that methods, techniques and strategies show how a counseling session could be successfully achieved beginning from the general method or approach to the specific techniques and strategies for applying such techniques while counseling a client.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Define the term method.
2. Differentiate clearly between technique and strategy.
3. State one cognitive counseling method and briefly discuss the techniques that you can apply to solve a deviant behaviour using the method.
4. Discuss the relationship among methods, techniques and strategies of counseling.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Lawal, M. B. & Oyeleye, A. S. (2003). *A Pedagogy Handbook for Social Studies' Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers*. Lagos: Tunbans Publishers.

Shukla, R. (2005). *Dictionary of Education*. New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation.

Unit 4 Counseling Skills I

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learned about the concepts of methods, techniques and strategies of counseling. To effectively apply these concepts in order to achieve the desired goal of counseling a particular client or a group of clients, it is important to note that certain skills are required. Skills as earlier discussed are the demonstration of abilities and capabilities in applying methods, techniques and strategies to attend to clients' problems.

Skills are acquired through training during the process of counsellor education in various training institutions. These are feelings, attitudes and competences acquired or internalised to assist clients in solving their problems which if applied appropriately, enable clients to feel relaxed, worthwhile and open during counseling sessions.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of counseling skills
- discuss various counseling skills
- demonstrate how to use counseling skills in counseling situations.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Meaning and History of Counseling Skills

A skill is generally known to be the knowledge and ability that enables one to do something well which requires special training. Shukla (2005) defines skill as the capacity to perform particular tasks or to achieve particular goals, often required through long periods of training and practice. He maintains that skills are usually thought of in terms of perceptual, perceptual-motor and mental skills. Skill is therefore the ability to perform a task or activity through required steps in a proper sequence.

Counseling is a helping relationship to assist individuals with academic or personal problems that interfere with their lives, which requires special and differing skills due to individual differences. According to McLeod and McLeod (2011), the idea that psychological processes and interpersonal behaviour can be viewed as skills can be traced to the 1950's. During the period, psychologists came up with the idea of breaking down each task or function into a set of component skills, which could be learned separately and then build up into the final complete task sequence (McLeod & McLeod, 2011). They maintained that the model of skill that emerged emphasised the sequence of actions that the operator needed to go through, and the operator's attention to feedback around whether each operation had been effective in achieving its intended goals. Counseling skills are therefore processes or acts of making sense of how to facilitate people in any walk of life to make a difference to the lives of individuals. It involves the process of breaking down each task or function of counseling into a set of component skills, which could be in form of task sequence to achieve a particular counseling goal. Hence, counseling skills are activities that come into play in the process of

using various methods and strategies during counseling sessions. Counseling skills are key facilitators of counseling relationships.

Within the field of counseling, the late 1940s and 1950s saw a vast expansion of the psychological therapies in the USA, largely stimulated by the need to respond to mental health problems in returning service personnel (McLeod & McLeod, 2011). Prominent among the skills developed then were directed towards client-centered therapy, popularised by Carl Rogers. Hence, the emergence of non-directive, empathy and unconditional regard as formidable counseling skills as practiced today owe their root to the work of Rogers and others. With more therapists emerging, there are several counseling skills which practicing counsellors and counsellors in training ought to be conversant with. According to McLeod and McLeod (2011), all of several of such skills were inspired by the work of Charles Truax and Robert Carkhuff. They reasoned that counseling skills will enable clients to be guided through a series of learning or skill-acquisition activities instead of handing them down a mere treatment procedure to their mental health problems.

In Nigeria, the history of modern counseling is traced back to vocational guidance given to final year students of St. Theresa's College, Ibadan in 1959 by Catholic Reverend Sisters (Onah, 2002). The Reverend Sisters invited experts in various fields of human endeavour to enlighten the final year students who were about to graduate into the world of work. The specialists gave career talks on their professions and in the end, a good number of the students were able to select good jobs and/or good careers in their choice of higher institutions (Akinade, Sokan and Osarenren, 2005).

Between 1962 when Ibadan Career Council was formed and 1967, a greater awareness was created all over the country about career masters and mistresses who collated and disseminated career information to students in their schools across the country. State Ministries of Education also became involved and encouraged the appointment of career officers in schools. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference at Ibadan also recognised the need to have counsellors as career officers in schools. This was therefore entrenched in the National Policy on Education of 1977, revised in 1981, 1988 and 2004. The policy states that in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors shall be appointed in post-primary institutions (FRN, 2004).

Today, there are counsellors in both public and some private secondary schools to assist students in solving educational, vocational, social and psychological problems. There are also counsellors in tertiary institutions to assist students in solving problems associated with late adolescence and early adulthood, adjustment to life in tertiary institutions and preparation for life outside the school system (FME, 2000).

3.2 Types of Counseling Skills

There are various types of counseling skills as there are various problems, theories, methods, techniques and strategies of counseling. McLeod and McLeod (2011) list core counseling skills as attending, attunement, bodily awareness, boundary management, caring, challenging, checking out, naming, observing, offering feedback, process monitoring, providing information, questioning, reflecting, restating, reframing, remembering, self-disclosure, self-monitoring, structuring, using silence and witnessing. These skills are not mutually exclusive as several of them are interwoven and interrelated. Discussed below and in the next unit of this module and the first unit of the next module are some of the listed techniques and some others not mentioned above.

Listening skill: The first skill to be acquired by any practicing counsellor is the listening skill. This involves paying attention to every statement involving body movement or sign that a client makes in a counseling encounter. Listening skill is a crucial skill that helps to establish core conditions of counseling like openness, trust, self-confidence, love and worthiness or belongingness. The counsellor in the process of listening attentively to his clients' presentations indulges in paraphrasing his statements, perception checks, reaction to sudden body movement, non-judgmental statements, restatements and clarifications. These are things that ensure the client that his/her counsellor is responsive, empathic, and listening to his/her problems with a view to finding solutions that are appropriate. The counsellor should avoid what the client did not say or omit what he/she said.

Questioning skill: This is a basic and formidable skill of counseling which promotes greater client disclosure. There are two types of questioning: open-ended and close-ended questioning. In counseling, open-ended questioning seeks to elicit information from clients using "how" and "what" instead of "why". Open-ended questions can be answered in one word or in a phrase. The client is made to progress from generalisations to specifics with more detailed information and clarity of points. At the onset of counseling, an open-ended question can lead a client into telling a story in his/her own way. In a situation whereby a counsellor is interested in knowing the birth order of his/her client, he/she can ask his client to tell him about his family.

The close-ended question on the other hand places a lot of restriction on clients' responses and statements about his problems. In this case, the client supplies only the needed answer as required unlike in the open-ended questioning where the client provides the required answer and goes ahead to supply other information that might be useful later.

Summarisation skill: This is the ability to pick major points of a conversation to bring about corrections or confirmation of information. This is an important counseling skill as it assures the counselees that the counsellors usually hear the correct content of their problems. Summarisation skill encourages clients to probe their points by themselves. It can be used in the beginning of a counseling session to bring a synergy between the previous counseling session and the current one or to reflect on the problem earlier presented by the client(s). Also, summarisation can be applied in-between counseling sessions or midway into a counseling relationship to remind the counsellor and his client of what they have done so far or at the end of a counseling session to mark the end of the session.

Reframing skill: This is a skill used by counsellors to give alternative statements or perspectives of what clients say. Reframing is used to keep clients at alert and to challenge their cognitions. Through positive or negative alternative expressions of what a client has said, the counsellor can manipulate the information presented. The counsellor might decide to reframe a client's statement in a neutral version but in the end, the client is led through to full meaning and awareness of his problem. The client is also encouraged to explore the values of what he has said. For instance, a client might state that his major problem in school is distraction from friends during prep classes. In response to this, the counsellor might reframe the statement by saying, "Your friends distract your studies and perhaps cause you to perform poorly in assessments."

Paraphrasing skill: Paraphrasing counseling skill is the ability to respond to clients' statements while expressing their problems in phrases. The counsellor uses phrases to build, blend and facilitate what the client says. It involves what the client has said and what he intends to say. This skill gives clients confidence and assurance that the counsellor is actively

involved in their problems by listening attentively. Through this, the clients correct misconceptions about certain information given about problems presented.

One good thing about paraphrasing skill is that it facilitates reflective thinking, feelings and processing of information during counseling sessions. Additionally, it gives clients feedback and room for further exploration of thoughts and feelings. Like reframing skill, it enables clients to be led through feelings and cognitive challenges. It clarifies clients' problem-statements with a view to bringing a clearer picture of their intentions.

Empathy skill: This is otherwise called reflection of feeling skill where the counsellor demonstrates to his/her clients that he/she is aware of their feelings and emotions. It conveys the counsellor's understanding of the clients' problems and feelings. According to Onah (2002), empathy implies an attitude in which the counsellor is able to sense the hurt or pleasure as another person sees it; to perceive the causes of a client's problems as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is "as if" he was the person involved. He/she maintains that empathy facilitates counseling as it conveys to the client the message that much value is placed on him/her and that the feelings and meanings which he/she attaches to his experiences are respected and worth attending to. This no doubt makes a client in a counseling relation to feel a sense of belonging, reassurance, love and relaxation. In applying empathy skill, the counsellor needs to let his client understand that he too feels the way he, the client feels about his experience. If a student reports to his/her counsellor that he/she often feels rejected by his classmates, the counsellor can respond by saying, "it is like you are feeling lonely and isolated each time you are in the class" or "it sounds as if you are yet to make friends in your class."

Reflection of meaning skill: This suggests attentiveness or intense listening with emphasis on literal meaning of clients' problems or experiences. This skill enables the therapist to understand the client's major concern, mood, feelings and expectations while it enables the client to learn that the therapist has heard not only the surface of his experience but also the inner or deeper meaning of it. The skill of reflection of meaning as a facilitator of counseling conveys information about clients' experience as well as the counsellor's perceptions of his situation.

Capping counseling skill: This skill is similar to, but different from the skill of reflection of feelings (empathy). Here, the counsellor tries to move his/her client along from emotion-laden situations to cognitively restructured situations. He/she engages his/her clients in discussions that task their cognitions in order to realise themselves. The counsellor can introduce humour here but must be very careful, plain, sincere and natural in the counseling relationships. The counsellor's attribute of genuineness comes to play in this regard as whatever he/she says and feels must be reliable and the same over time. Onah (2002) warns that the counsellor trying to demonstrate his/her genuineness should not attempt to be phony as it is very risky to do so.

4.0 Conclusion

Skills are attitudes and abilities employed in the process of achieving a task. Counseling skills are therefore facilitating abilities acquired by counsellors to enable them solve their clients' problems. Such counseling skills range from listening, questioning, summarisation, reframing, paraphrasing, empathy, reflection of meaning to capping counseling skills which are all discussed in this unit. To be successful counsellors therefore, it is important that counsellors

in training should be equipped with several counseling skills that they can use when they are in counseling relationships with their clients.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you studied the meaning of skill, meaning and historical antecedents of counseling skills and various types of counseling skills.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give a brief definition of the term skill.
2. Explain with examples what you understand by counseling skills.
3. Differentiate clearly between:
 - a. Reframing and summarisation skills of counseling.
 - b. Questioning and listening skills of counseling.
 - c. Empathy and reflection of meaning skills of counseling.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Akinade, E. A., Sokan, B. O. & Osarenren, N. (2005). *An Introduction to Guidance and Counseling: A Basic Text for Educational Institutions in Nigeria*. Lagos: Derate Nigeria Limited.

Federal Ministry of Education, FME (2000). *Blueprint on Guidance and Counseling for Educational Institutions in Nigeria*. Abuja: Art and Culture Education.

Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.

McLeod, J. & McLeod, J. (2011). *Counseling Skills: A Practical Guide for Counsellors and Helping Professionals*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Onah, P. C. (2002). *The School Guidance Programme: Theory and Practice*. Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers.

Shukla, R. (2005). *Dictionary of Education*. New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation.

Unit 5 Counseling Skills II

1.0 Introduction

In Unit 4 of this module, you learned about eight different types of counseling skills that practicing counsellors can apply in handling their clients' problems. In furtherance to that, more counseling skills are discussed in this unit. These are all efforts to provide a wide range of counseling skills that counsellors can apply depending on the nature of their clients' problems, the counseling approach and what exactly they want to achieve at each counseling session. In this unit therefore, the following counseling skills are discussed: encouragement skill, congruence skill, focusing skill, self-disclosure skill, structuring skill, clarification skill, interpretation skill and verbal tracking skill.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss some other types of counseling skills
- differentiate clearly between any two counseling skills
- demonstrate how to use any counseling skill in solving clients' problems.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Types of Counseling Skills II

In the previous unit, you were exposed to some counseling techniques necessary to solve clients' problems during counseling sessions. The list is many. Below are some other counseling skills that could be used by counsellors while handling their clients. The application of any skill depends largely on the nature of problem presented by a client.

Engagement skill: This is a skill that is described as an all-inclusive process of achieving counseling tasks. It involves both the counsellor and his/her clients being actively involved in the counseling relationships. It enables the clients to become active participants in order to establish and sustain their interest. When clients are involved in counseling like in the Carl Rogers' Client-Centred Therapy, a solid foundation of interaction, conversation and free expressions will be established. Hence, the counsellor applying engagement skill is expected to engage his/her clients in conversation even if the clients are not forthcoming in discussing their problem due to lack of trust. In the process of engagement, a re-awakening attitude is established in such a client and because he/she is involved, that elusive trust is ensured and a quick resolution of his/her problem will be achieved.

Encouragement skill: Encouraging somebody in a particular situation is an essential tool in disarming his/her emotions. A trained counsellor is endowed with the skill of encouraging clients with diverse problems.

During any counseling session, it is expected that the counsellor listens actively to get full information about the problem presented by his/her client and engage in any activity that will promote full disclosure of problems by clients. This could be done through verbal or

non-verbal activity to ensure the client that you are interested in his case and would like to hear more from him/her. When a client is encouraged, no matter his/her vulnerability, the problem to him/her seems to have been resolved or that he/she is in the right place for quick resolution of his/her problem.

For illustration, a counsellor using this skill should be conversant with client-centred therapy as discussed in EGC 802. He uses words or phrases that can encourage the client to bring out his problems using words and phrases like: “really?” “True?” “Go on” “very sad my boy” “tell me more” and a host of others. With these words and/or phrases, the client will feel relaxed, become part of the counseling process and ready to go extra miles in discussing his/her problems.

Congruence skill: This is another Rogerian skill that every professional counsellor should possess. According to Rogers (1965), congruence is a genuine sense of understanding displayed by a counsellor in handling problems presented by clients. It involves consistency and appropriate harmonious relationship with clients through observable responses to situations, emotions, mood and state of the mind of the clients. Hence, the skill of congruence helps to express the genuineness and authenticity of counsellors and encourages clients to express themselves and equally assists them to understand that they (the clients) will not be judged by their counsellors. In all, congruence establishes and sustains a working alliance between counsellors and clients by facilitating rapport, love and good working relationships. Congruence is the only reasonable counseling skill that checks conflict in counseling sessions. This is because a state of congruency in thoughts and emotions clears clients’ doubts and reservations. A counselor with a female client who is suggesting abortion can be engaged in such a way that the proposition is not completely or outrightly jettisoned at the onset. While the counsellor is concurring with the client but explicitly explaining the consequences of abortion, efforts should be made to avoid eye contact and interruptions so that the client will not withdraw into his/her shell.

Focusing skill: This is the ability of a counsellor to re-direct a client’s attention to a particular goal at a particular time. The counsellor while discussing with his/her clients ensures that there is adequate concentration or attention on what is considered essential by both parties based on what is being discussed. Focusing skill is about the need to attend to problems or feelings of clients as they arise during the course of a counseling process.

The benefit of this is that clients are encouraged to work on present and particular problems where attainable goals exist. This is contrary to focusing on past experiences or early childhood experiences which cannot be changed or influenced easily. It leads to charting a direction in counseling sessions through the creation or formulation of counseling goals and the action plan to achieve the goals. A good illustration is the ability of a counsellor to re-direct the attention of his client from a trivial issue that is responsible for his problem to what should be done to avoid the occurrence of that problem in future so that he/she will live adjusted life.

Self-disclosure skill: This is a skill that involves conscious sharing of personal information about lives with clients by counsellors. In this situation, a counsellor gives his personal life history, how he/she passed through certain problems similar to what the client presented. When this is done in a counseling process, the client will feel relaxed and at the same time, understand that what he/she is passing through is not an uncommon problem. This skill increases rapport and embraces alliance between the counsellor and his/her clients. It is reasoned that such life information should be relevant and focused otherwise; the client would feel that the counsellor might just be wasting his/her time or merely diverting his/her

attention from what is disturbing him/her. For illustration, a depressed client due to loss of biological parent could be counseled and relaxed when the counsellor discloses how his/her own father died in similar situation when he/she was an infant. In the same vein, it is irrelevant discussing with the client how 50 people lost their lives in a ghastly motor accident somewhere last year. This has nothing to do with a person who is in sober mood for losing one of his parents recently.

Structuring skill: This skill is a conceptual framework that explains issues as they arise during counseling relationships. It is like building a relationship to ensure that clients are aware of what to expect and remain highly protected in the process. An important aspect of structuring is informed consent where the client is made to understand the process, expectations, emergencies, confidentiality and probable counseling outcomes. With this, the client feels comforted. For instance, it enables a client to understand that talking about something quite emotional will no doubt, despite all odds, lead to a better situation at the end of counseling relationships if well structured. What the counsellor needs therefore, is to be focused and engage in explaining the meaning, causes and consequences of every action in the course of discussing a problem presented by a client. One aspect of structuring skill in counseling relationships is focusing where clients' attention is re-directed to one goal at a time.

Clarification skill: Clarification is an old but important skill used by counsellors in ensuring complete understanding of clients' problems. It involves deep understanding of clients through active communication and participation in counseling process by both parties. One of the cardinal uses of clarification skill in counseling relationships is to clear doubts and avoid assumptions. Through this, clients are made to feel important as they are being heard with keen interest. Each party asks questions where there is confusion to prevent misunderstandings which may deter genuine progress towards achieving set objectives. For illustration, a student who reports to his counsellor about his/her difficulty in understanding map reading in geography might conclude during counseling that he/she would like to drop geography in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). Using clarification skill, the counsellor may ask, "So you don't want to register and write geography in your SSCE because of map reading?" An answer to this will enable the counsellor to understand the student's communication and line of action in order to avoid assumption and wrong counseling strategy. Also, a student might report to his counsellor that his classmates are fond of calling him "clown" which he does not want and does not know how to stop them from calling him that. The counsellor might begin by asking him the meaning of clown from where a foundation is laid to commence treatment.

Interpretation skill: This skill is the act of drawing an analysis of what a client is presenting before his/her counsellor. It is embellished in cognitive counseling to give explanations and meaning to unconscious thoughts and feelings. The counsellor employing this skill gives interpretation or meaning to actions that might be responsible for a client's particular behaviour. The client on the other hand can accept or reject such analysis and/or seek for more clarifications if in doubt especially if the analysis is incredibly inaccurate and outrageous. For instance, a client might present a dream he/she had where an old woman was chasing him/her with a cutlass.

In an attempt to interpret the dream during counseling session, the counsellor can tell the client that the old woman represented a witch who is bent on terminating his/her life or at least retard his/her progress in life. It is now left for the client to accept or reject the interpretation given to the dream by the counsellor. Whichever option the client finally

takes at the end of the counseling sessions will depend on the interplay of other skills employed by the counsellor during their interpretations. Interpretation to some extent is highly subjective especially in dream analysis.

Verbal tracking skill: One of the good qualities of trained counsellors is the ability to actively listen to their clients as they present and explain their problems. This often followed by verbal tracking through which the counsellor verbally follows the client as he reflects on his problems. He paraphrases the client's statements through appropriate and constant interjections instead of mere listening without verbal reactions. In this circumstance, body gestures are not enough. The counsellor uses words that the client often utters to rephrase or paraphrase his/her statements. This makes the client to feel important, relevant and listened to during counseling relationships. Besides, effective use of verbal tracking assists counsellors in taking or summarising notes during and after counseling sessions. It also builds and sustains rapport, confidence, genuineness, empathy, sense of responsibility and respect. For instance, a client who reports to his/her counsellor that he/she was tired of life due to poor grades in his/her subjects might be responded to by the counsellor saying: "Are you saying that you often obtain poor grades in your academic subjects?" This seems repetition but it sends un-quantified message to the student as he/she might come up with more explicit information about the situation in an attempt to agree with the counsellor on what he paraphrased.

The lists of counseling skills are as many and varied as there are many and varied professional and problems. By all standards, counseling skills are grounded in life experience (McLeod & McLeod, 2011). Experts believe that practical skills improve actual physical activity. For instance, using an open-ended question to encourage a client to explore and express what their feelings are around an issue (McLeod & McLeod, 2011) is an important attempt to help such an individual. In practice, counseling skills are all interconnected as they form a general pathway through which all or few approaches to counseling are applied in assisting clients.

4.0 Conclusion

Counseling skills are integral part of every professional counsellor to among other things, probe extensively into problems presented by clients during counseling sessions. Among such skills as discussed in this unit which are by no means sacrosanct are engagement skill, encouragement skill, congruence skill, focusing skill, self-disclosure skill, structuring skill, clarification skill, interpretation skill and verbal tracking skill. The use of any of these skills or a combination of them depends largely on the approach and techniques of counseling being employed by the counsellor, the type of training acquired by the counsellor, and the nature of the problem presented by the clients. It is important to note that no single skill is perfect, independent and all embracing. In the application of the counseling skills discussed in this unit and elsewhere, it is reasoned that the principle of eclecticism should be considered uppermost.

5.0 Summary

Like in Unit 4 of this module, you studied various other counseling skills used in counseling relationships. Efforts were made to explain each skill with few illustrations which will no doubt assist you in understanding them better.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Write short notes on each of the following:
 - a. Structuring skill.
 - b. Clarification skill.
 - c. Interpretation skill.
 - d. Engagement skill.
 - e. Self-disclosure skill.
2. Differentiate clearly between:
 - a. Verbal tracking and focusing skills of counseling.
 - b. Congruence and encouraging skills of counseling.

7.0 References/Further Reading

McLeod, J. & McLeod J. (2011). *Counseling Skills: A Practical Guide for Counsellors and Helping Professionals*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Rogers, C. R. (1965). *Client-Centred Therapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.