Gerard Egan's Stage 3 Counselling skills Teleseminar Lecture 3

Basic principles of counselling

Stage 3 Action

Some models of counselling that are person centred trust that the client will be able to find their own way out of their mire. Theory goes that with a careful reflective counsellor, a client comes to discover their own solutions to their problems. This model relies upon a client's resourcefulness and existing personal insight. This may be why some models of counselling take such a long time: the slow awakening of clients to their own internal programming and self awareness through the medium of 'counsellor as mirror' may not be something many people are prepared to do happily. Of course, to be happy, one may need to go through that process, but the reality is that people protect themselves from change which is uncomfortable and our human nature has a tendency to blame external circumstances, people, events, instead of realising our own inner power.

However, Egan's model encourages clients to take Action: Action that is relevant to them and do-able. The action results from the therapist listening very carefully to the client's cues and realising that the client is ready to be more proactive about resolving their issues. This may be evident from session one, or it may be something you work towards carefully through counselling stages 1 and 2 as you facilitate more personal awareness in your client.

In some respects, the skill of encouraging action is akin to coaching where, once the force field surrounding your client's life has been analysed and the client is conscious of their choices, the therapist or coach simply questions what would be involved in implementing some of the changes. At this point therapy moves from the holding environment (Winnicott) in a parent to young child way to the holding environment in a parent to teenage way. At some point, your client will 'grow up' enough to 'leave home'. Encouraging action and independence is an important step along the way to becoming self directed and self motivated.

In stage 3, we look at how to encourage our clients to take ACTION. But importantly they need to know and understand that whatever ails them, is ultimately in their control. And that is the purpose of stage 2 counselling skills: to give clients more control over what they once believed was someone else's responsibility.

In each of the gaps below, jot down what you understand each of the skills to be. It will help you learn if you can write.

Stage 3

Divergent Thinking

Goal Setting

Goal into Aim

Decision making

Programme Choice

Force Field Analysis

Anticipate Blocks

Resources

Encourage Action

Evaluation

Stage 3 skills can be used at any stage of the counselling or therapy process. However, you need to be mindful of your client's need to just talk and download and not rush them on to action. I've supervised several Hypnotherapists who feel like they're failing if their clients are not moving on and instead of being able to hold them while they develop, become impatient and annoyed that the client isn't 'better' yet. This is merely a reflection of their own lack of skill and often, lack of personal self awareness on their part. What is it in the therapist that needs so desperately to bring results for their clients, when clearly their clients are not ready to move so fast? Is it a fear of failure? A fear of not knowing what to do after 6 or 12 sessions? I understand of course the frustration of having 'slow moving' clients. However I have to understand that the frustration is mine, that the client needed something different to what I thought they needed, and that I do in fact have the insight and skills to be able to help them by changing my expectation modality.

I want to talk about models of therapy in one of the upcoming teleseminars. But let me briefly elaborate here.

We talk in psychotherapy of their being 6 models as follows:

Support	eg: client needs some support to get through a bereavement, say
Post trauma	eg: Client needs to normalise what has been a traumatic experience.
Decision making	eg: Client may need to make a life changing decision: divorce, baby etc
Problem solving	eg: Client may have difficult relationship and need some guidance
Developmental issues	eg: Client is experiencing suffering that needs you to address developmental
Crisis	eg: Client may have say, just heard her husband is having an affair etc.

In each of the above cases, the client will require a different approach. You may have already been doing this without realising that there is a different therapeutic requirement from each model. However, I have met many hypnotherapists who use the same strategies regardless which model their client presents with. Understandably the outcomes will be unpredictable and inconsistent which is why it's important to have some counselling and psychotherapy knowledge to work with.

Each of the above models that clients present with require different types of counselling skill stages and hypnotherapeutic interventions. See if you can give some thought to which counselling stage lends itself to each model. And also bear in mind, that your client may move from crisis to developmental, or from support to problem solving, or from post trauma to decision making within a course of hypnotherapy. Each model requires you to use different skills adeptly and efficiently to keep up with your client's development.