

Curriculum Outline Proposal – Helping Relationship Skills

(2005)

1) Welcoming and Engaging:

Engagement techniques – creating trust and belief

“Meeting people where they’re at”

Charity – giving without expectations

Client vs. friend role – camaraderie - nondefensive

Doing nonclinical things together - enjoying client’s company

2) Listening:

Avoiding agendas

Creating space in yourself for their story – not just “waiting for your turn to talk”

Nonjudgmental – depersonalizing/it’s not about you

Genuine curiosity and interest – letting them teach you

3) Empathizing vs. sympathizing:

Feeling their feelings – reflecting back

Using your life experiences – to find connections, not impose your story

Subjective understanding – seeing the world through their eyes – role playing

Making people feel understood and cared for – keeping them in your thoughts

4) Creating a shared story:

Collaboratively learning about them

Asking questions to make a story

Understanding transference

5) Emotional healing:

Creating corrective emotional experiences – avoiding retraumatizing them

Understanding emotional templates and dynamics

Use and misuse of boundaries

6) Goal visualizing:

Uncovering people's strengths

Believing in people until they can believe in themselves

Creating concrete hopeful visions of the future

Story telling of successful role models

Your goals and expectations vs. their goals and expectations

7) Empowering:

Equalizing your relationship

Self-disclosure

Responsibility sharing

Avoiding power stealing

8) Using motivational interviewing:

Increasing their decision making skills

Working in ambivalence

Working in negative spaces (e.g. battered women, addicts) with acceptance

9) Creating a menu of opportunities:

Meaningful education and meaningful choices

Create exposure to new opportunities

Share knowledge of an array of resources and supports

10) Moving beyond linkage to support:

Not doing for, but guiding alongside

Teaching skills while doing together

Modeling problem solving, advocacy, etc.

11) Teaching self-evaluation and self-reward:

Self-acceptance while judging

Self-observation (e.g. internal states, functioning, quality of life)

Learning from “failures” – getting something good from bad events

Self-praise – internalizing improvements

12) Teaching self-help techniques:

Self-care from maintenance to crisis (e.g. WRAP)

Symptom relief and re-centering techniques

Self-help groups

13) Building supportive relationships in the community:

Mutuality of relationships – self-disclosure to build consideration of others

Getting support as a byproduct of other activities and shared interests

“Relationship maps”

14) Creating community roles:

Teaching and modeling role expectations and behaviors

Finding repetitive, regular activities with personal connections

Finding “welcoming hearts” in the community

Creating belonging

15) Providing spiritual/existential guidance:

Finding meaning in suffering

Uncovering “core gifts”

Finding a “higher purpose”

Relating to a “higher power”

I think that this curriculum should also be added to our professional training programs. I wasn't taught any of these skills in my residency program and to be a good psychiatrist I've had to learn them as I've gone along.

Note that these subjects are not, by and large, what's taught in "Counseling 101" or psychotherapy training. In many ways this is a new skill set.