

Introduction to Counselling

Introduction to Counselling – Study Notes

1. What Is Counselling?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A professional, collaborative relationship that helps individuals, couples, families, or groups explore and resolve personal, social, or psychological challenges.
Goal	Empower clients to gain insight, develop coping strategies, and make positive changes in thoughts, emotions, or behaviours.
Scope	Includes mental health support, career guidance, grief work, substance use issues, relationship problems, and more.

2. Core Principles & Values

Principle	Practical Meaning
Confidentiality	Information shared stays private, except where law requires disclosure (e.g., risk of harm).
Respect for Autonomy	Clients decide the direction and pace of therapy; counsellor does not impose solutions.
Non-judgmental Attitude	Acceptance of the client's feelings, beliefs, and experiences without criticism.
Beneficence & Non-maleficence	Act in the client's best interest and avoid causing harm.
Cultural Sensitivity	Recognise and honour cultural, religious, and personal values that influence the client's worldview.

3. Counselling Process – Typical Stages

1. Engagement & Rapport Building

- Warm greeting, clear introduction of roles.

Introduction to Counselling

- Establish trust and a safe environment.

2. Assessment & Goal Setting

- Gather relevant history (presenting problem, background, strengths).
- Co-create specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound (SMART) goals.

3. Intervention & Exploration

- Apply therapeutic techniques (e.g., active listening, questioning, reflection).
- Explore thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and underlying patterns.

4. Evaluation & Feedback

- Review progress toward goals.
- Invite client feedback on the counselling experience.

5. Termination / Follow-up

- Summarise gains, discuss maintenance strategies.
- Plan for possible future check-ins or referrals.

(Not all clients follow a linear path; stages may recur as needed.)

4. Common Counselling Approaches

Approach	Key Features	Typical Use
Person-Centered (Rogers)	Unconditional positive regard, empathy, congruence.	Enhancing self-esteem, personal growth.
Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	Identify & challenge distorted thoughts; behavioural experiments.	Anxiety, depression, phobias.
Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)	Emphasises future solutions, scaling questions, miracle question.	Time-limited interventions, crisis work.
Narrative Therapy	Re-authoring personal stories; externalising problems.	Identity issues, trauma.
Psychodynamic	Explores unconscious processes, early relationships.	Deep-seated relational patterns.

Introduction to Counselling

Approach	Key Features	Typical Use
Integrative / Eclectic	Combines techniques from multiple models based on client needs.	Complex or multi-issue cases.

5. Essential Counselling Skills

Skill	Description	Example
Active Listening	Fully attend, paraphrase, and reflect back content and feeling.	"It sounds like you felt abandoned when..."
Empathy	Convey understanding of the client's emotional state.	"I can see how that would be overwhelming."
Questioning	Open-ended queries that encourage exploration.	