UCONN | COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Dropping Anchor in Murky Waters:

Enhance Your Advising Skills With Basic Counseling Techniques

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What is this all about?

- When students share something personal with us—did I say the right thing?
- Provide advisors with tools to use both in everyday advising and with tricky situations
- Don't worry, it's easy! You're probably already doing it!

Who is this for?

- Applicable for everyone & anyone, in any career—to help better connect with people
- Particularly designed for advisors with no formal counseling experience.
- This is **not** designed to push you into an area where you do not feel comfortable or to make you a qualified counselor.

Why does this matter?

- Advising conversations don't always stay within the academics, they often stray into the personal.
- Avoid referring too quickly and be conscious of your reaction, as both can damage the relationship. Take a few minutes to just listen and let them know you care. Then you can refer.
- Liminal Advising—occupying the space between advising and counseling. Existing here with students allows for trust and rapport to build quickly.

Notes:

Basic Counseling Skills

1. Invitational Skills (Attending)

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•	<u>Active listening</u> : Letting the student tell their story—the need to communicate and be understood is central to the relationship!	
•	<u>Non-verbal communication</u> : Body language, eye contact, body position, silence, distance, touch.	
•	Encouragers:	
	 Door openers: Open the door for the student to feel comfortable, nonjudgmental. 	
	 Ex: "Can you tell me more?" "What brought you in today?" 	
	 Minimal encouragers: Conveys attention and understanding, does not deter student from story. Avoid overuse. 	
	 Ex: "I see" "Mhmm" "Sure" "Yes" 	
•	<u>Questions</u> : Use to better understand story. Why questions can lead to defensiveness, leading questions may shut down the conversation.	
	 Closed Questions: Yes or no, short answers. Try to avoid these, however, as advisors, we sometimes need to ask these kinds of questions! 	
	 Ex: "What is your major?" "Did you go to class today?" 	
	Open Questions: Elicits more information.	
	 Ex: "What did you do in class today?" "Tell me about your day." 	
•	<u>Silence</u> : It's okay to be quiet and wait for a response!	
	2. Paraphrasing	
•	Neutral restatement of facts, non-judgmental, condensed, only the important parts.	
•	We do this to get to the deeper level of the student's story.	
•	Not word-for-word parroting	
•	Can use to clarify student's story— "Let me make sure I've got it…"	

Basic Counseling Skills

•	Feelings are often implicit.	Notes:
•	When we reflect feeling, we are saying that we understand your emotions. Can deepen the relationship with the student.	
•	Go with your gut!	
•	Keep in mind gender and culture.	
•	2 steps:	
	 Identify the feelings—Use non-verbals, imagine how they feel (empathy), follow your gut, improve your feelings vocab. 	
	 Articulate underlying emotions—Start with "you feel" or "you are" Then move to feelings formula: 	
	You feel because	
	(feeling, then content)	
	Ex: You feel <u>sad</u> because <u>you failed a</u> <u>course.</u>	
	4. Reflect Meaning	
•	What is meaning? When we reflect meaning, we are getting to the perceptions, interpretations, values, and beliefs that are unique to each person. The WHY of it all. More implicit than feelings.	
•	Understanding the student's world view is important to understanding the meaning.	
•	Why do we reflect meaning? These meanings are the core reason for the surface issues.	
•	This can be tricky! It takes some practice!	
•	3 steps:	
	1. Fully comprehend student's situation, feelings, beliefs, values, world view.	
	 Trust your gut!! They will correct you if your wrong. This is often viewed as trying to better understand them. 	
	3. Use the feelings formula , but now we add meaning.	
	You feel when because	
	Ex: You feel <u>sad w</u> hen <u>you failed a course</u> because <u>you feel like you disappointed</u> <u>yourself.</u>	

Basic Counseling Skills and Tips & Tricks

5. Summarize

٠	Sum it up!	Notes:
•	Synopsis of everything you discussed.	notes.
•	Paraphrasing vs Summarizing:	
	Paraphrasing: reiterating what student said	
	 Summarizing: sum everything up, content, feeling, meaning, and what you said. 	
•	Clarify—be sure to ask that you got it right.	
•	Different types of summaries, but I usually use planning.	
	Tips & Tricks From Various Theories	
<u>Ac</u>	llerian	
•	Prescribe the Symptom - Ex: For a student who has trouble with procrastination, assign them a time to procrastinate.	
•	Act As If - Ask the student to try on a successful role.	
•	Goal Setting/Task Setting - Develop a plan and work towards specific actions regarding that plan.	
<u>Pe</u>	erson Centered	
•	Genuine and Authentic - Be truly invested in students and their story.	
•	Real care - Remember parts of their story to ask about it later. Can put in student notes.	
•	Open and honest - When the relationship is established, you can openly share your thoughts about the student's decisions or thoughts.	
•	Share Yourself - When appropriate, you can show empathy by self disclosure.	
Re	eality Therapy	
•	WDEP worksheet (use in FYE or for probation)	
<u>So</u>	lution Focused Brief Therapy	
•	Pre-Meeting Change - Sometimes just making the appointment can act as a means for change.	
•	Exception Question - Ask a student about a time in	
	their life when the problem did not exist.	
•	Miracle Question - "If I waived a magic wand and fixed all of your problems, what would that look like?"	
•	Scaling Question - "On a scale of 1-10"	
•	Strengths/coping questions	