

IT'S WHAT THEY SAY *AND*
HOW THEY SAY IT:
COUNSELING COMMUNICATION
SKILLS

August 4, 2016



A decorative header consisting of a solid orange rectangle on the left and a solid blue rectangle on the right. The text "A quick demonstration of what's behind all this" is written in white, sans-serif font across the blue portion.

A quick demonstration of what's behind all
this

The very confident and informed
counselor seeks to work with the
beneficiary in need...

Introduction

- ❑ What we're going to do in this session
- ❑ What may come about because of it
- ❑ Quick audience introductions: program, role

Counseling Skills: A quick introduction



- ❑ Counseling as a consulting skill:
 - ✓ Knowing the right answer
 - ✓ Getting others to accept what you know

- ❑ What makes this harder than it looks:
 - ✓ You probably don't have any relationship with the beneficiary that would lead them to trust you
 - ✓ In some cases they actually trust you too much and want you to make their decision for them

Exercise #1: Introducing yourself and establishing rapport

- ❑ If beneficiaries don't trust you they won't listen to what you advise. Even worse, they won't provide you with accurate information about themselves which would allow you to find a good solution.
- ❑ Building trust in the SMP/SHIP setting is hard because you probably don't have any prior contact with the beneficiary and they probably have little prior experience with SMP or SHIP.

A demonstration

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- “A volunteer from the audience...”
- Critique and debriefing
- “A second volunteer...”
- What did Steve do?

Trying this out: a suggested approach

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- Quick name and background
- Brief credentials
- How you came to be doing this
- How you envision yourself working with the beneficiary
- What you hope to accomplish

But you have to be able to say it:

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- Find a partner: introduce yourself smoothly and confidently
- Switch roles
- Debrief and discuss: what seemed to work; what would you tweak?

Exercise #2: Saying “no” gracefully

What do you do when the beneficiary wants you to make their decision for them?

Let's try this out:

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- Back to the same pairs as before
- Assignment of roles



Instructions to the Counselor

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- You've fully explored the beneficiary's situation. You have asked insightful, probing questions.
- You have explained three different possible courses of action and explained the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- You look in their direction, fully expecting a light bulb to appear above their head and a grateful smile to appear upon their face.

Instead

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- They ask you what they should do.
- You decline.
- They ask you again.
- You decline.
- Things get worse...

Instructions to the Beneficiary

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- You're the "Problem Beneficiary"
- You may engage in any and all behaviors that you think will get the counselor to make your decision for you: begging, claims to senility, bribery, verbal abuse, insisting that "you trust them and them alone and they are your last hope in the entire world," crying.
- Your goal is to make it as difficult as possible for the counselor to stick to his or her decision to abandon you to your own devices.

Ready? Or not?

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- A brief moment to prepare...
- ✓ Counselor: gather your calm and professional demeanor
- ✓ Beneficiary: think of all the bad behaviors you've always wanted to demonstrate in public

- Begin!

Debriefing



- How many of you noticed that the more you talked the worse it seemed to get?
- “A closed mouth gathers no feet.”
- What seemed to work?

A suggestion, based on sad experience



- The best way to avoid or mitigate this problem is to add something to your introduction - the section on how you envision working with the beneficiary:
 - ▣ *“I see my role as exploring your situation and getting you to the point where you can make the best decision about what is right for you. I’m not here to make the decision for you; I’m here to make sure you have the best information possible to allow you to decide what will work best.”*
- If you shape the expectation at the beginning you’re less likely to have someone who will still insist on avoiding responsibility.

Discussion



- ❑ What are your thoughts on this aspect of counseling?
- ❑ Examples of materials we're working on:
 - ✓ "Tips for Counselors"
 - ✓ "Evaluating Counseling Skills"
- ❑ Examples of other available materials
- ❑ What else do you recommend the SHIP Center develop in this area?

Contact Us

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Questions?

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