

Reflection of Counseling Session

**Reflection Paper of 2<sup>nd</sup> Counseling Session**

**Role Play Between Samantha (student/client) and Cindy Firestein (Counselor)**

**Cindy Firestein**

**Applied Counseling /CNSA – 530**

**Bridgewater State College**

At the start of the second counseling session with my client Samantha, I began working toward building a stronger rapport with her by offering her a muffin as well as a bottle of water. In addition to the muffin, I tried a little small talk by saying she looked nice in her dress and the weather was getting warmer outside. Before the session began I thought a lot about the first session. I felt a connection had not been made. I thought came to the idea of offering a muffin to her as well as a bottle of water might be a nice way to start off the session and would help to obtain the client's trust. Purchasing the same muffin she had brought with her during the previous session was a positive way to build rapport helped to showing my active listening skills as well as my caring personality. After about a minute of the greeting, I began the session by asking her if she had spoken to her roommates yet. At the close of our last session I had assigned Samantha homework to speak to her roommates about how she has been feelings and to listen to what they had to say about their current roommate/friendship situation.

Unfortunately, Samantha never followed up on her homework to sit down and have a conversation with her roommates about their friendship as well as how she has been feeling left out lately. In stead, Samantha went to the senior ball with her good friend Steve who is a fraternity member, enjoys partying, playing soccer and getting physically close with Samantha. Due to her decision to go to the senior ball with Steve and not share this information with her boyfriend, Kevin, a new problem has begun for Samantha. She is now in an argument with her boyfriend of five years because he believes she is cheating on him with Steve. Samantha neglected to inform her boyfriend about her decision to join Steve at the senior ball because she didn't want to deal with the issue. Because of her decision, Kevin has started to express his distrust with Samantha and being around so many males. Since Kevin has never met Steve and Samantha doesn't think there is any reason for the two to meet, having not spoke to her

boyfriend prior to attending the senior ball with Steve may not be in her best favor when her relationship is involved with Kevin. Samantha is also blaming her argument with her boyfriend on her roommate, because her roommate is the one who told her boyfriend she was with another man.

Samantha is creating a challenging environment for herself with her actions. She has the support of her friends and boyfriend who care for her and has Student Affairs Counselors as an additional supportive resource to help her deal with her challenging college moments. Unfortunately, she is still making excuses for herself and her multiple actions instead of learning from her mistakes.

“Support and challenge are evident when students try to lessen the tension produced by the collegiate environment and succeed to the extent that environmental support is available (Stanford, 1967). Stanford invariably argued that ‘a college should be a developmental community in which the student encounters both challenge and support’ (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978, p. ix) (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998)”

Even though I have not brought it up with Samantha yet, for some reason I keep thinking I should be focusing on her relationship with her parents and how life is at home for her. She made several comments about people not respecting her and how people are trying to control her life. Samantha also said she hardly ever goes home, she does not get along well with her parents and her roommates seem to be judgmental and take over the parent role when Samantha describes how they speak to her. I am not quite sure how to swing the parents into the discussion to see what is said by the client. During the final session the roommate issue as well as the new boyfriend problem will be discussed in detail in hopes Samantha will have her issue(s) resolved.

However, touching upon her relationship with her parents is something that needs to be addressed and will be addressed before the end of our next session. Being a new counselor it is difficult to figure out how to transition from one topic to another without having the client feeling intimidated or uncomfortable.

As a counselor in training I think I built a stronger rapport with Samantha more during our second session than the first. Plus, I feel I was able to follow the conversation a lot better with improved active listening. While sitting with Samantha I keep my body posture in mind and tried to keep it as open and welcoming as possible. Even still being very nervous, I tried to focus my nervous feelings into positive energy to help me continue with the conversations. Several of the comments made on my peer feedback form was my good body language. Compared to the first session with Samantha my body language has improved greatly.

A few additional strengths that were noted on the peer feedback forms were how certain questions were phrased, turning the tables around on the client when she made statements, recapping the prior session which showed good active listening skills, having good non-verbal, welcoming the client in a positive way as well as coming across as truly a friendly and caring person. The client still has several issues that could go either way. However, with my counseling skills improving I feel that by the next and final counseling session with Samantha things will start to look better for her as well as for my improving counseling skills.

At the beginning of the session I asked Samantha if she had spoken to her roommates. I had told her at the end of our first session that she should speak to her roommates since it had been several months since the last time they spoke. She has expressed in different occasions that her friendships with her roommates mean a lot to her, especially the roommate she high school been friends with since high school.

## Student Assessment 1

There were times during the session that Samantha seemed to be closed off. She would have her hands and legs crossed but she was still willing to speak to me about her issues. So even though her body language was not positive I did continue to get useful information to assist her. Towards the end of our session I worked on relaxing her and getting her to focus on what we had discussed and what she should do when she left. Since she was already planning on speaking to her boyfriend the next day and already told me she would try to speak to her roommates one more time I felt we were in a good place. To me the goals were for her to speak to her boyfriend and speak to her roommates about the whole situation. I did not want to over burden her with additional things to do before next session since she did not follow up the first time. But thinking about it now it would have been a good idea to restate what her current goals were before the next session so there would be no questions for the third session.

In my first role-playing counseling session I was very quiet and did not ask the client many questions. I also came off as nervous and unsure of myself as a counselor. Those are several of the areas I felt needed improvement during the second session. To improve upon my weaknesses I read over all of my first set of peer feedback forms and kept every comment in mind while preparing for my second session with my client. Going into the second session I felt more confident and it showed. I also asked a lot more questions and seemed to have a better understanding of where the client was coming from with her issues at hand.

After reading over my peer feedback forms from the second session I am now aware of new areas of my counseling style that are in need of improvement. In the beginning of the second session the client may have felt rushed was one comment made. To begin my next session, I will not complement her but ask her how she is feeling that particular day and slowly work into the session but with strong open ended questions. I want her to not feel threatened but

to open up as much as she can. Plus asking too many closed ended questions is something that I need to work on. Asking a few strong open ended questions in the beginning should keep me in the mind set to continue to ask open ended questions during the session. Several closed ended questions I asked were; “Is there anything you want to tell me?”, “I know we talked about you maybe talking to your roommates; did you have a chance to do that?”, “Has he (Kevin) always been jealous? “Have you always kept things from him since it sounds like you were unsure to tell him?”. To improve my open ended skills I took these same questions and reworded them as shorter open ended questions. During the second session with the client I asked about 10 to 14 closed ended questions. Several of the questions asked were too long and could have been shorted for a much more powerful question.

While working on improving the open ended question I ask, another related comment was that I interrupted the client several times. This particular comment was mentioned on my feedback more than once. Reviewing the session I was able to catch myself interrupting Samantha at least twice. It was very unintentional that I interrupted her, but since it happened more than once and more than one person noted it on their paper it will be something I keep in mind and work on during the next session with my client.

Several of the other suggested areas that are in need of improvement are my wrap up style, better use of non-verbal, improving my listening skills, having confidence to ask the client why she is upset or confronting a client on how she keeps making excuses for herself. Finally, I should not purchase something for the client or try extra hard to have them answer a question. Having candy in the room for everyone is fine if that is what is offered. However, it does not come across as right to purchase food for a client type relationship. Different relationships have different unspoken rules and one rule for the client/helper relationship is the helper should not

## Student Assessment 1

purchase anything special for the client. Also, the client is not going to answer a question the way I want them to, no matter how many ways I rephrase the question. That is something I will keep in mind when asking open ended questions, to not ask the same question several different ways.

In addition, while reviewing session one and session two with the client and reading over the different feedback forms it is very clear to me. I swapped what I was supposed to do during session one with session two. In session two I focused more on building rapport and during session one I was in the Ms Fix-It mode and tried to obtain details about the student's issue(s) before getting to know her. I even gave her homework during the first session instead of the second one. With my last session quickly approaching within the next few short weeks, I must really work on my open ended question delivery, asking questions without seeming nervous or unsure if I should ask the question, not to interrupt my client when she is speaking, to keep my voice at a nice steady level that I am clear for my client as well as the DVD recorder. Furthermore, I truly need to work on getting to the root of the issue. Samantha had body language that was not inviting for a while even though she seemed good about speaking to me. I will be reviewing my DVD of the sessions several more times to figure out what I can do to better assist her without trying to solve her issues.

References

Evans, N, Forney, D, & Guido-DiBrito, F (1998). *Student Development In College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.