
UNIT 2 INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP TECHNIQUES IN COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Counseling is a process that involves interpersonal relationships and helps the clients to become more self-directive and self-responsible. Though Counseling began as a person to person relationship, group counseling too has a long and distinguished history. Joseph Hersey Pratt is generally credited for starting the first counseling group with tuberculosis patients in 1905. With over 200 approaches to counseling, counselors have a wide variety of theories to choose.

Effective counselors scrutinise theories for its effectiveness and match them to personal beliefs about nature of people and change.

Most counseling approaches fall within four broad categories and each category comprises of several theories:

- 1) **Psychodynamic:** It comprises of classical psychoanalysis given by Sigmund Freud and Adlerian counseling and aims at developing client's insight into his/her unconscious.
- 2) **Affective:** It focuses on making an impact on clients' emotions to bring about change. Prominent affective theories are:
 - i) Person centered counseling,
 - ii) Existential counseling and
 - iii) Gestalt therapy.
- 3) **Behavioural:** It uses learning principle to replace maladaptive behaviour with adaptive behaviour.
- 4) **Cognitive:** Cognitive approach focuses on the thinking pattern and its influence on the behaviour and feelings. Best known cognitive theories are Rational Emotive therapy Reality therapy, Cognitive therapy and Transactional Analysis.

Description of all the counseling theories is beyond the scope of this unit. Therefore an attempt has been made to discuss at least one theory from each approach to provide and give an overview of major counseling theories.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Delineate different approaches to counseling;
- Explain these approaches in regard to human behaviour;
- Elucidate different techniques used in each approach to address psychological issues; and
- Explain the Process of Individual and group counseling.

2.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES OF COUNSELLING

2.2.1 Psychodynamic Approach

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis was developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. The psychoanalytic perspective maintains certain assumptions about human behaviour and psychological problems.

Human behaviour is influenced by intrapsychic (within the mind) drives, motives, conflicts, and impulses, which are primarily unconscious.

Various adaptive and maladaptive ego defense mechanisms are used to deal with unresolved conflicts, needs, wishes, and fantasies that contribute to both normal and abnormal behaviour.

Conflicts between conscious view of reality and unconscious (repressed) material can result in mental disturbances such as anxiety, depression etc.;

Beside the inherited constitution of personality, early experiences and relationships, such as the relationship between children and their parents, play a critical and enduring role in psychological development and adult behaviour.

2.2.2 Role of the Counselor

To encourage the clients to talk whatever comes o their mind, especially the childhood experiences.

Help clients to gain insight by reliving and working through the unresolved past experiences that come into focus during sessions.

Encourage transference in order to help clients deal realistically with unconscious material.

Goals

Goals of psychoanalysis vary according to clients but the focus is mainly to reconstruct the basic personality of the client.

Primary goal is to help the client become aware of the unconscious aspect of his/her personality. The unconscious comprise of repressed memories or wishes that are painful and threatening and the client is unable to handle it.

Help client work through a developmental stage not previously resolved. Working through unresolved developmental stage requires major reconstruction of the personality. Once these conflicts are resolved client become more productive human being.

Strengthen the ego so that behaviour is based more in reality (ego) and not on the instinctual cravings that the id wants to express.

Techniques

- 1) **Free Association:** Psychoanalysts make the client lie on a couch and remains out of view (usually seated behind the clients head and motivates them to recall early childhood memories or emotional experiences.

The clients speak whatever comes to the mind even if it seems silly, irrational or painful. The analyst maintains an attitude of emphatic neutrality all through the session, maintaining a non-judgmental stance, without appearing seemingly unconcerned. At times the clients resist free association by blocking their thoughts. The analyst attempts to help clients work through their resistance by assuring that even trivial thoughts are important and needs to be expressed with a goal of leading the client toward better insights of the hidden dynamics.

- 2) **Dream Analysis:** In Freud's view dreams are the fulfillment of a repressed wish and are main avenue to understand the unconscious. Dreams are made by latent thoughts and manifest content. The manifest content is what the client reports and latent content is the unconscious meaning of the dream.

The therapist works to uncover the disguised meanings that are in the dream through dream interpretation include

- 1) Has the client associate to the elements of the dream in the order in which they occurred.
- 2) Make the client associate to a particular dream element.
- 3) Disregard the content of the dream, and ask the client what events of the previous could be associated with the dream.
- 4) Avoid giving any instructions and leave the client to begin.

The analyst uses the clients association to find the clue to the workings of the unconscious mind.

Analysis of Transference: Transference is the process whereby emotions are passed on or displaced from one person to another; during psychoanalytic therapy the displacement of feelings toward others (usually the parents) is onto the analyst. Transference analysis is one of the basic methods in Freudian psychoanalysis. The analyst encourages the transference and interprets the positive or negative feeling expressed. The release of the feelings is therapeutic and moreover the analysis increases the clients self knowledge.

Analysis of Resistance: Resistance occurs when a client becomes reluctant to bring unconscious or repressed thoughts to the surface and explore them. Once to therapeutic process may take many forms such as missing appointments, being late for appointments, persisting in transference, blocking thoughts during free association or refusing to recall dreams or early memories. The counselor immediately needs to deal with resistance as it helps clients gain insight into it as well other behaviours. The counselor educates the client about how to better work with the unconscious material as opposed to resist it. If resistance is not dealt with the therapeutic process might come to a halt.

Interpretation: The analyst provides the client with interpretation about the psychological events that were neither previously understood by the client nor were meaningful. Psychoanalytic interpretation encompasses explanations and analysis of clients' thoughts feelings and actions, meaningful statement of current conflicts and historical factors that influence them. Interpretations must be well timed. If it is employed early it may drive away the client as the client may not be prepared because of anxiety, negative transference or stress. On the other hand if it is not used at all or used infrequently the client may fail to develop insight. The proper timing of interpretation requires great clinical skill.

2.2.3 Affective Approach

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt counseling is an existential/experiential form of counseling that emphasises personal responsibility, and that focuses upon the individual's experience in the present moment. The word 'gestalt' means whole figure. Gestalt counseling is associated with Gestalt psychology, a school of thought that emphasises upon perception of completeness and wholeness. The approach was popularised by Fritz Perls in 1960's.

Gestalt thinking stresses the importance of one's relationship to the environmental field. In Gestalt view an individual cannot be understood in isolation. Since people are continually engaged with their environment, they are fully comprehensible only when viewed in context. An individual is seen as part of an ever-changing field which includes not only one's immediate surroundings but also his or her culture, beliefs, and past experiences.

At any particular moment an individual's attention is devoted to exactly one primary figure from the field; the ignored and undifferentiated remainder of the field is called the background, but it is vital that the individual experiences that figure with full awareness, for if the individual fails to completely express feelings in the present, the unexpressed emotions would recede into the background as unfinished business, exerting a harmful influence and causing self-defeating behaviour

Gestalt thinking also emphasises upon the present moment, "now", as what an individual feels and perceives in the "now" is far more significant than explanations and interpretations of the past. Similarly, how someone behaves in the present is of more importance than is understanding why he or she behaves that way.

Gestaltian thinking teaches that individuals only know what they experience. Therefore to learn or to solve a problem an individual must discover something in his/her field, which can be of help. The whole of the human experience is greater than the sum of its parts, and any individual is meant to experience this wholeness rather than encountering its components in a piecemeal fashion.

As per Gestalt thinking a well adjusted individual is the one who has the capacity to organise his or her field into well-defined obligations which can be dealt with appropriately. He or she revels in the now, living it fully, making choices, freely experiencing and expressing emotion, and leaving behind no unfinished business. This self-awareness leads to the realisation of happiness, fulfillment, and wholeness.

Gestalt model emphasises, that dysfunction occurs when the natural flow of the figure/background process is disrupted. Unfinished business is the result of figures receding into the background before they are completely experienced and dealt with in the now. Painful feelings, never fully and properly expressed, lurk in the background and grow stronger as time passes. Eventually they grow powerful enough to hinder an individual's present moments, and self-defeating behaviour results. This condition persists until the person finally faces and deals with the unfinished business.

2.2.4 Role of the Counselor

The role of the counselor is to create an atmosphere that promotes the client's exploration of what is needed in order to grow as it is believed that the clients ultimately change through their own activities. The counselor works towards restoring the personality to its gestalt, its organized whole by being honest and personally and intensely involved with the clients. Counselor tries to help the client better understand the relationship between himself or herself and his/her environment. i.e. awareness of now.

Gestalt counselors follow several rules while helping client become more aware of the now:

The principle of now: Always using the present tense.

I and thou: always addressing someone directly instead of talking about him or her to the counselor.

The use of I: substituting the word I for it especially when talking about the body.

The use of an awareness continuum: focusing on HOW and WHAT rather than WHY.

The conversion of Question: Asking Client to convert question into statements.

2.2.5 Goals

Gestalt counselling is an existential encounter between people, out of which clients tend to move in certain directions. As an outgrowth of genuine therapeutic encounter it is expected that clients would move towards increased awareness of themselves, be cognisant of every aspect of the present moment, every sensation and emotion, every facet of the environment, and fully experience and respond to every situation in the now

Gradually assume ownership of their experience

- Become more aware of all their senses
- Learn to accept responsibility for what they do, including accepting the consequences of their actions.
- Therapeutic relationship help clients resolve the past (unfinished business) in order to become integrated.

2.2.6 Techniques

The Gestaltian therapist engages in a dialogue with his or her client, proposing both experiments for the client to perform and therapeutic exercises to be used as interventions. Experiments are creative and spontaneous, with a particular outcome neither expected nor encouraged. For example, a client may be asked to engage in a seemingly odd activity such as "becoming" an object from a dream. Experiments force the client to face emotions in the present. Exercises are ready-made techniques such as role-playing and face-to-face encounters between group members. Again, the goal is to elicit emotions and thereby raze the barriers preventing resolution of unfinished business.

Dream work: Dreams are considered to be the messages that represent a person's place at the certain time. Dreams are not interpreted as in psychoanalysis rather

the client's present dreams and are then directed to experience what it is like to be each part of the dream. In this way, the clients get in touch with the more multiple aspects of the self. A person with repetitive dreams is encouraged to realise that there is some unfinished business that is being brought into awareness.

Empty Chair Technique: In this procedure, the clients talk to their various parts of their personality (dominant and passive part). A client may simply talk to an empty chair considering it to be a representative of one part of the self. The client may switch from chair to chair as a representation of different parts of personality. Through this exercise both rational and irrational parts of the clients come into focus and enables him or her to deal with the dichotomy within the self.

Confrontation: Counselors point out to client's incongruent behaviours and feelings. Confrontation involves asking clients WHAT and HOW questions instead of WHY.

Making the Rounds: It is implemented when the counselors feel that a particular theme or feeling expressed by a client should be faced by every person in the group. For example the client may say "I can't stand anyone." Then the client is instructed to say this sentence to each individual in the group, adding some remarks about each group member. The rounds exercise is very flexible and may include non verbal and positive feeling too. Through this exercise the client becomes more aware of inner feelings.

I take responsibility: The client makes statement about perception with the phrase "and I take responsibility for it" the exercise helps client integrate and own perception and behaviour.

Loosening and integrating techniques: Often the patient is so fettered by the bonds of the usual ways of thinking that alternative possibilities are not allowed into awareness. This includes traditional mechanisms, such as denial or repression, but also cultural and learning factors affecting the patient's way of thinking. One technique is just to ask the patient to imagine the opposite of whatever is believed to be true.

Role Playing: In this clients are asked to play the other persons role. For example asking a client to be his mother and say what his mother would say if he/she comes back at 2.00 a.m. In this way the client develops full awareness of himself and others.

Enactment: Here the patient is asked to put feelings or thoughts into action. For example, the therapist may encourage the patient to "say it to the person". "Put words to it" is another example. The patient with tears in his eyes might be asked to "put words to it." Enactment is intended as a way of increasing awareness, not as a form of catharsis.

Exaggeration is a special form of enactment: A person is asked to exaggerate some feeling, thought, movement, etc., in order to feel the more intense (albeit artificial) enacted or fantasized vision. Enactment into movement, sound, art, poetry, etc., stimulates both creativity and is therapeutic. For instance, a man who had been talking about his mother without showing any special emotion was asked to describe her. Out of his description came the suggestion to move

like her. As the patient adopted her posture and movement, intense feelings came back into his awareness.

May I feed you a sentence? : The counselor who is aware that certain implicit attitudes or messages are implied in whatever the client is saying, ask if the client will say a certain sentence provided by the counselor that make the clients thought explicit. If the counselor is correct the client will gain insight.

2.2.7 Behavioural Counselling

The behavioural approach has developed from a strong scientific base, starting with Pavlov's early work on classical conditioning. Other major influences on the development of behaviour therapy have been Skinner's work on operant conditioning and Bandura's work on observational or social learning.

The behavioural approach focuses on overt (i.e., observable) behaviours acquired through learning and conditioning in the social environment. Basic assumptions of behavioural approach include that all behaviour is learned whether adaptive or maladaptive. Maladjusted person is one who has

- a) failed to acquire competencies required for coping with the problems of living or;
- b) has learned faulty reactions or coping patterns that are being maintained by some kind of reinforcement.

Behavioural perspectives include principles of operant conditioning, classical conditioning, and social learning.

- i) **Classical Conditioning:** This refers to the changing of the meaning of a stimulus through repeated pairings with other stimuli.
- ii) **Operant Conditioning:** In this type of conditioning the person's actions produce a consequence that either increases or decreases the probability of the recurrence of behaviour.
- iii) **Social Learning:** In this form of learning an individual acquire new behaviour by observing other people and events.

2.2.8 Role of the Counselor in Behavioural Counselling

Behavioural counselor is active in counseling sessions and involves the client in every phase of counseling. The client learns, unlearns, or relearns specific ways of behaviour. In that process the counselor functions as a consultant teacher adviser, reinforcer and facilitator.

2.2.9 Goal of Behavioural Counselling

The goal of behavioural counseling is to modify or eliminate maladaptive behaviour and help clients acquire productive behaviour.

2.2.10 Techniques

Behavioural counseling is the most technique oriented of all counseling approaches.

1) Contingency Management

The behaviour to be performed, changed or discontinued and the rewards associated with the achievement of these goals are stated.

2) **Token Economy**

It is based on operant conditioning in which desired behaviours necessary for day-to-day functioning are specified and a unit of exchange (the token) is presented to the client contingent upon the occurrence of the desired behaviours. The tokens accumulated can be exchanged for other objects or privileges.

3) **Shaping**

It is a form of operant conditioning in which rewards are given for successive approximations towards the desired new behaviour e.g. a mentally retarded child dressing himself. The desired behaviour is broken into many steps, and often the therapist also acts as a model for the child to follow. It is a laborious process, and used only if a new behaviour is totally absent from the patient's repertoire.

4) **Modelling**

It refers to the acquisition of new behaviours by the process of imitation. The person models himself after another's behaviour.

5) **Extinction**

In extinction reinforcement is withheld/discontinued of a previously reinforced behaviour, resulting in the decrease of that behaviour. The behaviour is then set to be extinguished. In using extinction technique there is a temporary increase in the frequency, intensity, and/or duration of the behaviour targeted for extinction.

6) **Punishment**

Punishment is a process by which a consequence immediately follows a behaviour which decreases the future frequency of that behaviour. Punishment can either be positive (stimulus added) or negative (stimulus removed).

Broadly, there are three types of punishment:

Presentation of aversive stimuli such as spanking, pinching, electric shock, ammonia vapor loud or harsh sounds hair tugging etc.

Response cost

This involves the removal of a specified amount of reinforcer (for e.g. tokens) that the individual has already earned following a undesirable behaviour

Time out

This is a technique in which the individual is removed from the area where the inappropriate behaviour is reinforced. This is done either by transferring him/her to a non-reinforcing situation or removing the source of reinforcement from the present situation, for example a child is separated from classmates when he/she misbehaves.

Habit Reversal

It involves the use of a competing action, which is incompatible with the habit. A nail biter can grasp an object while a person with motor tics may be taught to contract the muscle of his upper limb isometrically.

3) What is involved in affective approach in counseling?
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4) Describe behavioural counseling.
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2.3 COGNITIVE COUNSELLING

2.3.1 Rational Emotive Therapy

The basic theory and practice of rational emotive therapy was formulated by Albert Ellis in 1962. Ellis posited that thoughts influence our emotions and behaviour.

In his ABC model he explained that emotional symptoms or consequences:

- A) Are determined by a person’s belief systems.
- B) Regarding particular activating experiences or events
- C) The belief system of an individual may be either rational or irrational.

Rational belief and behaviour is viewed as effective and potentially productive, whereas irrational belief results in unhappiness and non-productivity and leads to many types of emotional problems and stand in the way of achieving goals and purposes of an individual’s live. Individuals holding unrealistic beliefs and perfectionist values often expect too much of themselves leading to irrational behaviour and consequently feel worthless failures. For example a person may continually think “I should be thoroughly adequate and competent in everything I do”. Such unrealistic assumptions and self demands lead to ineffective and self-defeating behaviour and an emotional response of self devaluation. Ellis identified the following irrational beliefs that might be the root of most psychological maladjustment:

- i) It is absolutely essential for an individual to be loved or approved by every significant person in his environment.
- ii) To be worthwhile a person must be competent, adequate and achieving in everything attempted.
- iii) Some people are bad, wicked or villainous and these people should be blamed and punished.

- iv) It is terrible and catastrophic when things are not in the way an individual wants them to be.
- v) Unhappiness is a function of events outside the control of the individual.
- vi) If something is dangerous or harmful, an individual should constantly be concerned about it.
- vii) It is easier to run away from difficulties and self-responsibility than facing them.
- viii) A person must depend on others and have someone stronger on whom to rely
- ix) Past events in an individual's life determine present behaviour and cannot be changed.
- x) An individual should be very concerned and upset by other individual's problems.
- xi) There is always a correct and precise answer to every problem and it is catastrophic if is not found.

2.3.2 Goals of RET

The goal of rational emotive counseling is to reduce or eliminate irrational behaviour by restructuring the belief system and self evaluation especially with respect to the irrational "should's", "musts" and "ought's" that prevents a positive sense of self worth and emotionally satisfying life.

2.3.3 Role of the RET Counsellor

In RET approach counselors are active and direct. They teach the clients how their thinking, emotions, and behaviour are interrelated. They actively challenge, provoke and dispute the client's irrational beliefs, agree upon homework assignments which help the client to overcome their irrational beliefs, and in general 'pushes' the client to challenge themselves and to accept the discomfort which may accompany the change process.

2.3.4 Techniques of RET

In order to challenge the clients' irrational belief and to strengthen their conviction in a rational alternative the counselor employs a variety of cognitive, behavioural, emotive and imagery techniques.

1) Cognitive Techniques

Disputation Cognitive disputation involves the use of direct questions, logical reasoning and persuasion. Direct questions may challenge the client to prove that his/her belief is logical by asking 'why'. Such inquiries enable the client to distinguish between rational and irrational thoughts.

- a) **Coping Self Statements:** By developing coping self statement rational beliefs are strengthened. For example A person fearful of public speaking may write down and repeat "I want to speak flawlessly, but it is alright if I don't.

- b) **Reframing:** Re-evaluate bad events as ‘disappointing’, ‘concerning’, or ‘uncomfortable’, rather than as ‘awful’ or ‘unbearable’. A variation of this procedure is to list the positives of a negative event.

2) **Emotive Techniques**

- a) **Rational emotive imagery:** A form of mental practice, in which the client imagines a situation that would normally upset a great deal, to feel the inappropriately intense feelings about that event and then change them to more appropriate feelings. The client keeps practicing such a procedure ‘several times a week for a few weeks’ then reaches a point where he/she is no longer troubled by the event.
- b) **Shame attacking exercises:** Include activities that are harmless but dreaded such as introducing oneself to a stranger, wearing loud clothes to attract attention, asking a silly question at a lecture. Through this the client learns that the world does not stop even if a mistake is made and everything need not be perfect.

3) **Behavioural Techniques**

- a) **Biblio Therapy:** In this client is asked to read a self-help book.
- b) **Activity Homework:** The client actually does activities he/she previously thought impossible to do. For example rather than quitting a job a client may continue to work with unreasonable boss and listen to the unfair criticism and mentally dispute the criticism.

2.3.5 Cognitive Therapy

Cognitive therapy, a system developed by Aaron Beck stresses the importance of belief systems and thinking in determining an individual’s behaviour and feelings. It is based on the idea that how an individual thinks (cognition), feels (emotion) and acts (behaviour) all interact together.

Aaron Beck used the term “schemas” to describe individual’s thoughts, beliefs and assumptions about the world, people, events and environment. Cognitive schema may be positive (adaptive) and negative (maladaptive). Normal reactions are mediated by positive cognitive schemas that enable individuals to perceive reality accurately.

Maladaptive cognitive schema or cognitive distortions (i.e. inaccurate ways of thinking) leads to faulty reasoning and individuals interpret situations negatively which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take (behaviour) leading to distress and resulting in problems.

2.3.6 Goals of Cognitive Therapy

Basic goal of cognitive therapy is to remove biases or distortions in thinking. It aims to make individuals become aware of their negative interpretations, and behavioural patterns that reinforce the distorted thinking and helps people to develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving which reduce the psychological distress, so that individuals may function more effectively.

2.3.7 Role of CT Counsellor

The counselor and client collaborate on the treatment plan and work together as partners throughout the treatment. The counselor brings an expertise about cognitions, behaviours and feelings to guide the clients in determining goals for therapy and means for reaching these goals.

2.3.8 Techniques of CT Counsellor

Cognitive Restructuring: It is done following a series of steps:

1) **Self Monitoring and Daily Diaries**

Client is instructed to recognise how situations elicit automatic thoughts, which influences subsequent behaviours.

2) **Examining Available Evidence**

In collaboration with counselor the client evaluates their thoughts with respect to their usefulness as well as their validity.

3) **Socratic Questioning**

Using this method a client is made to logically analyse his/her thoughts and replace distorted thoughts with more accurate and realistic thoughts. This method helps clients revise negative thinking and beliefs and bring about more objective thinking. For this questions such as What is the evidence for the belief? What is the evidence against it? How else can you interpret the situation?

Theoretical Approaches and their respective techniques discussed above are applicable both in the individual as well as in group counseling. However the implementation of the approaches differs when employed with a group because of group dynamics (interaction of members within the group). The following section will discuss the counseling process that takes place in both individual and group setting and how different counseling approaches are applied in the group context through group leaders i.e. counselors.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss cognitive counseling in terms of its approaches and techniques.

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2) Describe rational emotive counseling / therapy.

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3) What is cognitive therapy?
4) What are the techniques and goals of cognitive therapy?

2.4 INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING PROCESS

2.4.1 Establishing Relationship with the Client

The core of the counseling process is the relationship established between the counselor and the client. The Counselor takes the initiative in the initial interview to establish a climate conducive to develop mutual respect, trust, free and open communication and understanding in general of what the counseling process involves.

Counselors main responsibility always remains to meet the clients need as much and possible. The counseling relationship seeks to assist the clients in assuming the responsibilities for his or her problem and its solution. This is facilitated by the counselor’s communication skills, the ability to identify and reflect clients’ feeling and the ability to identify and gain insight into the clients concerns and needs.

2.4.2 Problem Identification and Exploration

After the establishment of an adequate relationship, the clients become more receptive for in depth discussion and exploration of their concern.

Counselor with the cooperation of client tries to identify the problem as specifically and objectively as possible and begins to explore the changes that are required and obstacles that exist for these changes to materialise.

2.4.3 Planning for Problem Solving

Once the counselor determines that all relevant information regarding the client has been gathered and understood in proper perspective and client has also developed awareness and has gained insight into the fact that something needs to be done about a specific problem, counselor moves on to develop a plan in collaboration with client to remediate the concern of the client.

2.4.4 Solution Application and Termination

In this final stage the counselor encourages the client to act upon his or her determined solution of the problem. During the time the client actively involves in implementing the problem solution, the counselor maintains contact as a source of follow up, support and encouragement as the client may need the counselor's assistance in the event things do not go according to plan.

Once it is determined that the counselor and the client has dealt with the client's concern to the maximum possible extent, the counseling process is terminated.

2.5 GROUP COUNSELLING PROCESS

Group counseling provides a unique forum for individuals to make changes in their lives. Unlike individual counseling groups provide a realistic social setting in which the client interacts with peers who may be sharing the same or a similar concern and have some understanding of the problem. The counseling group allows members to be open, honest and frank about their problems and provide a situation in which it is safe to test ideas and solutions to problems. Moreover through the group process and its interactions and sharing of experiences, clients learn to modify earlier behaviour patterns and seek new, more appropriate behaviours in situations that require interpersonal skills.

2.5.1 Group Size

Ideal size of counseling group is seven or eight members with an acceptable range of five to ten members. In small group (three or four members), member interaction diminishes, and counselors often find themselves engaged in individual counseling within the group. On the other hand in large groups the intimacy and comfort diminishes and groups become less personal and more mechanical in their process. Larger groups also increase the risks that some members may be inadvertently overlooked to the extent that their needs are not satisfied.

2.5.2 Group Process

The elements of the group counseling process share much in common with those of individual counseling. These may be separated into their logical sequence of occurrence.

2.5.3 The Establishment of the Group

The initial group time is used to acquaint the new group membership with the format and processes of the group, to orient them to such practical considerations as frequency of meetings, duration of group, and length of group meeting time. Additionally the beginning session is used to initiate relationships and open communications among the participants. The counselor also may use beginning sessions to answer questions that clarify the purpose and processes of the group. The establishment of the group is a time to further prepare members for meaningful group participation and to set a positive and promising group climate.

The group counselor must remember that in the initial group sessions the general climate of the group may be a mixture of uncertainty, anxiety, and awkwardness. It is not un-common for group members to be unfamiliar with one another and uncertain regarding the process and expectancies of the group regardless of previous explanations or the establishing of ground rules.

It is important in this initial stage of group establishment for the leader to take sufficient time to ensure that” all the groups’ members have their questions and concerns addressed; that they understand the process and begin to feel comfortable in the group. Of course, the impression that the group counselor makes in this initial stage is of utmost importance to the smooth and successful process of the group.

2.5.4 Identification: Group Role and Goal

Once an appropriate climate has been established that at least facilitates a level of discussion, the group may then move toward a second, distinct stage: identification. In this stage, the group identity unfolds, the identification of individual roles emerges, and group and individual goals are established jointly by the counselor and group members and are made operational. All these develop simultaneously at this stage of the group counseling process.

The early identification of goals in group counseling facilitates the group’s movement toward a meaningful process and outcomes. Goals are stated in objectives that are not only measurable but are also attainable and observable and are likely to be realised in view of the group strategies planned. It is also important in this process that the sub-goals of each individual group member is recognised and responded to in turn.

Counselors need to be aware of the probable, or at least possible, conflict and confrontation that may emerge during this stage of the group’s development. Yalom (2005) labels this second phase “the conflict, dominance, rebellion stage.” He considers it a time when the group shifts from preoccupation with acceptance, approval, commitment to the group, definitions of accepted behaviour, and the search for orientation, structure, and meaning, to a preoccupation with dominance, control, and power. The conflict characteristic of this phase is among members or between members and leader. Each member attempts to establish his or her preferred amount of initiative and power. Gradually a control hierarchy, a social pecking order, emerges.

As members attempt new patterns of behaviour and new approaches to group goals, different perceptions as well as differences in solutions generated by the individual members may lead to a range of behaviours from normal discussions to active and open confrontation. In this stage, the counselor needs to keep the discussions relevant and prevent them group members from making personal attacks on individuals’ values and integrity. The counselor should also remain alert to the possibility that silence of certain group member may be a signal of resistance rather than group compliance.

At this stage the group members might express their dissatisfaction with the group process or leadership when controversial issues are discussed or when there is a difference between the way a group member sees himself or herself and the way the group stereotypes the individual, leading to the member’s challenging the reactions or impressions of the rest of the group.

However, when conflicts and confrontations occur, a more cohesive group usually emerges, resulting in increased openness in communication, consensual group action and cooperation, and mutual support among the members.

2.5.5 Productivity

As the group achieves some degree of stability in its pattern of behaving, and the members become more deeply committed to the group, and ready to reveal more of themselves and their problems productivity process begins.

This sets the stage for problem clarification and exploration, usually followed by an examination of possible solutions.

In this regard, the group counselor clarifies the individual and group concern. This clarification includes a thorough understanding of the nature of the problem and its causes. Next along with the group members the counselor identifies what the group desires to accomplish, examines all possible solutions in terms of their consequences and also whether it is capable of being realised (obtainable). Finally the group members employ the chosen solution to achieve the desired outcomes. In this entire process, by making their own decisions members establish their ownership of the problem and the chosen solution.

2.5.6 Realisation

By the time group members reach this stage they recognise the inappropriateness of their past behaviours and begin to try out the selected solutions or new behaviours, making progress toward realising their individual goals. They take responsibility of acting on their own decisions. The counselor at this point encourages the sharing of individual experiences and goal achievement both inside and outside the group. Although success with the new behaviours may provide sufficient reinforcement for many members to continue, for others a support base of significant others outside the group needs to be developed in order to help them maintain the change once the counseling group is terminated.

2.5.7 Termination

Termination may be determined by the counselor or by the group members and the counselor together'. Termination, like all other stages of the group counseling experience, requires skill and planning by the counselor. It is most appropriate when the group goals and the goals of the individual members have been achieved and new behaviours or leanings have been put into practice in everyday life outside the group.

At times the group members resist termination of a counseling group and continue indefinitely as the counseling group provides a base for interpersonal relationships, open communication, trust, and support. Therefore it becomes important that from the very beginning the group counselor keeps on emphasising the temporary nature of the group and establish, if appropriate, specific time limitations and reminds the group, of the impending termination as the time approaches.

Under less favorable circumstances, groups may be terminated when their continuation promises to be nonproductive or harmful, or when group progress is slow and long-term continuation might create over dependency on the group by its members.

The point of termination is a time for review and summary by both counselor and clients. Some groups will need time to allow members to work through their feelings about termination. Even though strong ties may have developed along

with pressures from the group to extend the termination time, those pressures must be resisted, and the group must be firmly, though gently, moved toward the inevitable termination.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss individual counseling process.

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2) How problem identification and exploration is take place in this process?

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3) Describe the group counseling process.

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4) Elucidate the process of establishing the group.

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5) What are the methods to ensure productivity in a group?

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6) Differentiate between individual and group counseling processes.

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2.6 GROUP LEADERS OF DIFFERENT THEORETICAL STANCE

In groups led by counselors with a *psychoanalytic* theoretical orientation, the counselor understands that within the group context each member re-experiences emotionally and repeats behaviourally his/her early childhood experiences and needs that were not met. They try to find satisfaction in the group through in much the same way they tried earlier and failed. The psychoanalytic group leader teaches the individuals “how” to satisfy the needs in an appropriate and effective way. The leader is also sensitive to the phenomena of group transference as a whole and individual transference occurring simultaneously within the group. The counselor interprets transference and resistances in order to free the client’s unconscious. The analysis, focus on the behaviour of both the individual members of the group and/or the behaviour of the group as a whole.

2.6.1 The Behavioural Counsellor

The *behavioural* counselor in the group setting proceeds to systematically identify the members’ problems in behavioural terms and establish behavioural objectives for members. Behavioural objectives are accomplished either through modeling or reinforcement paradigm. The group provides rich behavioural resources and the group leader identifies new appropriate behaviour which may be beneficial for group members and help the members of the group to learn productive behaviour by observing (modeling) other members of the group or the leader himself. In Behaviourally oriented group, groups are also used to dispense reinforcement. Peer pressure is used either to encourage or discourage certain specified behaviours. Behavioural group leader may help the members learn to give or withheld reinforcement’s thereby making the consequences of an individual’s behaviour dependent on the group as well as on the individual. This is known as group contingencies. This practice teaches the value of cooperation to group members.

2.6.2 The Rational Emotive Therapist

In group counseling the *rational-emotive* therapist, is prominent in promoting client change. Within the group, members help each other in identifying illogical, emotionally driven behaviours and the counselor seeks to bring about cognitive and rational behaviour change through reason, persuasion, role-playing, and so forth.

2.6.3 Gestalt Therapist

Gestalt therapy focuses on the integration of the person “getting it all together”. It emphasises that a person’s experiences form a meaningful whole when there

is a smooth transition between those set of experiences which are immediately within the focus of awareness (figure) and those that are in the background. The gestalt group, work towards this end by using some member's perceptions of themselves and others as catalyst for changing other member's cognition of themselves and others in the group.

2.6.4 Cognitive Therapist

Cognitive oriented group leader perceives that the group setting provides diverse emotional, social, and intellectual opportunities to the group member for enriched experiences. Group interactions increase their ability to use their logical processes in order to arrive at a better understanding of the world and of themselves.

2.7 SIMILARITIES: INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING

The objectives of both techniques are similar i.e. helping the counselee achieve self integration, self-direction and responsibility.

In both the techniques the counselor presents an accepting, permissive climate for the clients to participate freely such that their defenses are reduced.

Both techniques aim at clarifying feelings, restatement of content, and the like. The counselor helps the client to become aware of their feelings and attitudes and also to examine them.

Both approaches provide for privacy and confidentiality of relationship.

2.8 DIFFERENCES: INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING

Individualised counseling is a one to one, face to face relationship marked by intimacy, warmth and rapport between the counselor and counselee. In group counseling there is the physical proximity of other members with perhaps similar problems. The client may obtain solace from the knowledge that he is not only one with problems and that there are others who have similar problems.

In group counseling unlike in individualised counseling, the counsees not only receive help but also give help to others. The more cohesive the group, the more are the members able to help one another. This cooperative feeling brings the members closer, which in turn helps in facilitating the mutual expression of feelings.

The counselor's task is somewhat more complex in group counseling. He has not only to follow sense and appreciate what a member says but also how this affects other members and their reactions. The counselor in a group counseling situation has more demands to meet and satisfy.

2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we dealt with counseling and its definition and characteristics. Then we took up counseling and discussed the theoretical approaches which included

psychodynamic approach, affective approach to counseling, and behavioural counseling. In regard to all the three approaches, we also presented the role of the counsellor in each of these approaches, the goals of each of the approach and the techniques thereof. Then we took up in the next section cognitive counselling, explained what it is and under its rubric we discussed the rational emotive therapy, the goals of this therapy and the role of the rational emotive counsellor. Then we discussed the cognitive therapy, its goals and the role of counsellor using cognitive approach. We then discussed the techniques of cognitive therapy. We then elucidated the individual counseling processes within which we discussed establishing relationship with the client, how to identify and explore the problems faced by the client, how to plan and solve the problem systematically etc. This was followed by the group counseling process. In this we discussed the size of the group, the process of the group, and how to establish the group, the methods to identify the group goal, the productivity and termination of the group therapy. Then we discussed the leaders of different theoretical stance under which we presented the behavioural counsellor, the rational emotive therapist, gestalt therapist and cognitive therapist. This is followed by similarities and differences between the individual and group counseling.

2.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What are the learning principles on which behavioural approach is based? Describe the various behavioural techniques briefly.
- 2) Describe the techniques used by a psychoanalytic counselor to achieve counseling goals.
- 3) What are irrational beliefs that cause psychological problems? Discuss the techniques used by a rational emotive counselor to dispute the irrational beliefs.
- 4) Explain the Group process of counseling. How do counselors of different theoretical orientation differ in leading the group?
- 5) Describe briefly the Cognitive approach of counseling.
- 6) Explain the Gestalt conceptualisation of psychological problems. What are the goals and techniques used in Gestalt counseling?

2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Belkin, G.S. (1986). *Introduction to Counseling*. Brown Publishers U.S.A.

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