

Personal Values and Counseling Sessions

Essay

Personal values have a direct influence on professional work. Moreover, personal values are almost impossible to be separated from professional counseling. However, counselors are expected and even required to be free of personal bias toward the patient. People rely on the counselor for advice and recommendation, and they do not want the personal values of the counselor to have any impact on sessions. Therefore, counselors need to take into account their own values and try to become conscious of how their professional work is impacted or modified by personal values.

Special attention should be paid to the non-verbal clues. It is hardly possible to avoid communicating values. Nevertheless, counselors have the primary responsibility to remain objective during the sessions and person-oriented instead of self-oriented. Non-verbal clues may reveal the opinion of the counselor about the problem of the patient. For example, lack of direct eye contact may send the message to the patient that the counselor is personally not interested in the problem shared by the patient. If the counselor does not ask any questions or smile when the patient tells about the tragic, in his opinion, incident, the quality of counseling is affected by the personal values of the counselor.

There would be no problem with personal values if the field of professional expertise was different from counseling. Counselors must be free of bias and express a personal interest in each patient. Taking into account that counselors and clients usually have different value systems, a conflict of values may occur. If the counselor is not able to control his non-verbal communication, the counseling process is affected negatively because the client may read the non-verbal clues or adapt his own interpretation. Thus, the primary objectives of the counseling will not be achieved.

Many therapists believe that they can be professional counselors while avoiding the influence of personal values during counseling sessions. However, it would be wrong to state with confidence that all counselors are free of personal bias. Some counselors are not aware of the impact personal values have on the counseling process. Yet others lack the skills and abilities to keep their personal values out of the counseling process. It is important to add that there is a constant exchange of values between a therapist and a client. Nevertheless, patient and therapist play different roles: patient seeks help while therapist must function in a helpful manner.

On the other side, the therapist may be able to avoid the influence of personal values on the counseling process if they have a clear mental separation of their personal life from professional duties. From an ethical perspective, the therapist is not a friend; the therapist is a responsible professional whose primary responsibility is to provide efficient and timely help. Clients turn to a counselor to find help solving their problems. The personal values of the counselor may affect the given advice or recommendation.

In conclusion, personal values have an unavoidable impact on counseling sessions. Therapists and counselors must regularly assess their counseling practices in order to ensure bias-free counseling. However, non-verbal clues may reveal the personal values of the counselor to the patient. Counselors should pay special attention to trying to avoid the impact of their personal values on the counseling process and advice they give.