

ASCHP Circular March 2022

Factors that make a successful counsellor

“I hold a PhD in clinical psychology, but I didn’t know how to counsel clients” she admitted.

This bright psychologist was sitting in my office and relating her experience. I listened to her story, but I wasn’t surprised for I already knew that being trained in behavioural science does not necessarily make you competent to counsel. She continued:

“But then traumatologists from the USA came to South Africa to offer training in in what is known as TRI, and since then the set of skills I learned is all I use in my practice, and it is exceedingly effective”

There are many similar stories, depending on whether professionals are



Will the counsellor step forward please

honest (and brave) enough to relate their experiences. Of course we cannot generalize for not everyone is in the same boat. But through the years we at the professional body have been alarmed by the need of counsellors to be thoroughly skilled in rendering effective counselling services. This is truly the make or break

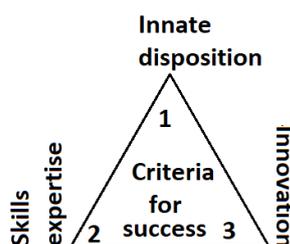
criterion for the measure of successfulness. In this circular we want to point to the pivotal factors that we deem to be crucial.

In the first instance, we promote the recognition of the natural aptitude of a person to interact with other people. Some people are by nature compassionate nurturers with a set of virtues that make them likeable – joy, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, etc. They were born with an innate disposition to establish rapport with fellow human beings; their temperaments are suitable to exercise patience and accordingly it makes them good listeners. On more clinical grounds these people are most likely GABA or acetylcholine dominant in neurotransmitter levels and we can justify the notion that they are born counsellors. On the other hand, dopamine dominance contributes better to coaching than counselling. We believe that no professionalism or education cannot substitute for these important personal qualities that undergird understanding, acceptance and empathic support. This factor is

taken into account in preparing CPD training programmes – further developing the counsellor.

Secondly, as we have noted, training can often be so academic astute that it only develops the mind and not the person. We stand by the saying that training is not so much about what you learn, as it is about what you become! This alludes to the set of skills you have mastered in working with people, especially communication skills, people skills and social skills. A skills is not directed at understanding only, but to doing something well, having expertise. It is the product of training and practice which demands endless repetition and correction, not merely the writing of an examination. This is the rationale behind the type of QCTO and HWSETA institutions. The ASCHP preferred training providers. In the news section we would like to welcome another training provider more about this registered provider.

Lastly, we need to add innovation to the list of criteria, for without the ability to apply virtues or skills effectively to the counselling challenge will be to no avail. Due to the fact that the spectrum of needs, personality and challenges of every client you would encounter is different from the next one, it requires and act of innovation. The word “innovation” is derived from the Latin verb *innovare*, which carries the connotation of renewal, improvement, or replacement (innilytics.ag). As you may realize, this in turn calls for insight, creativity and sense-making. In a radical way it also includes breaking the rules, believing in the impossible, inspiring hope, conquering defeat, reaping novel ideas from everywhere and moving outside of the proverbial box.



Summary. If we know what is required, it makes it easier to determine where we may lack and need to improve. The triangle is a summary of three criteria that contribute largely to successfulness in counselling (and probably other occupations as well). These criteria belong to the categories of training, practice

and personality that cover the occupation of counselling.

‘Counseling has to do with intuition, with work on oneself, with the quietness of one's mind and the openness of one's heart.’ Ram Das

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