

UNIT 6

PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health difficulties are the leading cause of lifelong disability with a very high risk of persistence into adulthood when untreated. The negative impact of mental health difficulties across multiple domains of a young person's life is very powerful particularly on education, physical health and families.

Teachers can take the following measures to promote positive mental health.

1. Provide a conducive climate:

Provide a safe, secure and nurturing climate in which the child can grow as a healthy, whole individual.

2. Encourage Social Time:

Schedule 30 minutes or an hour every week where students can be social and focus on something other than the curriculum. Encourage them to chat with their peers and complete a task together, like a difficult problem or a challenge.

3. Make Mental Health Known:

Mental health is still seen as a bit of a taboo subject and something that sufferers feel embarrassed to talk about. Many also feel judged if they explain their problems. Recognize the student's need for intervention and build a rapport. Enhance child's perspectives, wellbeing through educating about the problem.

4. Have an open door policy:

It's essential that students know they can come and talk to you about any issues or concerns they have. Communicate this to your students so they know you're always there to listen. Provide an appropriate time to truly listen to the child.

5. Extend Help:

Help the person identify and clarify the problem. Illuminate options and alternatives for problem solving. Help create goals to facilitate improvement or change. Encourage the student to succeed. Assist the student in understanding his strengths, weakness, interest, values, potentialities and limitations. Show concern for and assist in the planning of the student's educational, career, personal, and social development. Clarify student thinking and decision making at crisis points.

6. Engage in Healthy Activities:

Encourage the student to plan and utilize leisure time activities well. Help the student to acquire a better understanding of the world of work through the acquisition of skills and attitudes and/or participation in work-related programs. Help students find alternative positive ways to express emotions like panic, rage, guilt rather than venting in destructive ways.

7. Referral:

Refer to professional help if in depth skills are needed. Listen to the inner messages that come through interaction with the child.

Conclusion:

The role that schools and teachers play in promoting positive mental health in children should not be underestimated. Creating a school ethos which promotes and builds strengths among students, whatever their academic profile, can turn risk into resilience and significantly reduce the prevalence and impact of mental health disorders.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF A COUNSELLOR

Ethics codes provide professional standards for counselors with the purpose of protecting the dignity and well-being of clients. This helps counselors decide an appropriate plan of action for their clients and provides the ethical standards by which complaints and inquiries can be made. Professional ethics of a counselor in respect to:

1. The Counseling Relationship

Ethical guidelines that focus on the counseling relationship such as client welfare, informed consent, and managing multiple relationships-

Counselors must-

- Work hard to create and sustain a relationship with their clients based on trust.
- Obtain informed consent from clients entering a counseling relationship.
- Respect a client's confidentiality and privacy.
- Explain to clients what the counseling relationship entails (which could include fees, group work, and termination).
- Be cognizant of client's culture, values, and beliefs.

2. Confidentiality and Privacy

Ethical guidelines that focus on the importance of trust, boundaries, and confidential interactions are:

Counselors must:

- Communicate the concept of confidentiality with their clients on an ongoing basis and do so in a culturally sensitive way.
- Inform clients about the limitations of confidentiality regarding what situations information must be disclosed (e.g., to protect clients or others from harm).
- Discuss if and how information may be shared with others.
- Understand legal and ethical issues involved in working with clients who cannot provide informed consent (such as minors or clients with impairment).
- Maintain and store records in an approved way.

3. Professional Responsibility

Ethical guidelines that focus on respecting the practice of counseling are:

Counselors must:

- Adhere to the Code of Ethics.
- Practice within one's boundaries of competence.
- Participate in associations that help improve the profession.
- Practice counseling based on scientific foundations.
- Be mindful when advertising and talking with the media.
- Engage in self-care activities so they can work at their highest capacity.

4. Relationships with Colleagues, Employees, and Employers

Ethical guidelines that focus on developing working relationships with those within and outside of the counseling field are:

Counselors must:

- Develop relationships with colleagues from other disciplines and be respectful of those who have different theoretical approaches.
- Provide consultation services within areas of competence.
- Provide appropriate consultation referrals when requested or necessary.

5. Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation

To ethically use formal and informal assessments to guide treatment plans and intervention selection –

Counselors must:

- Understand the use of assessments as an important part of information gathering and to assist in conducting clients' treatment and evaluation.

- Use educational, mental health, forensic, and career assessments (among others) on which they are trained and have had comprehensive supervised experience administering and interpreting.
- Diagnose clients and interpret assessments accurately and in a culturally sensitive manner.

6. Supervision, Training, and Teaching-

Ethical guidelines that focus on how to develop relationships with supervisees, students, and trainees in ways that support ethical boundaries in a learning environment-

Counseling supervisors must:

- Be trained in supervision methods and techniques before they offer supervision services.
- Be responsible for monitoring supervisees' clients' welfare and supervisees' performance and development through a variety of supervision modalities, such as regular meetings and live supervision.
- Inform supervisees of their clients' rights and inform clients with information regarding the supervision process and its limitation on confidentiality.
- Be aware of and address the role of multiculturalism and diversity in the supervisory relationship.
- Endorse supervisees that they deem qualified and sufficiently able to perform duties in the areas of certification, licensure, employment, or completion of an academic or training program.

Counselor educators must:

- Be knowledgeable regarding the ethical, legal, and everyday aspects of the profession including how diversity impacts groups and individuals.
- Inform students of their ethical responsibilities and standards as professionals and as students.
- Provide ongoing feedback, evaluation, and act as gatekeepers to the profession.
- Promote the use of techniques, procedures, and modalities that are grounded in theory and have scientific foundations.
- Develop clear policies and provide direct assistance regarding field placement.

Counseling students must:

- Be aware of their responsibility to follow the Code of Ethics and applicable laws.
- Understand the implications of taking a break from counseling others when impaired.
- Disclose their status as supervisees before beginning counseling others.

7. Research and Publication

Ethical guidelines that focus on how to ethically conduct human subjects research and publish and/or present results:

Counselors must:

- Conduct research that is aligned with ethical principles, federal and state laws, host institutional regulations, and scientific standards of governing research.
- Adhere to confidentiality in their research.
- Be responsible for participants' welfare throughout the research process.
- Inform individuals of their rights as a research participant through informed consent.
- Plan, conduct, and report research accurately.

8. Distance Counseling, Technology, and Social Media

Ethical guidelines that focus on how to ethically use technology and social media within the field of counseling-

Counselors must:

- Be knowledgeable about the laws governing distance counseling and social media.
- Only utilize distance counseling after gaining competence through training and supervised experience in this specialty area.
- Inform clients about the limits of confidentiality and potential Internet interruptions due to the nature of technology.
- Understand the benefits and drawbacks related to distance counseling
- Utilize a professional presence if they choose to use social media platforms
- Avoid disclosing confidential information through social media.
- Utilize informed consent to explain the boundaries of social media.

9. Resolving Ethical Issues

Ethical guidelines that focus on how to address and resolve ethical issues with other counselors-

Counselors must:

- Behave in an ethical and legal manner and recognize when there is a conflict between ethics codes and laws.
- Utilize and document an ethical decision-making process when faced with an ethical dilemma.
- Hold other counselors to similar standards of professional conduct.
- Resolve ethical dilemmas with direct and open communication to all parties involved.
- Seek consultation when necessary.
- Become familiar with Procedures for Processing Complaints of Ethical Violations link and use it as a reference.

1. Communication Skills

Effective counselors should have excellent communication skills. Although some of these skills are developed and refined over the course of the counselling career, one should already possess certain communication skills before embarking on a counseling career. Counselors need to have a natural ability to listen and be able to clearly explain their ideas and thoughts to others.

2. Acceptance

Being nonjudgmental and accepting are important attributes in any of the helping professions. But professional counselors must be able to "start where the client is at." This phrase is often used in counseling to describe the ability to relate to clients with an open, nonjudgmental attitude – accepting the client for who she is and in her current situation. Counselors need to be able to convey acceptance to their clients with warmth and understanding.

3. Empathy

Counselors help people through some of the most difficult and stressful times of their lives. They must be able to display empathy – the ability to feel what another person is feeling. Empathy means that you are truly able to imagine what it's like to stand in someone else's shoes. Compassion and empathy help clients feel understood and heard.

4. Problem-Solving Skills

It's not up to a counselor to solve her clients' problems, no matter how much she might want to help. But counselors must have excellent problem-solving skills to be able to help their clients identify and make changes to negative thought patterns and other harmful behaviors that might be contributing to their issues.

5. Rapport-Building Skills

Counselors must possess a strong set of interpersonal skills to help establish rapport quickly with clients and develop strong relationships. They must give their undivided attention to clients and be able to cultivate trust. Counselors need to be able to place all of their focus on what their clients are saying and avoid being distracted by their own personal problems or concerns when they are in a session.

6. Flexibility

Flexibility in counseling is defined as the ability to adapt and change the way you respond to meet the clients' needs. Counsellors cannot stay rigid and stick to a predetermined treatment path when clients require a different approach. Being flexible is one of the most important attributes of a professional counselor.

7. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to look within and identify your own unmet psychological needs and desires, such as a need for intimacy or the desire to be professionally competent. This ability prevents the counsellor's issues from affecting or conflicting with those of the clients. Self-awareness has a major impact on a counselor's effectiveness.

8. Multicultural Competency

Counselors help people from all walks of life. They must display multicultural competency and adopt a multicultural worldview. Multicultural competency means that you try to relate to and understand the clients regardless of their race, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs or socioeconomic background.

9. Warmth

The quality of being warm refers to a situation, where a person shows interest in other individual/group. 'Cold' individuals rarely become good counsellors. A word of caution here, a too warm counsellor may lead towards the development of over-dependence on the part of the client. The ideal feeling of being warm is the one which demonstrates that the counsellor is non-judgmental and is honestly interested in his/her client. Care should be taken to see that the counsellor does not try to dominate the process of counselling.

10. A Sense of Humour:

A sense of humour comes quite handy, in rescuing most of the sensitive or delicate situations. It does not mean that a counsellor should resort to a comedian's tactics. It also does not mean that a counsellor should start taking the conversation during counselling session lightly. But, it means to help a client to regain the sight of the larger picture of a problem. It helps in calming down the tense atmosphere, that builds up because the clients generally blow the things out of proportion. Even subjects dubbed as 'taboos', can be easily confronted with the help of a sense of humour.
