Open Questioning Practice Idea

This is a simple way to practice the basics of engagement. Remember that engagement doesn't just happen at the beginning of the first session. We return to it over and over as needed. It's you working to get fully on the client's page.

1. Get a partner and decide who will be the "client" first. This person thinks of a change he/she is considering making. Choose something real. Set a timer for 4 minutes.

2. The counselor will engage with the "client" about this change staying only with the exploratory stage. Get out the Open-Ended Questions sheet. You will stay with only the first two sections, "to open a session" and "to explore reasons to change."

- If you notice yourself going into problem-solving, giving advice, etc, back up and explore more about what the change will mean to this person.
- Feel free to ask exactly the questions on the sheet or to make up your own.
- Notice if any of your questions are closed and stop to redo them as open.
- You could also practice reflections by picking out the main points you hear and reflecting them back.

3. When you believe you have explored all that is there, keep at it! Ask again if there is anything else. Then form a summary and ask if you got it all.

4. If you wish, end with a summary of what you have heard from your client.

5. Switch sides and the other person practices.

Affirming Practice Idea

1. Before the practice time collect in writing some things a client has said that give you some insight into this person. If you have a recorded client session, transcribe some of what the client says. If you don’t have any recordings you could reproduce some of what you remember from a recent client.

3. Share your client content with your partner or small group, perhaps first by reading it and then by sharing it in writing.

4. Brainstorm together affirmations you could make. Remember that affirmations are reflections of efforts the client is making or strengths he/she has.

5. Tweak them together to make them stronger. Experiment with saying them. How do they sound/feel?

Reflecting Practice Idea

1. Decide who will be the "client" first. This person thinks of a decision he/she is trying to make. Choose something real. Set a timer for 4 minutes.

2. The counselor will engage with the "client" about this decision beginning with an open question.

- Proceed by using reflections. Attempt to ask very few, if any, questions. Stick with reflections.
- Perhaps work to make your reflections more complex, reflect feelings you sense, perhaps include a double-sided reflection.
- There is no need for the client to make a decision, though she might. It's about practicing reflections.

3. When it seems your client has made a decision or you run out of time, form a summary and ask if you got it all.

4. Switch sides and the other person practices.

5. If you have three people in your group, the observer could listen and tally up the number of reflections and questions. Ideally the R/Q ratio is at least 1, better yet 2.

Summarizing Practice Idea

1. This one can be done by yourself or in pairs or a small group.

2. Take a look at Tips #72 and #119 to remind yourself of how to form strong summaries. Perhaps keep the format in Tip #119 in front of you.

3. Think of a client you saw recently. Form a summary that you could have said at the end of the session.

- You could just "wing it"out loud or write it down and edit it.
- If you have a partner read it out loud, ask for feedback and ideas for making it stronger.
- This works best if you say or read your summary just as you would say it to the client. For example, instead of saying, "Well, I would tell her that…" just say, "Mrs. Jones, you came in today concerned about…"

4. Then with the same client or another one, form a summary that would have fit at a transition point in the session. Form a summary and make sure to include a key question at the end.

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