

Helpful Conversations

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Welcome

Welcome to the wonderful world of supporting employees and the organization by means of helpful, skilled and informed conversations. It's an exciting, fascinating and very privileged place to be, at once rewarding and demanding. This book aims to acquaint you, the Reader, with that world.

Supporting employees and the organization is a relatively new role, about which little has been published. Probably the closest are texts on counseling at work. However, this kind of work is broader and more complex. The job requires you to hold a:

- Range of conversations (from advice to mediation) with a
- Range of clients (employees, managers, teams, the organization) about a
- Range of issues (from individual personal health to organization al diversity) in a
- Range of settings (from office to hospital) using a
- Range of communication methods (from individual face-to-face work to organizational presentations).

In effect, you are expected to be a communication and conversation specialist.

You will also need to be aware of and be able to manage:

- Overlapping circles of information and confidentiality.
- Complex (and sometimes conflicting) relationships between individual clients, managers and the organization.
- Personal and interpersonal emotion, distress and pain.





Additionally, conversations need to be tailored to the particular client. That means:

- Being familiar with various theoretical approaches to client work.
- Being able to adapt one's approach to client need and preference: for instance: with one considering practical solutions and with another other exploring their feelings.
- Choosing and changing 'gear' as needed. You may see the client only briefly and refer them on to others or work in greater depth over a longer period of time.

Last but not least, it means keeping clients, the organization and oneself safe:

- Legally
- Ethically, and
- Psychologically.

Quite a tall order and that's what makes it deeply rewarding.

Let's begin.

Let's have fun.

Bon Voyage!





CHAPTER 1:

Let's Meet Tom and Sally

In this book, we take the nuts and bolts of different kinds of conversations apart so that you get a good sense of the individual elements that conversations consist of. This will enable you to tailor your future conversations more closely to suit a particular requirement, as is necessary in supporting employees and the organization.

It's perhaps surprising how much theory is involved in understanding conversations. It's a little bit like learning to drive: once you know how, you forget the initial complexity; at the beginning, it was all very confusing to remember everything. Experience shows that learning about conversations is similar, because we are taking apart something we take for granted: the ability to converse. We do it every day and probably you are in this job because you are pretty good at it! So it can feel unnecessarily complex and somewhat disorienting to put conversations under the microscope.

We take Humpty Dumpty apart in order to then put him back together again: to become consciously aware of the way best-suited to the particular task in hand. We do this because helpful conversations are held ultimately for the client's benefit. We are accountable for how we manage the conversations and the choices we make. So let's begin by looking at an example of a helpful conversation that actually took place.

The context of the conversation

This conversation is between 'Tom,' the client and 'Sally,' the practitioner. Both were social workers in training at the time. The practice was videotaped, then transcribed and edited to disguise their true identity. Tom is speaking to Sally about a real issue that has cropped up in his day-to-day work. Sally's role is that of being a colleague who has some understanding of the situation; of course, she is also a fellow student. Both Tom and Sally are keenly aware of the training aspect of this conversation and its overall background context is similar to that of mulling over a work problem with a colleague, as one does.

As you read it, you may like to make some notes or observations. Let's consider the following questions:



- Was the conversation successful?
- Was it helpful?
- What kind of conversation do you think it was (for example: advice, guidance, etc)
- How do you think the client felt?
- What do you think the issue was?
- How did Sally proceed?
- How else might Sally have proceeded?
- What would have been the advantages / disadvantages of that?

SALLY and Tom

Your Notes

SCENE: *Meeting Room*

Sally and Tom sitting across the table

(2) SALLY: Hi Tom

TOM Hi Sally

(4) SALLY How are you today?

TOM I'm very well, very well indeed

(6) SALLY How are things going?

TOM Very well, there's just a slightly little concern I've got... As you are aware, I work in the Westport office of our Department. Now I am based in Eastport and have been for about 15 years. So, going to Westport, the people don't really know me. Uh... but it's not really related to that. It's a silly issue really. ...



It's actually related to the room I am using, which is set up like an office and I get the impression that it is really an Area Manager's office, you know it's got that feel to it that I do not feel is really conducive to the role of a Social Worker.

(8) SALLY So you say it makes you feel silly? The set-up makes you feel silly?

TOM No, sorry, not the set up makes me feel silly. I thought you may think I am being silly because it is a small issue. The set up makes me feel ... within the accommodation I have in Westport makes me feel that it is too much of an office situation. Basically, to explain - in Eastport, I have a corner seating unit. People in general... people sometimes come in, and although some people have had a joke about it being a sort of counseling couch and have had bit of a laugh about it, people have actually come and said this feels more of a relaxing environment. Now the situation in Westport is that I don't have that relaxing environment.

(10) SALLY So, you feel that it is too formal. The setting is too formal?

TOM That's correct. I do feel it is too formal. That is not the actual difficulty. The difficulty arises on the basis that because I know people in Eastport - I know Facilities and even get things purchased. It is so much easier for me to go and say 'Can I have this?' and generally speaking they actually supply it, but in Westport, I am not that well known and in some ways I feel I can't go and say to them "Can I have this" because it is like somehow out of place for me to say "I am the new counselor for your office - I want this...I want that.."



I have seen a number of clients and I just feel that the environment is not conducive to a conversation, whether it is to do with a major issue, whether it's bereavement or whether it is to do with a simple issue as giving information. I feel that the environment does not really lend itself . . . I mean, I do not know how to approach it because I feel I cannot really go into Personnel and say "I want this and I want that" because all these things cost a lot of money, and I do feel that I haven't got that sort of relationship with them because I'm new there.

(12) SALLY Can I go back to you? You feel that the setting you have in the office is too formal and you want to change things, and you don't want to come across too authoritative to your accommodation people or Personnel to get these changes to happen - so that's inhibiting you from making these changes.

TOM Yes, perhaps it seems that way. ... I was just thinking it through. ... It's almost as though I don't like that authoritarian style in the counseling room, and perhaps I do not want to use that same authoritarian style to approach the Facilities area in case they feel I am being a bit too pushy.

(14) SALLY Have you thought to feed this back through your Manager?

TOM I have spoken very briefly about it. As I said, I have raised it with the Head of Facilities saying, "Can I have this?" ... I have a fairly open rapport with him - I think he has a fairly helpful nature - and he just said "Yea Tom, just give us the list." I don't think really it is a massive priority for them in the wider scheme of things. In my mind, it is a key priority for me.



(16) **SALLY** Yeah, yeah, I can see that. How about ... just another alternative, another option for you to consider. ... How about putting a business case through to your manager and putting in the reasons why you feel it is necessary to get these changes in your set-up and see what the response is to that? Have you thought about doing that?

TOM No, I have not. At the moment, perhaps a formal approach is what is required. I have just had an informal approach. It has been one of those things. It is not just the room, the more I think about it. ... The stand that we use for information and leaflets is basically a small insignificant stand at the bottom of one of the stair wells, which people don't see as most people use the elevators. So there are a number of ways I feel that I can improve the service and I want to improve the service, because, as you well know, we want to do our best at the end of the day. It is almost as though I have this block in myself that I do not want to push it and be seen as 'overstepping my position.'

(18) **SALLY** Uhm. Uhm. ... So let me relay this back to you again. You feel that you are being pushy ... demanding, maybe? Is that what you feel?

TOM Yes, definitely. I think you've hit the nail on the head. Yes, it is how others will perceive me. Because from the point of view of the clients I am seeing in Westport, I am pretty sure that they do not see it as an issue. No one has ever said to me "I do not think that this room is suitable." Things have changed. Originally, when I went down there, the room I was assigned was actually just a meeting room and I had to book it. So I was pushy into saying "I do not want this, I want a proper room " and perhaps part of the issue... well, I pushed... and they provided me with a



TOM room, and what I don't want to be saying now is - although I want it - is to be in the position of 'now you have given me a room and you've kicked somebody out and put them somewhere else,' now I am now being seen to be pushy by saying "I now want this and I want that."

(20) SALLY **It sounds as though this is a very important issue to you.**

TOM Yes.

(22) SALLY **How important is it for you get something done?**

TOM Very important.

(24) SALLY **Right, so thinking along the lines of other Alternatives...**

Because as I said, things in our line of work... How important is it for us to make the client feel safe and secure, ummh?

TOM It is very much part of the work, at the end of the day, to make the client feel as 'safe' as possible, which I am very interested in... Ummh, yah. Perhaps a formal approach to the Manager...

Perhaps I am being too hard on myself - that's how I sometimes feel... I don't really know. Assertiveness is a quality that we all have to learn and perhaps being a bit more assertive and saying, "Well alright, you provided me with a room, but in an ideal scenario..... I do not know what you think about me putting a business case and I'll be able to improve the service I offer, if you provided me with this. ... I feel I could.
...



(26) SALLY Yes, yes, and exploring the different avenues and the advantages of doing so perhaps. Have you thought about going down these lines and compiling that report?

TOM Yes, I think you are right. I might just sit down and do that and prepare something. ...

(28) SALLY Well, if you would like to run it past me when you have finished, please feel free to do so.

TOM Okay Sally. Thanks for your time

(30) SALLY Okay. Bye.

Used with Kind Permission of 'Sally' and 'Tom.'

I wonder what you noticed, what you jotted down and to what extent you were able to identify specific elements of the conversation that led it in one direction or the other. Well now, let's think about it together.

Was the conversation successful?

What did you think? Certainly, there was a useful outcome. The issue was moved forward. Tom had some ideas of how he might approach the problem.

Was it helpful?

By the same token, we have to say it was helpful. It was essentially a conversation of two people looking at one person's problems. The conversation was for Tom's benefit. The approach the conversation adopted and the solution arrived at was that of a practical, managerial one. Tom will be preparing a business case to get the furniture he requires.

What kind of conversation do you think it was?

It was a nicely explorative conversation. The practitioner allowed Tom to explain and explore the issue at his own pace. She gave time, support, empathy and respect for Tom's viewpoint. She listened carefully and understood how important this issue was for Tom. She identified some ways forward and talked





these through with Tom. I would describe it overall as a sensitive, empathic, managerial type conversation.

How do you think the client felt?

I expect your answers might include points such as 'helped,' and I would agree. Certainly, Tom was listened to respectfully, understood and taken seriously.

I have an unfair advantage in responding to this question: I happened to be sitting in on the original practice to give feedback, and all three of us critiqued it subsequently. Practitioner and client then had another go at the same issue, based on some of the things Tom had indicated in the original practice but which had not been taken up. This moved things on to a different level - see below.

In a different training context, we have also subsequently acted out this transcript live for students, with one tutor being 'Tom' and another 'Sally.' We then asked 'Tom' and the students about how Tom might have been left feeling. It's interesting that what mainly came up was that Tom was probably left feeling somewhat anxious. Although helped in the practical sense of now having a strategy up his sleeve, he was faced with the need to have to put together this business case, while having stated repeatedly already that he didn't want to be perceived as 'pushy.'

What do you think the issue was?

This really brings us to the crux of the matter: what does one identify as the issue. Here, on a practical level, the issue is about furniture, but then conversations are complex, as is the listening process. There is so much information in each sentence that as listeners, we need to filter and decide what to focus on, what to respond to and what not. That decision is largely guided by our perceived '*role*' and '*remit*' in the conversation. Sorry that these are technical terms. By '*role*' is meant a particular set of responsibilities within one's job description, e.g. that of counseling clients or advising line managers on how to support staff. '*Remit*' refers to the implicit permissions & restrictions that come with a work role. It defines what is/not appropriate within one's role.





How did Sally proceed?

Well, Sally's 'role' was that of being in real life a fellow social worker and, on the course, that of a fellow student with a shared agenda of making the most of learning opportunities. Her role was neither that of being Tom's manager nor that of his counselor. Perhaps it would be useful to imagine for a moment what kind of a turn the conversation might have taken in either case... Sally chose to adopt a fairly pragmatic, semi-managerial approach, although within her 'remit,' nothing would have prevented her from responding to the more personal cues Tom was giving her and then taking the conversation down that route.

It's instructive to consider the middle section of the conversation in detail.

(11) Tom expresses the fact that when he feels comfortable in a relationship, he is happy to ask for what he needs professionally. However, in the new office, he feels less confident of himself.

(13) Tom gives a fair amount of personal information here:

- I don't like that authoritarian style in the Employee Support Officer's counseling room.
- Perhaps I do not want to use that same authoritarian style to approach the Facilities area...
- ... in case they feel I am being a bit too pushy.

These are three instances of personal assertiveness issues.

(14) Sally does not respond to any mention of them, rather focuses on the problem and its managerial implications:

- Have you thought to feed this back through your Manager?

(15) Tom identifies how central the issue is for him.

(16) Sally continues to focus on the managerial approach, perhaps encouraged by Tom confirming how important the issue is. She now suggests the business case option.

(17) Tom responds in great detail to the managerial approach and the suggested solution of putting forward a business case. Overall, he uses 179 words in his response. Towards the end, in only 28 words (= 6.4% of the total), he expresses his concerns in three ways over:



- it is almost as though I have this block in myself
- that I do not want to push it and
- be seen as 'overstepping my position.'

(18) Sally picks up these core message sensitively and responds directly to it rather than to any of the earlier, more peripheral points, with

Uhm. Uhm. ... So, let me relay this back to you again. You feel that you are being pushy ... demanding, maybe? Is that what you feel?

(19) Tom's response is direct, strong, and unequivocal:

Yes, definitely. I think you've hit the nail on the head. Yes, it is how others will perceive me.

He continues at length, using 179 words. Of these only (19), that is 11%, make the key statement; the remainder elaborate the point. He expresses strong feeling:

... Because from the point of view of the clients I am seeing in Westport, I am pretty sure that they do not see it as an issue - No one has ever said to me "I do not think that this room is suitable." Things have changed. Originally, when I went down there, the room I was assigned was actually just a meeting room and I had to book it. So I was pushy in saying **"I do not want this, I want a proper room " and perhaps part of the issue... well, I pushed...** and they provided me with a room, and what I don't want to be saying now is - although I want it- is to be in the position of 'now you have given me a room and you've kicked somebody out and put them somewhere else,' now I am now being seen to be pushy by saying "I now want this and I want that."

(20) Sally quite correctly picks up that this is the central issue and responds with:

It sounds as though this is a very important issue to you.

However, it's not as yet clear what she means by the 'important issue': the furniture or 'being pushy'?

(21) Tom agrees it's important.



(22) Sally takes the practical side forward; she focuses on action:

How important is it to you to get something done?

(23) Tom responds at the managerial problem-solving level and the conversation remains there.

How else might Sally have proceeded?

Role and *remit* play an important part in deciding which issue to take forward. However, most fundamental is hearing what the client is saying.

I suggest that if we look carefully at Tom's utterances, there is some kind of theme or conflict in the area of lack of confidence / assertiveness / wanting to be liked. In order to identify such a theme, the client clearly needs to make reference to it - whether consciously or unconsciously.

As practitioner, active listening allows you to pick up on those parts of the conversation that seem to go deeper - perhaps where the voice shakes or emotion 'leaks.' In the transcript, we don't have that. We do have Tom's choice of expressions in setting out the question of asserting himself or otherwise. Here are some phrases he uses:

(11) ... it is somehow like feeling out of place.

(11) ... to try it on...

(13) ...authoritarian style

(13) ...being a bit too pushy..

(15) ... have this block in myself

(15) ... do not want to push it...

(17) ... be seen as 'overstepping my position'

(19) ... well, I pushed...

(19) ... you've kicked somebody out...

(19) ... seen to be pushy

(20) ...perhaps I am being too hard on myself - that's how I sometimes feel ... I don't really know

(20) ... perhaps being a bit more assertive...

As practitioner listening with your technical hat on, it's hard not to pick up that the client has conflicting feelings about being assertive, that assertiveness and making necessary changes has negative associations such as 'pushy,' 'kick out,' and 'feeling out of place.' So having heard that this is an issue (and with so





many examples we can be pretty sure it is), the question arises whether or not to address it and if so how.

So, in answer to the question of how else might Sally have proceeded, I suggest she might usefully have addressed the underlying conflict. The art then lies in how to do this appropriately to her *role* and *remit*. Clearly, issues can be taken up at more or less depth, and it would not be appropriate for Sally to act as Tom's counselor and explore his feelings about being assertive in great detail. However, it would have helped Tom to know that what he said had been 'heard.' Nowhere in the dialogue does Sally acknowledge the assertiveness issue, and that this might be what is tying Tom in knots.

This could have been done with a light touch for example in Sally (14). Previously, Tom sets out the emotional issues quite expressly:

Yes, perhaps it seems that way. ... I was just thinking it through. ... It's almost as though I don't like that authoritarian style in the counseling room, and perhaps I do not want to use that same authoritarian style to approach the Facilities area in case they feel I am being a bit too pushy.

Sally 'responds' with:

Have you thought to feed this back through your Manager?

She does not pick up on the emotional content, but rather moves on the issue as she sees it (that of the furniture), with a problem solving approach.

An opportunity missed and a client left feeling 'unheard.' Alternatively, Sally might have picked up on what Tom said and reflected it back to him, for example by saying:

So some of this is also about not wanting to be pushy.

Tom may not have been aware how much he has been talking about his worry not to be perceived as 'pushy,' so Sally's reflection would have give him the opportunity to consider it. Tom might then decide to explore it further. He might consider whether this was about furniture or about being assertive, and the conversation might take a different course.



I can tell you from the three-way discussion 'Sally,' 'Tom' and I had subsequently to this practice, that Tom indeed was well aware of his need to be liked, to be 'Mr. Nice-Guy' and that this held him back in being as effective at work as he would have liked.

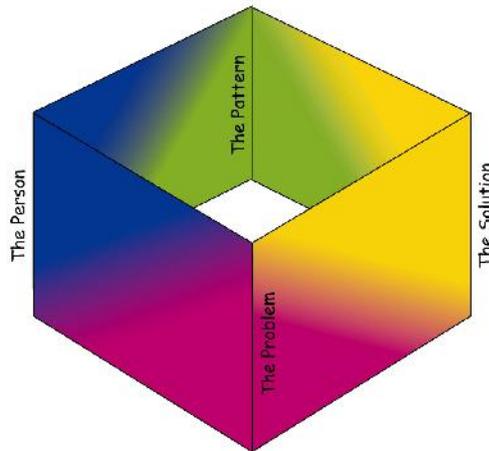
What would have been the advantages / disadvantages of that?

Structuring helpful conversations is invariably a case of best fit: what's the most useful kind of conversation I can have with this person at this point, under these circumstances, considering my role, remit, level of training, competence and so forth? There's not necessarily a perfect solution; there are choices and each choice has consequences.

The Problem, the Person, the Pattern.

In this instance, Sally chose to stick with what we can call 'the problem' = the furniture, rather than addressing the person who had 'the problem' or exploring whether there was a 'pattern' to the 'problem' the person had. There is a time and place for all of these options and the diagram below shows how they are related. Each has advantages and disadvantages. We discuss these later in greater detail.

The Relationship of Problem, Person & Pattern



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***Advantages and Disadvantages of
Addressing the Problem, the Pattern or the Person***



	<i>Addressing the Problem</i>	<i>Addressing the Pattern</i>	<i>Addressing the Person</i>
<i>Advantages</i>	Usually quick. Problem is resolved.	Client gains insight into own patterns. Problem less likely to reoccur. If so, client more likely to manage better.	Person feels 'seen' & 'heard.' Person also feels valued and empowered. Person resolves their own problems.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	Problem may not be the real (underlying) issue. Problem likely to reoccur, perhaps in a different form.	Takes more time. Client may be reluctant to unpack.	Takes time to establish depth of rapport. Problem may remain unresolved for longer.

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Given that the setting of this conversation was that of a training course that aimed to develop social work practitioners, it would have been entirely appropriate for the practitioner to invite the client to explore the 'pattern' / 'person' issues in greater depth. Indeed, in the follow-on practice Tom and Sally did this - with success!

CHAPTER SUMMARY

So where does this leave us.

I think in this first chapter, we have had an introductory look at a helping conversation and identified some of the key issues and processes that arising in holding such conversations.

It will probably be useful to refer back to this dialogue through the book for examples of particular skills, concepts, and theory as they are introduced.

Perhaps a good idea would be to move on to thinking about the different kinds of helping conversations in general. We do this in the next chapter.





Task No 1

Please jot down your thoughts about Tom's and Sally's conversation.

Please also make a note of any questions you have at this stage.



Glossary

Advice

Information, skilled opinion. (Chambers Dictionary)

Advocacy

Speaking on behalf of another. Making another's case.

Authoritative Interventions

Responses to the client in which the practitioner 'leads' (see below).

Category

The 'kind,' or the 'sort.' A term used by John Heron to explain that any client work always has an underlying practitioner intention, for example to be 'supportive' or 'informative.' John Heron's approach is called the 'Six Category Intervention Analysis' because it analyses what the practitioner does according to six different categories, i.e. whether the practitioner is being: supportive, informative, catalytic, cathartic, challenging or prescriptive. See below for definitions of each category.

Catalytic

One of the 'intentions' (see below). A catalytic 'intention' or 'intervention' (see below) seeks to elicit self-discovery, self-directed living, learning and problem-solving in the client.

Cathartic

One of the 'intentions' (see below). A cathartic 'intention' or 'intervention' (see below) seeks to enable the client to discharge painful emotion, primarily grief, fear and anger.

Client-centered conversations

A way of enabling the client to explore and resolve their problems themselves, with the practitioner facilitating, rather than managing, the process.

Code of Ethics & Practice

A formal agreement on the principles to be followed in professional practice and their underpinning ethical values.

Cognition, 'cognitive'

The psychological term for 'thinking' / 'to do with thinking.'

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

A theoretical approach in psychology and counseling which primarily addresses the client's thinking and the resultant effects on feeling and behavior.

Communication modalities

Different 'channels' for communication, for example face-to-face, telephone, email, written report, organizational presentations, etc.



Congruence

One of the 'core conditions (see below) this is about 'being real' as opposed to 'being phoney' or operating from the 'false self.' There's a sense of being touched in the core of one's being when this occurs interpersonally, as opposed to the superficial contact of polite facades.

Confronting

One of the 'intentions' (see below). A confronting intention or intervention seeks to raise the client's consciousness about some limiting attitude or behavior of which they are relatively unaware.

Congruence This is about 'being real' as opposed to 'being phoney' or operating from the 'false self.' There's a sense of being touched in the core of one's being when this occurs interpersonally, as opposed to the superficial contact of polite facades.

Consultancy

The knowledge and skills of helping another think through professional issues.

Contract

An explicit agreement between client and practitioner about the nature of their work together and what will be expected of either party.

Core Conditions

Usually defined as the practitioner offering the client: Empathy, Congruence (or Genuineness), and Unconditional Positive Regard (Non-judgmental Warmth / Acceptance).

Counseling

Here, with regard to the use of communication skills: a particular kind of interaction / conversation, as a result of which the client achieves greater 'intra-personal integration' (see below).

Eclectic

'Ec' = out; 'lect' = 'choose' as in 'e-lect.' Being aware of more than one psychological approach and adopting that which seems to best fit the client. 'Mix and match.'

Empathy

Empathy literally means 'em' = 'in' + 'pathy' = 'feeling.' So it's about the practitioner being able to feel as though they were in the client's shoes. This is different from sympathy = 'with' + 'feeling.' It's not about me as practitioner expressing how I feel, but rather my being able to sense and convey to the client that I understand how they feel.

EOS (Employee & Organization Support)

Supporting both employees and the organization as a whole, to the greater benefit of all.





Evidence-Based Practice

Approaches to work and procedures, which reflect current research and professionally agreed best practice guidelines.

External Frame of Reference

Seeing things: externally, that is from an observer's perspective.

Facilitative Interventions

The practitioner facilitates or follows the client

Follow(ing)

Here: enabling the other person to 'set the agenda,' letting them determine the direction the conversation will take.

Frame ('The Frame')

Factors which determine the 'shape' the conversation can take, such as a *secure* and *reliable* setting in which there is a fixed place, time and duration for each meeting, an appropriate *fee* to ensure that the therapist is employed by and accountable to the client, and so forth. The frame may be 'secure' or 'insecure' (see these). Please note, this is not the same as a 'Frame of Reference.'

Frame of Reference

The way one sees things: externally, i.e. from an observer's perspective or internally, from the client's perspective.

Guidance

Direction, leadership (Chambers). Giving 'Advice' + assisting the client in implementing it. There is a pastoral component to guidance.

Informative

An informative intervention seeks to impart knowledge, information and meaning to the client.

Insecure Frame

Situational and contextual factors, which determine the 'shape' the conversation can take. The frame of helping conversations at work is insecure in so far as there is not necessarily a fixed place, time, and duration for each meeting, reports may be given to third parties, and so forth.

Intention

Here: 'intention' refers to the way in which what the practitioner aims to help the client - see Chapter 3. There are (6) basic intentions: catalytic, cathartic, confronting, informative, prescriptive, and supportive. The glossary defines each briefly.

Internal Frame of Reference

Seeing things from the client's perspective. (Please note that this is different from the 'secure' and 'insecure' frame.)



Intervention

A response by the practitioner.

Intrapersonal Integration

'Intra' = 'within.' 'Integration' = 'becoming part of a whole.' Here: a distinguishing feature of 'counseling' conversations. The client is facilitated in 're-owning' and accepting a part of themselves they had not been in touch with. Please see Chapter 4.

Lead(ing)

Here: 'setting the agenda' = determining the direction the conversation will take.

Mediation

A process by which an impartial, trained practitioner helps two or more people in dispute to talk about and resolve their situation.

Microskills

Recognized and distinguishable practitioner 'interventions' at the level of an individual sentence, or part of a sentence. See Chapter 7 for individual microskills.

Mini-contracting

'Contracting' once the conversation is underway, often occurring where a review is needed about how to take the conversation forward, for example if there are several options.

Modalities (Communication modalities)

Different 'channels' for communication, for example face-to-face work, telephone, email, written report, organizational presentations, etc.

Multi-cornered contract

Clarifying the practitioner's role(s) with the client and other related third parties, in particular how to manage confidential information in overlapping systems, e.g. with colleague, manager, Human Resources, Occupational Health. Practitioners are likely to have multiple and complex role relationships with their clients.

Non-directive, client-centered conversations

A way of enabling the client to explore and resolve their problems themselves, with the practitioner facilitating, rather than managing, the process.

Popular procedural models

The combinations of procedural elements that occur more frequently than others. For example: the 'Problem Acknowledgement and Referral Model,' the 'Problem Acknowledgement, Clarification, and Referral Model,' the 'Limited Personal Meaning Model,' the 'Egan Model,' and the 'Umbrella Model.' See Chapter (11) for details.

Practitioner

Here: the person primarily responsible for the course of the conversation.



Pre-contracting

As the name suggests, this is an initial contract that is made at the outset of or before a conversation in order to facilitate the conversation itself. Typically, a home visit would be preceded by a pre-contract, most likely made over the telephone, and covering such issues as the need for privacy and uninterrupted time.

Prescriptive

A prescriptive intervention seeks to direct the behavior of the client, usually behavior that is outside the practitioner-client relationship.

Procedural Elements

The various elements, parts, components, or 'stepping stones' of how one might proceed in conversations with clients, for example managing the setting, pre-appointment contracting, etc. See Chapter 9.

Procedural Model

A combination of 'procedural elements.' Procedural elements can be combined in various ways to give a range of models.

Protocol

The measures and sequence of actions to be observed under given circumstances, such as Risk.

Psyche / psycho-

The breath, the soul.

Psychodynamic

Psycho-' (see above) + 'dynamic' (= energies). Looking at the past, the unconscious, and the internal forces are at work behind the scenes. The task of the counselor is to understand these dynamics and interpret them to the client.

Psychological Contract

An explicit agreement that underpins professional conversations, for example: Information Giving, Advice, Referral, Support and so on.

Psychotherapy

Not always distinguished from counseling - however, we would see it as going deeper than counseling, with greater client 'intra-personal integration' and change. It might extend to the client's entire style of behaving, rather than just a part of their behavior.

Reflective practitioner

Here: Taking a step back from having conversations intuitively and being aware of the different kinds of conversations (advice, guidance, counseling, etc) and making choices that in retrospect can be explained and justified.

Remit

The implicit 'permissions' & restrictions that come with a work role. What is/not appropriate within one's role



Risk Assessment

A 'protocol' (see above) for safe practice in various situations, for instance the likelihood of: harm to self, harm to other, harm under the Children Act, threat to Practitioner safety (e.g. home visits), threat to Organization safety (work-related stress, the 'disgruntled employee'), harassment and bullying, disciplinary and job loss threat, trauma, and more.

Role

A particular set of responsibilities within one's job description, e.g. that of counseling clients or advising line managers on how to support staff.

Secure Frame

Factors which determine the 'shape' the conversation can take, such as a *secure* and *reliable* setting in which there is a fixed place, time and duration for each meeting, an appropriate *fee* to ensure that the therapist is employed by and accountable to the client, and so forth

Supervision

Here: non-managerial, primarily clinical, consultative support for practitioners in their client work.

Supportive

A supportive intervention seeks to affirm the worth and value of the client's person, qualities, attitudes or actions.

Unconditional Positive Regard

The opposite of conditional acceptance, this requires of the practitioner to accept and appreciate the client's being without reservation. This does not equate to unquestioning endorsement of everything the client does. It is important to differentiate between actions or behavior and the core of the person.

