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# PRACTICE SKILLS OF CASE WORK AND GROUP WORK IN PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK

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## Short Profile
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**ABSTRACT:**
Casework and group work are the two basic methods of professional social work. Every social worker as to utilise these two methods in different context. The situation might be very prompt one place to another place but the method remains the same in all the situation and in all the condition. There is a science of social work, every social worker has to follow that science if the social worker's not following the science of social work the chances to get the result by utilising various methods and techniques in the field to deal with social problem will be very difficult therefore, it is very essential to develop the necessary skills and knowledge needed for implementation of various methods of professional social work. The casework and group work these are the two methods where social worker has two acquaint himself for its practical utility. In this paper the details about various skills needed for casework and group work practice in professional social work are discussed the in details. All the skills are essential for effective practice in social work. The very common skills are dealing with the person having complex problem, analysing its situation, died proper diagnosis of the problem, deciding appropriate treatment, providing adequate intervention, identifying various resources needed for coping with the situation, for all these actions there are large number of skills are required at various stages of casework and group work the details of the same are discussed the in this paper.

KEYWORDS
*casework, group work, professional social work, client, group members, group dynamics, treatment, professional skills,*

## INTRODUCTION:

The scope of social work practice is remarkably wide. Social workers practice not only in the traditional social service agency, but also in elementary schools; in the military; in business, factories, and offices, in federal, state, and local government agencies and legislative bodies; in private practice as individual, family, and marriage therapists; in hospitals and in mental health facilities; in courts and correctional settings; in home health care; and in services to the elderly. In fact social workers can be found anywhere and everywhere there are people who need the help of a professional to alleviate personal or social problems. (Senator Daniel Inouye, D-HI, April 1986) First you will learn that there are common skills and responsibilities that all social workers have that enable us to work with all populations.

### These common skills and responsibilities are to

• Advocate for individual clients or the community on identified problems.
• Serve as a broker by connecting individual with resources.
• Create and maintain professional helping relationships.
• Improve problem-solving, coping, and development capacities of all people.
• Be able to engage and communicate with diverse population and groups of all sizes.
• Have a knowledge and understanding of human relationships.
• Provide services to not only support change in the individual but also in his/her environment as well.

### 1: Developing Relationship

### A. Resiliency

This self-study guide emphasizes an approach to working with teens called "building resiliency." The resiliency approach focuses on what clients can do and what their strengths are. It also stresses the vital role that caring adults can play in teens' lives. Research has shown that most at-risk adolescents develop into "competent, confident and caring adults." How do they do this? Through strong relationships with an adult! Caring adults can be what have been called "turnaround people" for troubled teens.

### "Turnaround people" can do the following:

• Demonstrate caring, compassion, and respect by looking underneath a teen's negative behavior to see the pain and suffering that contribute to it
• Maintain high expectations by mirroring back the strength that has gotten the teen this far and conveying the idea that "you can make it"
• Provide opportunities to contribute to others and feel needed and important by linking the youth to jobs, activities, or other interests

In this same way, you can let your clients know that you see their strengths and not just their problems. The goal is to communicate a "you can do it" attitude and convey that you believe in them.

## Recognizing Your Clients' Strengths

Finding hidden strengths in your clients is an opportunity to shift your perspective of them and look for the positive when only the negative may be apparent. Then you can help them begin shifting their own self-concept. By seeing clients through a more positive lens, you help them recognize their own strengths. It helps you build your relationships with your clients, because you don't automatically respond critically, and allows you to increase your empathy for them.

## B. Stages of the Relationship

Relationships with your clients go through several stages, and the beginning is often the hardest. One framework to think about it is:

1. The Current State of Affairs
2. The Preferred State of Affairs
3. Strategies for Action

It may take a number of visits to move through each of these stages. It is also possible to move back and forth among the stages throughout your relationship with a client. In the first stage, "The Current State of Affairs," clients tell you their stories. Often, case managers feel they have so much to get done with their clients that they can't wait and listen to the clients tell their stories. However, waiting and listening are incredibly important tools for building trust and rapport. From hearing their stories, you begin to understand:

• What the issues are as they see them
• How much insight and maturity they possess
• Who their main sources of support are, if any
• Other information that will help you develop a good working relationship

In the second stage, "The Preferred State of Affairs," you assist clients in identifying their goals and developing hope that some of their problems can be solved.

In the third stage, "Strategies for Action," you discuss with your clients what they are willing to do to meet their goals and then help them choose strategies.

## C. The First Meeting

Establishing a good impression during your first meeting is critical. With proper thought and preparation, you can set a positive tone for the rest of your relationship. Both you and your client will have feelings about each other. You may have been given information about your client and formed an opinion before meeting her/him. Try to keep an open mind! In the same way, the client may have ideas about who you are and what you can and can't do for her/him. So the slate must be cleared, and you must separate yourself from your assumptions. It's crucial that you use this first meeting to create a warm tone and set appropriate expectations. Take a moment to think about what kind of impression you want to make. Think of when you started in your job. Who were the people that made strong first impressions? Who were the people that did not? Who were the people that were caring, available, and

nonjudgmental? How did they communicate that?

## Building Rapport

Rapport is established when the client and the case manager feel comfortable and connected and understand each other easily. Good communication, understanding, and acceptance are all important elements of building rapport. The first step is helping your clients feel comfortable with you. To do that, you need to be comfortable in your role. If you're nervous, they'll feel it. If you're judgmental, they'll know. The things that help you feel comfortable getting to know someone in your personal life also apply here. Find out:

• What do they do for fun?
• How do they spend their free time?
• What places do they like to go to?
• What do you have in common? Do you know their neighborhood?

This may take only a minute or two, or it may take a little longer, but the payoff is the chance for your client to warm up to you. Sometimes it takes time to develop rapport. It's important not to hurry. On occasion, case managers may understandably try to take short cuts to create a comfortable relationship. For example, a case manager may want to prove that s/he will be helpful by volunteering to do things for clients that they could do themselves, such as filling out paperwork or making phone calls. Doing things for your clients will not automatically build rapport, but it will set a precedent that you are willing to do things for them rather than help them do things for themselves. Remember, rapport comes from how you are with clients, not what you do for them.

## Communicating Your Purpose and Role

The client may not know what to expect in the first visit. For example, many clients hear the term "case manager" and think that you see them as a "case" to be "managed." This doesn't make them want to open up right away! It's important to communicate to your clients exactly what you do and that you really want to know them as individuals. Letting your clients know the goals of the program, your role in it, and what they can expect of you will greatly affect how they view your relationship. Clarifying the way you will be working with them can also be an opportunity to demonstrate respect for them and their families. Allow yourself time to practice what you will say, so you can do so in a way that makes them want to connect with you and meet with you again.

## D. Client-Centered Case Management

In order to build rapport, it's important to see the world from the client's point of view and "start where the client is." You and your client may have different ideas about what is most important to work on. The client might be concerned about work and childcare, while you think that getting a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) is the most important thing for her/him. If you ignore your client and focus only on your concerns, it will be hard to earn the client's trust.

## Neutral Stance

No one likes unsolicited advice – especially teens. They will tune out quickly if they feel they are being told what to do. Giving advice indicates that you've decided what is best for them, rather than helping them decide what their options are. Instead, try to take the attitude that they will make good decisions if you help them explore the alternatives and their consequences. After all, clients are in charge of their behavior. You are not responsible for the choices they make. Conveying the idea that they have choices about what they do has multiple benefits. You are adopting a neutral stance, which will help them feel comfortable talking with you and reassure them that they won't be judged. Being neutral is also a way of showing respect for the differences between you and your clients and their families.

## Acknowledging Differences

If you sense there is a real barrier to your communication with the client because of your differences, you need to address it. You might acknowledge the differences by saying, for example, "I know you and I come from different cultures. Sometimes this affects our work together. Since I want to be a very good case manager for you, I'd like to know if something comes up that doesn't feel right. I'm very open to hearing about you and anything you think I don't understand." Issues that relate to socioeconomic differences, educational level, gender, drugs, and even your power as a professional may also require acknowledgment. Doing so let's your clients know that you are open to talking about what you know and what you don't. It prevents them from stereotyping you and stops you from making assumptions about them. It lets them know that you are open to learning about their specific experience and that you don't presume to know everything about them. Open discussion of these issues also lets them know that they can trust you and that you really care about "what it's like" for them. It's important to make it clear that it's the relationship between you that matters.

## E. Self-Disclosure

In your interactions with clients, you naturally experience emotions. There are varying viewpoints about if and when to disclose these emotions to clients. Some professionals believe that sharing feelings is unprofessional. However, not sharing any feelings at all can create more distance than is necessary and result in missed opportunities. Sharing feelings in a thoughtful, purposeful, and deliberate way can actually deepen the relationship.

If you feel that you've let some feelings out and they may negatively affect the relationship with your client, acknowledge those feelings. State that you know you may have seemed mad or judgmental, but that you realize now that those feelings were about you, not the client, and that you're sorry you let your feelings intrude. Clients may even ask you about feelings you're having, but unless it is clear that sharing your feelings will be helpful, it's usually better not to. Generally, it's best to share a feeling if:

• A client asks you directly, and you feel comfortable sharing it
• The client would benefit from knowing it
• The client would otherwise feel that you are withholding it unnecessarily

If you honestly evaluate the purpose of sharing your emotions and decide that doing so is in the best interest of the client, it may be appropriate. With experience, you can learn to avoid expressing

feelings that are not helpful to clients.

## F. Stating Personal Opinions

If you have an opinion, consider how it may affect your client before sharing it. Remember, your opinion may carry more weight because of your position. If it is appropriate, state what you think is going on, and give your client room to reject your idea. This is much more helpful than leaving the client to wonder what you think. That approach leaves the client feeling that you have secret information you're not sharing.

## 2. Effective Listening

## A: Active Listening

Active listening involves interaction between the case manager and the client. The case manager must try to understand what the client is saying and communicate back those feelings and thoughts so the client knows s/he is being understood. Another term for this type of interaction is "accurate listening." When a case manager is engaged in accurate listening, s/he understands what the client is saying and what her/his thoughts, feelings, and motivations are. The case manager also pays attention to nonverbal cues, such as lack of eye contact or fidgeting. The client, in turn, senses that the case manager is paying attention and is trying to understand. Because case managers have so many clients, they often feel rushed. However, it is worth taking the extra time to listen and truly understand the specific circumstances of each client. Prompting the client to elaborate enables you to understand the situation more fully and encourages her/him to discover and evaluate possibilities for change.

## Body Language

Before you begin talking or listening, it is important to consider the nonverbal cues that you give and receive. Your body language tells your client when you are paying attention, even though you may not be saying anything with words. Your client feels great when they know they have your complete attention!

## Barriers to Listening

Our emotions can get in the way of good listening, and so can our thoughts. Here is a list of unhelpful responses that can happen when listening to clients:

• Daydreaming – losing attention, thoughts wandering
• Labeling – putting the person in a category before hearing the evidence
• Scoring points – relating everything you hear to your own experience
• Mind reading – predicting what the other person is thinking
• Rehearsing – practicing your lines in your head
• Cherry picking – listening to a key piece of information, and then switching off
• Interrupting – being unable to resist giving advice
• Dueling – countering their statements with your own opposing statements, going back and forth

between the two of you
• Side-stepping sentiment – countering expressions of emotions with jokes or clinches

### 3. RESPONDING WITH EMPATHY

### A Reaching for Feelings

Clients may tell you about an event without mentioning their feelings about it. Sometimes, they may not be aware of their feelings and may need help in identifying them. Others may know their feelings but need help talking about them. Helping them reach for feelings moves the conversation to a more emotional level.

### Dealing with Silences

Sometimes it can be uncomfortable for case managers when clients become silent. But silences are keys and can be an opportunity to help clients understand their feelings. Its okay to sit with a silence for a while to see what happens. Sometimes a silence means there is a concern or a feeling underneath the surface, and the client needs help putting it into words. Generally, you will get cues from the client about what s/he is feeling. But if you are uncertain, the best way to know is to ask. "Is this what you're feeling?" "Did I get it right?" you might ask, or, "I'm not sure, but I wonder if you're feeling _____?" It's better to ask about a feeling or guess it incorrectly than to ignore it. Asking is not prying, and ignoring the silence can give the impression that you're not paying attention or that intense feelings scare you away. Sometimes, due to the power differential, the client may accept an interpretation that isn't correct, so it's important to encourage her/him to let you know if you are wrong. If the client does, graciously accept the correction and apologize.

### B. Acknowledging Feelings

By acknowledging your clients' feelings, you help them feel less alone and more understood. The three steps for acknowledging feelings are stating the feeling, validating the feeling, and normalizing the feeling.

Stating the feeling:  To see whether you understand what clients feel and to help them think about those feelings.

Validating: To let the clients know that their feelings are understandable. Validating clients' feelings lets them know that you accept their feelings and helps them accept themselves.

Normalizing: To let clients know that what they feel is expected and that there is nothing wrong with them.

### 4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial when providing services to teens. It is your promise that you will not disclose what your clients tell you without their consent unless specifically required to do so by law.

Many studies have shown that teens won't use services if they think their confidentiality will be violated. They need to know up front that you're not going to tell their families, their teachers, their boyfriends, or anyone else what they've told you. (You may, however, discuss cases with other case managers or your supervisor without disclosing your clients' identities.) In your work with teens, confidentiality issues will arise in many different and challenging ways.

## A. The Limits of Confidentiality

There are times when case managers must go outside their relationships with clients to disclose information that is otherwise confidential. This is called mandatory reporting. As an adult who works with minors, you are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse and neglect to Children's Protective Service (CPS). Specifically, the law requires that you break confidentiality when:

1. You suspect child abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect of your client or her/his child (ren)
2. The client is gravely disabled, cannot care for her/himself, and has no one to care for her/him
3. The client is in danger of hurting her/himself, the child, or others

## 5. Interviewing and Assessment

The primary goal of the initial interview is to get to know your client. However, interviewing can also be a tool for building the relationship between you and your client. By preparing well for the first few sessions, familiarizing yourself with the forms you will be using, and communicating effectively, you can transform what could be a stressful experience for your client into a positive one. The interview becomes a conversation rather than an interrogation. The interview also provides an opportunity to identify and acknowledge your client's strengths and enhance her/his motivation to overcome obstacles.

## There are three basic skills case managers use when conducting interviews:

1. Asking questions
2. Responding to answers
3. Transitioning from one topic to the next

## A. Advance Preparation

You can help the initial interview go more smoothly by reviewing the intake paperwork in advance and developing a plan for the completing the forms as efficiently as possible. This kind of preparation enables you to streamline the intake process. Consider the following before your interview:

• Are certain questions repeated on more than one form? If so, make a note of it so you can avoid repetition.
• Are there questions on the client assessment form that you can group together or paraphrase for clarity?
• Will you be able to complete some forms after the interview is over by transcribing information you've already gathered?
• Which responses do you need to write down immediately, and which can you remember and record

after the interview is over?

## B. The Art of Asking Questions

Remember that how you ask questions is more important than what you ask. As you become more familiar with the required forms, you will be able to ask questions without sounding mechanical or like you are giving your client the third degree. Your choice of words and tone of voice can demonstrate your genuine interest in the client and your empathy for what s/he is going through. For example, after hearing a client describe the problems she is coping with at home and school, you might respond, "That's a lot you have going, and you're handling it all. How do you feel about all this?"

Sometimes case managers feel intrusive asking so many questions. However, by using open-ended questions and carefully wording what you say, you can invite several responses with one question. Early in the session, your questions should be broad, to encourage the client to open up and give you the big picture about her/his concerns and goals. No one area needs to be pursued in detail at this point. By touching on several areas, you help the client identify which issues s/he wants to focus on. Asking open-ended questions also gives the client control over the order of topics to be discussed.

## C. Responding to the Client's Answers

Normalizing, validating, and reframing are important tools to use during an interview to help clients feel comfortable sharing information with you.

## D. Prefacing and Transitioning from One Topic to the Next

Based on your client's responses to your open-ended questions, you may have some specific follow-up questions. Preface these inquiries by giving the client a context and reason for the questions and asking permission to proceed. Questions just for the sake of questions can feel intrusive. You might say, "Is it okay if I ask you a couple of specific questions about _____, so

## E. Identifying Risk Factors

Assessment is essential to systematically insure that all clients are asked fundamental questions about their history, health, and safety. In assessing your clients, be aware of responses indicating risk factors that need to be addressed immediately, such as sociality or the intention to harm others. Other risk factors are chronic, like substance abuse or other self-destructive behaviors, and although they deserve your attention, they might not constitute an emergency. When you identify something that may be a red flag, write yourself a note indicating your concern. You may want to come back to that question later in the interview or stop the interview right away to focus on the issue. Either way, follow-up is very important. Let the client know that you heard what s/he said and that you will definitely come back to it.

## F. Closure

By the end of an interview, clients sometimes feel overwhelmed by the challenges and stresses they face. Closure is the process of ending a session without leaving pieces hanging — or leaving your client in an emotionally vulnerable state.

Group Work Skills : Benefits of group work:

•Group work provides the student with many different opinions and ideas on a subject.
•Each student provides his/her own unique academic background.
•Group work can prepare students for project work in a professional environment.

## Different people in a group

### ENCOURAGER

Energizes group when motivation is low through humor or by being enthusiastic. They are positive individuals who support and praise other group members. They don't like sitting around. They like to move things along by suggesting ideas, by clarifying the ideas of others and by confronting problems. They may use humor to break tensions in the group.

### COMPROMISER

Tries to maintain harmony among the team members. They are sociable, interested in others and will introduce people, draw them out and make them feel comfortable. They may be willing to change their own views to get a group decision. They work well with different people and can be depended on to promote a positive atmosphere, helping the team to gel. They pull people and tasks together thereby developing rapport. They are tolerant individuals and good listeners who will listen carefully to the views of other group members. They are good judges of people, diplomatic and sensitive to the feelings of others and not seen as a threat. They are able to recognize and resolve differences of opinion and the development of conflict, they enable "difficult" team-members to contribute positively.

### LEADER

Good leaders direct the sequence of steps the group takes and keep the group "on-track". They are good at controlling people and events and coordinating resources. They have the energy, determination and initiative to overcome obstacles and bring competitive drive to the team. They give shape to the team effort. They recognize the skills of each individual and how they can be used. Leaders are outgoing individuals who have to be careful not to be domineering. They can sometimes steamroller the team but get results quickly. They may become impatient with complacency and lack of progress and may sometimes overreact.

### SUMMARISER/CLARIFIER

Calm, reflective individuals who summaries the group's discussion and conclusions. They clarify group objectives and elaborate on the ideas of others. They may go into detail about how the group's plans would work and tie up loose ends. They are good mediators and seek consensus.

### IDEAS PERSON

The ideas person suggests new ideas to solve group problems or suggests new ways for the group

to organize the task. They dislike orthodoxy and are not too concerned with practicalities. They provide suggestions and proposals that are often original and radical. They are more concerned with the big picture than with details. They may get bored after the initial impetus wears off.

## EVALUATOR

Evaluators help the group to avoid coming to agreement too quickly. They tend to be slow in coming to a decision because of a need to think things over. They are the logical, analytical, objective people in the team and offer measured dispassionate critical analysis. They contribute at times of crucial decision making because they are capable of evaluating competing proposals. They may suggest alternative ideas.

## RECORDER

The recorder keeps the group focused and organized. They make sure that everyone is helping with the project. They are usually the first person to offer to take notes to keep a record of ideas and decisions. They also like to act as time-keeper, to allocate times to specific tasks and remind the team to keep to them, or act as a spokesperson, to deliver the ideas and findings of the group. They may check that all members understand and agree on plans and actions and know their roles and responsibilities. They act as the memory of the group.

Steps to successful group work-Identifying the Objective of the Assignment

### 1) What are the instructor's expectations?

• Consider the amount the project is worth, how it is to be presented, the subject matter to be covered, and questions to satisfy.

### 2) What are the goals of each group member?

• Some members will be satisfied with a "B"; others will not rest until they achieve an "A+". This information will help the group define its overall goals and keep group members satisfied.
• Some members will prefer to present, others to research, and others to write. By learning their expectations within the project, the group can delegate tasks fairly.

### 3) What tasks need to be completed?

• Break the project down into manageable tasks that will need to be completed in order to finish the assignment. For example: compiling research, creating a thesis, finding evidence, creating a handout, creating a PowerPoint presentation, etc.

### 4) How much research is required?

• Most group projects require some research and outside references.
• Identify how much research is required and how long it will take to compile those resources.
• A good presentation will review approximately ten different resources. Most professors know the

amount they require, so it is best to consult them if unsure.

## Dealing with Group Dynamics

1) Create a master list of names and contact information
• Include the best ways to contact each person. For example: some students can only be
Reached by cell phone, others prefer e-mail, and some their home phone.
• The contact list should include the task assigned to each person so you know who is responsible for certain aspects of the project if you need to consult them quickly.

## 2) NOMINATE A GROUP LEADER

• The leader's responsibilities will include:
a) Making sure the group's objectives are defined.
b) Maintaining the group's orientation toward those goals.
c) Actively soliciting ideas from each group member.
d) Making sure the group stays on task during meetings.
e) Monitoring group cohesiveness and member satisfaction.
• The job of the leader is not to do all of the work, but to ensure that members of the group work together to get it done.
• The leader should be careful not to use his/her position to impose his/her ideas on the group.

## 3) Negotiate roles and responsibilities.: Ensure that each group member is comfortable/satisfied with their tasks because:
a) Dissatisfaction could create resentment and cause conflict within the group.
b) Satisfied group members will be more productive, creative and willing to participate.

## 4) Determine the frequency, length, purpose of each group meeting.: It is important to set down these terms so that:
a) Meetings accommodate all (or most) group members.
b) Meetings stay on track and do not lose their focus.
c) Meetings become non-negotiable among group members.

## 5) Deal with problems as they arise. If issues cannot be resolved internally, go directly to your teaching assistant or professor.
• Members who are not contributing equally to the group (or in some cases not at all) should be warned early that their lack of contribution will not be accepted by the group.
• If the group is experiencing a creative block, it may be helpful to have the entire group meet with the professor to discuss the group's ideas and progress to that point.

## Presenting a Group Project

1) Ensure that your presentation is equally distributed.: The professor has assigned group work in order to hear a variety of viewpoints.

2) Practice makes perfect.: Practice individually and then meet at least the day before in order to pinpoint any weaknesses in the presentation. Some members may experience nervousness when presenting and may require more preparation and encouragement. This is a team effort, so help each other prepare.

3) Have one person go to the classroom early and make sure any audio/visual aids are in appropriate working order.

4) Have one person ensure the handouts are prepared and distribute them to the class.

5) During the presentation.: Introduce yourselves before the presentation begins and make sure to state your topic. Introduce each new speaker. For example: "Now Sarah will discuss the effects of industrialization on the British countryside." When another group member is speaking, appear interested and engaged. Avoid making distracting movements or talking to other group members during the presentation. Avoid interrupting a group member while he/she is presenting even if he/she have made an error.

## Skills for group work

To work together successfully, group members must demonstrate a sense of cohesion. Cohesion emerges as group members exhibit the following skills:

- Openness: Group members are willing to get to know one another, particularly those with different interests and backgrounds. They are open to new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and the variety of individuals present within the group. They listen to others and elicit their ideas. They know how to balance the need for cohesion within a group with the need for individual expression.

- Trust and self-disclosure: Group members trust one another enough to share their own ideas and feelings. A sense of mutual trust develops only to the extent that everyone is willing to self-disclose and be honest yet respectful. Trust also grows as group members demonstrate personal accountability for the tasks they have been assigned.

- Support: Group members demonstrate support for one another as they accomplish their goals. They exemplify a sense of team loyalty and both cheer on the group as a whole and help members who are experiencing difficulties. They view one another not as competitors (which is common within a typically individualistic educational system) but as collaborators.

- Respect: Group members communicate their opinions in a way that respects others, focusing on "What can we learn?" rather than "Who is to blame?" See constructive feedback in the process section for more details.

As an instructor, you can use several strategies to encourage students to develop a healthy climate within their small groups:

- Assign students into diverse groups so that they encounter others with different backgrounds and interests.

- Design activities that break the ice, promote awareness of differences within the group, encourage reflection on the stresses of working within a group, and point out the demands of working in a group.

- Have students participate in trust challenges. For example, try the trust-fall, in which individual group members fall backward off a table and are caught by their fellow group members. Or blindfold individual students, and have their group members guide them orally through an obstacle

course.

- Encourage students to participate willingly and ask questions of others. To encourage listening skills and ensure that everyone in the group speaks, try the "circle of voices" exercise. See Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) teaching tip "Group Work in the Classroom: Types of Small Groups".
- After students have worked in their groups for a couple of weeks, have them fill in a "Are we a team?" checklist individually, then discuss their answers within their group. Have them repeat this exercise when they have completed their task. See appendix B for an example of this checklist.

## Skills for an effective group process

Besides knowing how to develop a healthy group climate, students also need to know how to function so that they are productive and accomplish their tasks effectively. An effective process will emerge as students exhibit these skills:

- Individual responsibility and accountability: All group members agree on what needs to be done and by whom. Each student then determines what he or she needs to do and takes responsibility to complete the task(s). They can be held accountable for their tasks, and they hold others accountable for theirs.
- Constructive Feedback: Group members are able to give and receive feedback about group ideas. Giving constructive feedback requires focusing on ideas and behaviors, instead of individuals, being as positive as possible and offering suggestions for improvement. Receiving feedback requires listening well, asking for clarification if the comment is unclear, and being open to change and other ideas.
- Problem solving: Group members help the group to develop and use strategies central to their group goals. As such, they can facilitate group decision making and deal productively with conflict. In extreme cases, they know when to approach the professor for additional advice and help.
- Management and organization: Group members know how to plan and manage a task, how to manage their time, and how to run a meeting. For example, they ensure that meeting goals are set, that an agenda is created and followed, and that everyone has an opportunity to participate. They stay focused on the task and help others to do so too.
- Knowledge of roles: Group members know which roles can be filled within a group (e.g., facilitator, idea-generator, summarizer, evaluator, mediator, encourager, and recorder) and are aware of which role(s) they and others are best suited for. They are also willing to rotate roles to maximize their own and others' group learning experience.

As an instructor, use some of these strategies to encourage students to develop an effective process within their small groups:

- Design the group task so that the students must work together. Group members will be more motivated and committed to working together if they are given a group mark; if you choose to evaluate in this way, be sure to make your expectations extremely clear. See the CTE teaching tip sheet "Methods for Assessing Group Work" for additional ideas.
- Once students are in groups, have them develop, as one of their early assignments, a group contract in which they articulate ground rules and group goals. See the teaching tip "Making Group Contracts" for details. Be sure that groups discuss how they will respond to various scenarios such

as absentee or late group members and those who do not complete their assigned tasks.

- ⚲ Distribute a list of decision-making methods and strategies for conflict resolution. The CTE teaching tip sheet "Group Decision Making" is a good place to start. Have each group articulate, based on this list, a set of strategies for decision making and conflict resolution; this list should become part of the group contract. You may also want to offer yourself as an impartial arbitrator in emergency situations, but encourage students to work out problems among themselves.
- ⚲ Provide students with guidelines for running a meeting, such as setting and following an agenda, specifying time limits, and monitoring progress on the agenda. Consult the CTE teaching tip sheet "Meeting Strategies to Help Prepare Students for Group Work" for additional suggestions.
- ⚲ Teach students effective methods for giving and receiving feedback. For sample methods, see the teaching tip "Receiving and Giving Effective Feedback". Create an assignment that involves them giving feedback to group members, and make it part of their final grade.
- ⚲ To help students recognize and make the most of their own and one another's preferred roles, outline with them a list of team roles (see the teaching tip "Group Roles" for one such list), have them determine which role(s) suits them best, and give them time to discuss within their groups how their particular role(s) will complement those of other group members. Requiring them to rotate their roles helps them to expand their skills set.

## Professional Communication:

### Illustrates clarity in communication

•Is conscious of personal messages; becomes familiar with all relevant terms and meanings; avoids vague terms; is specific in what is being communicated; asks for feedback regarding personal statements; clarifies each statement given and received.
Illustrates clarity in written communication.
•will make conscious effort to be specific in all communication, whether that be through e-mail, documentation, letters, etc.; review all written material; discuss clarity with supervisor
Communicates effectively with diverse populations.
•Will place emphasis on communicating effectively with all populations; will practice cultural competence when working with groups with cultural differences.
Communicates effectively with diverse clients.
•seeks clarification when working with clients through questions, reflection of content, use of examples, further discussion, etc. when in one-on-one meetings and in group sessions.
Communicates effectively with colleagues and supervisors.
•Consistently communicates all activity and behavior; communicates any questions or concerns; updates supervisor on tasks and/or activity; writes in a professional manner; is specific in all statements.
Empathizes effectively with clients.
•Clarifies feelings with clients and demonstrates reflection of feeling when a client is sharing; prompts client to share feelings after developing a positive and trusting rapport; truly utilizes active listening skills during each meeting

### Planning and Organizing Skill

•Develop goals for an organization

- Identify tasks t be accomplished
- Prioritize and delegate tasks
- Facilitate brainstorming and discussions on programme planning process
- Conduct Meetings
- Coordinate Organizations and members' activities
- Motivate others on group projects
- Follow up with other members to evaluate progress, give constructive feedbacks, and praise others for good work done.

### Decision making-Supervisory, Management and Leadership Skills

- Understand the steps involved with effective decision making
- Implement sound decisions
- Facilitate group participation in the decision making process
- Take responsibility for decisions
- Evaluate the effects and effectiveness of a decision
- Be able to evaluate all options and make decisions without feeling any pressured
- Explain unpopular decisions to others
- Motivate others towards common goals
- Use appropriate management and mentoring skills with peers o subordinates.

### Financial Management Skill

- Develop an accurate budget, estimating expenses and income
- Justify the organization's budget to others
- Work within a budget
- Keep accurate and complete financial records
- Ensure timeliness of payments
- Determine necessity of fund raising events and strategize and organize as needed.

### Critical Thinking and Problem solving skills

- Understand the steps involved with critical thinking
- Anticipate problems before they occur
- Recognize if a problems need to be addressed
- Define the problem and identify possible causes
- Facilitate group members in identifying and evaluating possible solutions
- Identify range of solutions and select most appropriate ones
- Develop plans to implement solutions
- Be capable of handling more than one problem at a time.

### Team work and Team Building Skills

- Collaborate on Projects
- Motivate tem members to work towards a common goal

- Understand strengths and weaknesses of members and use strength to build team development.
- Support and praise members for reaching goals and accomplishments

## Research and Investigation skills

- Utilize a variety of sources of information
- Apply a variety of methods to test the validity of the data
- Identify problems and needs
- Formulate questions to clarify problems, topics or issues
- Identify appropriate information sources for problem solving.

## COMMUNICATION SKILL:

Social Work is fundamentally dependent on good communication. Social workers need to communicate effectively with service users and careers, other social workers, their managers, and other professionals. Each of these types of communication has its own challenges, often its own rules and language, and an inability to operate effectively in one or more of these areas has been at the root of many of the high-profile tragedies which have beset the history of social work.

Communication is, of necessity, a two-way process, involving a minimum of two people. A social worker needs, therefore, to be able to communicate clearly, but also to be able to enable others to communicate with her/himself. We need to have the skills

- To support other people in overcoming any blocks they bring to communicating with us
- To ensure that our own behavior, words, or tone are not in themselves a block.

Communication is a whole-body activity. We communicate through words, but also, and in fact more so, through tone, posture and gesture, behavior, facial gestures, clothes and appearance. Silence and stillness are powerful forms of communication. Developing good communication skills depends on becoming aware of all of these aspects, in ourselves and in those with whom we communicate. Because we have been communicating all our lives, and for the most part without thinking about it, developing such awareness can at first feel awkward and inhibiting, but over time becomes integrated into our practice.

## Effective Communication Skill is.......Speech and Language

The words you choose, the sound and pitch of your voice, the rate and delivery of your speech, and your use of the language may suggest a great deal to clients and oth¬ers with whom you interact.2 During a typical first contact—whether face to face, via telephone, or by letter, fax or e-mail—use words and phrases that arc easily under¬stood by most people. Keep it simple. Save arcane and esoteric language for profes¬sors! Avoid evaluative terms. Even words such as good or right—through which you intend to convey support and encouragement—may suggest to a client that you reg¬ularly make judgments about people. Especially during the early stages of work, be careful about sharing opinions or hypotheses. Use of diagnostic medical or psychological terminology and legal jargon may suggest to clients that you are reaching conclusions about them or their situation before fully understanding all the intricacies of their circumstances. Labels of all kinds, even positive ones, can significantly affect the tenor

of your relationships with clients and the course of your work together. Variations of the verb to be often result in a labeling effect.

## Listening Skills

A significant portion of a social worker's job involves interviewing clients and other parties involved in a client's care. To provide the most effective services and counseling, a social worker must develop the ability to listen carefully and pay attention to details. This may involve learning to take detailed notes so as to easily recall what was said later. Effective listening also involves paying attention to how the social worker reacts as the client is speaking. This means avoiding giving signs that the social worker disagrees with something a client has said, interrupting a client, rolling eyes, doodling, multitasking, or yawning and appearing generally disinterested in what the client is saying.

## Getting Information

Often social workers have to gain information from people who are not willing to part with that information or who may be difficult to understand. A social worker must know how to ask the right questions to get the necessary information or to alter the language of the questions to help a client understand what was being asked. Social workers may also benefit from knowing how to use alternate tactics for getting information, such as role playing or word association.

## Nonverbal Behaviors

A social worker's nonverbal behaviors can go a long way when it comes to communicating. Social workers should make eye-to-eye contact when speaking with clients and those involved with their care. Giving a smile can signal warmth and make a social worker seem more approachable. Keeping a distance of three to five feet between the social worker and the client can also help improve the level of comfort in the room, although a social worker also needs to keep in mind that cultural norms for physical distance vary, so that some clients may want to be closer than the social worker is used to.

## Building Trust

Social workers must often build someone's trust in order to effectively communicate. Communication with a client will not be successful if the client feels the social worker does not have her best interest in mind or if the social worker does not genuinely listen to the client. Building trust also involves not minimizing what a client has to say. Even if the social worker does not agree with the client or wants to focus on something more important, it is often necessary to focus on the client's agenda rather than the social worker's to help build trust and make the client feel important or as though she has some say.

## Conflict

Often, social workers encounter conflict. Knowing how to diffuse conflict and not let it interfere with the issues that need to be dealt with is the key. Social workers should avoid threatening or warning clients, judging clients or making inappropriate generalizations that could lead to conflict. Social workers

should also refrain from raising their voices, even if a client begins to yell first. For particularly difficult clients, a social worker may choose to bring a mediator or other impartial party into the room during any conversations to help diffuse conflict.

## Interpersonal Skills for Social Work:

### Written:

It is crucial for Social Workers to be able to write for a variety of audiences. You need to be able to express your expertise to managers, supervisors, court systems and clients to name a few. As rule, when writing documents to which clients will have access. Ensure that this is explained as simply as possible so we keep communication open and honest. It is important in written communication, especially formal reports and those for court, to spell properly and be grammatically correct. The use of words is a skill. It is imperative that you not only understand what you write, but also that you mean what you write. It is time consuming but make sure you proof read.

### Verbal:

Conversation is dynamic and multi-dimensional. In conversation, you have what you say, what the other person hears and how this is then interpreted through the lens of their previous experience. A big part of this knows your clients, having read previous files before meeting with them.

### Non-verbal:

A great deal of human communication is nonverbal. As a social worker, you should be keenly aware of the significance of body language. Factors such as posture, facial expression, eye contact, gait, and body positioning represent important forms of com¬munication (Ivey, 1988; Kadushin & Kadushin, 1997).In professional encounters with others, your body language should generally be congruent with your verbal lan¬guage. All people, perhaps especially clients, notice discrepancies and incongruities between what you say verbally and what yon express nonverbally. When you present yourself in an incongruent fashion, others may be confused about you and your mes¬sage. When you express yourself congruently, people are more likely to understand your communications and to experience you as genuine and sincere.

In addition to verbal and nonverbal congruence, your body language should communicate attention and interest in the other person, as well as caring, concern, respect, and authenticity. On many occasions, you will need to express your message in an assertive manner that conveys authority. In order to emphasize one clement or another, changes in body language may be necessary.

### Listening:

Listening involves the use of your" sensory capacities to receive and recognize messages expressed verbally and told verbally by others. The listening skills include hearing or receiving others* words, speech, and language; observing (Carkhuf P & Anthony, 1979, pp. 42-47) their nonverbal gestures and positions; encouraging (Ivey, 1988, pp. 93-95) them to express themselves fully; and remembering what they communicate. Most people are rather poor listeners, tending to pay more attention to their

own thoughts and feelings than to the messages others are trying to convey. Competent listening rarely comes naturally. Yet listening, perhaps more than any other skill is essential for effective social work practice. It requires two actions. First, you minimize attention to your own experiences (e.g., thoughts, feelings, and sensa¬tions). Then, you energetically concentrate on the client with a determination to understand—not to evaluate—what the client is experiencing and expressing.

## Hearing

It refers to the process of listening (i.e., receiving messages) that involves attending to the speech and language of other people. Hearing can be prevented or impeded by numerous factors. A room might be noisy or another person might speak in a soft or mumbled fashion, a foreign language, or an unfamiliar dialect. Another person might use words you do not understand or in ways that differ from your under¬standing of those words. Effective hearing involves diminishing the obstacles and focusing entirely on the words and sounds of the other person. It also involves reduc¬ing any tendencies to hear selectively as a result of judging, comparing, criticizing, or evaluating the words and sounds of the other person. In attempting to hear clearly, you hope to take in and remember the messages sent by the speaker. In listening, process is as important as content. Therefore, try to hear more than the words them-selves. Listen as well to the person's manner of speaking. Try to hear the meaning and feeling just beyond or beneath the words that arc actually said.

## Problem Solving:

There are many occasions when we get to know our clients in the midst of a crisis. It is important that we identify what the crisis is and address it. If we are working in a long term team we will need to get this addressed so we can get started on the plan for the family. Problem solving is much like care planning only in the short term. It is about identifying the problem, breaking it down into smaller tasks and allocating these, then coming back to the table to make sure that everyone has completed their individual tasks so the problem is addressed. If the problem is something bigger, like a housing issue etc. it may be that this needs to be added to the care plan as a longer term task so it is not forgotten. In Social Work, we need to "think on our feet" we need to be able to think through problems quite quickly, sometimes coming up with bridging responses until we are in a place to deal with the issue in totality. We need to be able to address minor issues quickly so it does not overwhelm the longer piece of work that we need to undertake with a client or client system.

## Negotiation:

It is a great skill to have personally as well as professionally. Professionally it is always helpful if you and your client are working together toward a common goal. Too many times out clientele are involuntary, which means they may not agree with what you think the problem is but they still need to work with you. If you are able to negotiate time where you address the need identified as well as those things they see as a problem you get further in the working relationship. You are communicating to them that while your work is important you are also concerned about their concerns and want them to be empowered to change their circumstances. Negotiation is also important in identifying those things you and your client will be working on for the duration of your working relationship. When you get to the management level you will have to negotiate with your subordinates at times to ensure the work gets

done when you need it and there are competing priorities.

## Decision Making:

Decision making is about using the information you have to come up with a plan to move forward. This is a big part of management. As a manager you go on the information provided to you by Social Workers in order to provide case oversight and direction. For this to work properly the information needs to be as thorough as possible and it needs to be accurate. Making decisions on bits and pieces of information without having a view of the bigger picture is dangerous and professionally unsound. As a Social Worker is it necessary to gather and corroborate as much information as possible as a part of your assessment in order to put the appropriate interventions into place. Without precise and detailed information it is quite impossible to put in interventions that do nothing to address the actual issue at hand.

## To be a better speaker:

**Be considerate. :** Don't dominate the conversation by talking only about yourself. Use questions to probe the person's feelings or opinions on the topic of conversation.

**Speak clearly. :** Don't mumble or talk in the opposite direction of the listener. Also, use words that you know the listener might understand.

**Stay focused on the conversation. :** Doing something else while you are talking, such as typing or working on a car, sends a message to the listener that you don't think the conversation is worthy of your full attention, and it could inhibit the listener's responses to what you say.

**Be brief. :** Don't over talk a point. It may cause the other person to lose interest in the conversation. Learn to "read" the listener.: If the other person seems inattentive or uncomfortable, it is probably not a good time to be carrying on a conversation. Recommend having the conversation at another time.

## To be a better listener:

**Eliminate distractions. :** If you find it hard to concentrate because of your surroundings, move to another area or schedule another time to talk.

**Make time to listen. :** If you are in a hurry or don't have time, let the speaker know and schedule another time to talk. Better to delay the conversation than to risk having an important conversation cut short.

**Practice reflective listening. :** Repeat what you think the speaker said to ensure you heard the speaker correctly. This is called "reflective listening" and it is identified by statements as "If I understand you correctly..." reflective listening gives the speaker a chance to clarify a point and ensures that both the speaker and the listener are on the same page.

**Listen for understanding. :** If you don't understand what is being said, don't be shy or embarrassed to ask questions. It is better to ask for clarification than to risk a misunderstanding that could lead to problems

later on.

**Wait for the speaker to finish :** Don't interrupt, even when it's apparent the person speaking is gathering his/her thoughts.

**Pay attention to what is being said. :**When someone is speaking, don't spend that time preparing your remarks or working on a project – listen.

**Keep eye contact. :** Doing so shows that you are interested in what is being said, which may encourage the speaker to express him/herself more freely?

**SUMMARY:**

In the above paper the details about various skills needed for professional social work for effective performance in various situations are discussed in detail detailed. The communication skills and the professional social work skills are the two sides of the personality of the social worker which are closely related to each other. The professional skills are important but the knowledge of its application is also equally important. It is not so that the same skills can be applied in the same condition. Social worker has to think about which skills and techniques are applicable in particular situation. Based on the feedback received from the field he can utilise these tools and techniques in the field.

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