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Career counselling & the role of Psychology



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Forward:

Counsellors and especially psychologists, who work or want to work as career counsellor, are expected to react appropriately in social situations and to be able to interact with a wide variety of needs and different clients. However, they often do not undertake practical (as opposed to academic) consulting competences and skills in their education and training. Therefore we propose a new and innovative training course that will fill this skills gap. The partnership will identify and address these deficits and this will create a situation that prevents problems happening rather than have to address them retrospectively.

The practical training that is missing from many of the existing training courses is a real and practical knowledge about the national and European labour market. Developing this content in a meaningful way to help the counsellors and psychologists will be the main focus of this project.

These missing competences are a problem not only exist across Europe therefore this project seeks to investigate the local cultural, fiscal realities in each of the partner countries and build the specific local content into the training course. The development of the Guide which forms the curriculum seeks to address the following areas of expertise and training.

- Raising the awareness of people to certain topics,
- Empathy,
- Conflicts mediation,
- Openness,
- Ability for cooperation and
- Integration.

There is a specific skill that the trainers will learn the traits of specific skills and competences be able expand their ability to understand the underlying currents that are influencing people the concept which we call “, reading between the lines” is an important aspect of the training.

Theories and practical work for empathy, appreciation, focusing, communication techniques, feedback about the own communicational skills; rules and roles in particular conversational situations, types of communication, active listening and conversational behavior;

1. Introduction: Careers counselling and the role of psychology

From its earliest beginnings Psychology has played an historic role in the provision of counselling services. This is understandable since counselling covers many issues besides emotional difficulties. It can address:

- confidence concerns,
- problematic behaviour patterns,
- skills and knowledge, and
- any other experience that is causing some kind of personal distress or worry.

Effective use of counselling skills in a variety of professional settings can help people overcome problems and understand objectives more effectively. Career counselling also focuses on thoughts and feelings about education, knowledge and skills. Using these skills to explore new experiences will also be productive. It can help people take a fresh look at their personal development and other career options.

Career counsellors make an assessment of a client's current situation and help them develop an effective work/life plan. In this, personality assessments and other ability tests may be used, along with an understanding of how personal interactions can influence effective outcomes. A significant tool in the process is the career interview, where two-way interactions take place between the client and the counsellor.

Attitudes, aspirations, attributions, etc., play significant roles in the success of these interactions – in the period leading up to the interview(s), during the interview(s), and assessments and actions afterwards.

In this process career guidance practitioners need to:

- have a real interest in people;
- have excellent interpersonal and communication skills in order to; establish a rapport with clients; liaise effectively with staff in other agencies, including educational institutions; have credibility with employers.
- be able to work effectively in large or small group situations;
- be able to work on their own initiative and as part of a team;
- be flexible and able to adapt readily to change;
- be well organised and able to balance a varied schedule of client contacts, meetings, and liaison with other organisations such as training providers and employers;
- have administrative skills including report writing and record keeping;
- have IT skills, including the ability to use word processing, databases, spreadsheets, email and the internet;

- be fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity and combating discrimination, including the ability to recognise and deal with their own prejudices.

Within the last years there has been a growth in the number of people offering their services as counsellors. Many have a professional background in psychiatry, psychology or social work, but many more, including school guidance counsellors, community nurses, ministers of religion, medical practitioners and others, are beginning to include counselling as part of their activities. There is a perception that counselling is just the effective management of very good communication skills in a one to one situation and that anyone who communicates well can put up their shingle and commence a practice. When we look for theoretical frameworks we find that both communication and counselling are becoming identified as their own distinct disciplines. In fact, pick up any communication text to find what it is all about and you will discover that the first chapter or two is likely to be devoted to theories and models of communication. The 90s have had a focus on the importance of audience who bring their own expectations and prejudices and Mohan, McGregor, Saunders and Archee (1997) have indicated that information technology will be the focus of future communication theoretical developments in the 21st century.

What is counselling?

- counselling is a two-way communication process that helps people look at their personal issues, make decisions and plan how to take action.
- the aim of counselling is not to solve every problem but to improve clients' coping skills.
- counselling helps people talk about, explore and understand their thoughts and feelings.
- counselling helps people work out what they want to do and how they will do it.
- counselling includes:
 - establishing supportive relationships
 - having conversations with a purpose (not just chatting)
 - listening attentively
 - helping people tell their stories without fear of stigma or judgment
 - giving correct and appropriate information
 - helping people to make informed decisions
 - exploring options and alternatives
 - helping people to recognize and build on their strengths
 - helping people to develop a positive attitude to life
 - respecting everyone's needs, values, culture, religion and lifestyle

Counselling does NOT include:

- solving someone's problems
- telling someone what to do
- making decisions for another person
- blaming the person
- interrogating or questioning the person
- judging the person
- preaching or lecturing to a person
- making promises that cannot be kept
- imposing one's own beliefs on another person

2. Basic approaches to guidance/counselling

The original approach to careers counselling is often traced back to Frank Parsons at the turn of the twentieth century. Parsons was interested in unemployed school leavers and developed a three-stage process of vocational counselling that included self-analysis, occupational analysis, and true reasoning or counselling to relate personal and occupational information. Since then different approaches to career counselling have been developed to help examine these issues, including differential, developmental, social learning, cognitive, sociological, economic, and mathematical models.

In 1981 Crites¹ defined the unique parameters of a given career counselling approach and provided a schema for synthesizing the approaches (trait-and-factor, developmental, client (person) -centred, psychodynamic, and behavioural). The methods used in career counselling are said to be more pragmatic than theoretical and help to translate the model into operational terms. They include the:

- interview techniques used by the counsellor,
- test-interpretation procedures engaged in by the client and counsellor, and
- acquisition and use of occupational information.

¹ Crites, J. O. (1981). *Career Counselling: Models, methods, and materials*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

2.1 Trait-factor approach

By seeking to gain a person-environment fit, the trait-factor approach is concerned with the total development of the individual across life stages and environments. Its short-term goal is to help the client stop irrational, non-productive thinking and behaving and start using rational problem-solving skills for effective decision making. The counsellor-client relationship can be described as teaching, mentoring, and influencing. External measures that allow the individual to gauge personal development against society are used.

Basic assumptions of the trait-factor theory as it applies to career counselling are:

- Vocational development is largely a cognitive process in which the individual uses reasoning to arrive at a decision
- Occupational choice is a single event
- Each person possesses a unique and stable pattern of traits that can be measured.
- There is a unique pattern of traits required for successful performance of the critical tasks of each occupation.
- It is possible to match the traits of persons with the trait requirements of occupations on a rational basis.
- The closer the fit between a person's traits and the trait requirements of the occupation, the greater the likelihood for successful job performance and personal satisfaction.
- Personal traits may be viewed in a context of how well they fit into the environmental system within which the person operates. Environmental systems may be viewed in a broad way that includes geographical, local, cultural heritage, family background and influence, socioeconomic class, work/school setting, community setting, and economic climate.
- The nature of the PE fit is not static but dynamic, with the person (P- client) being seen to influence the Environment (E- career) just as much as the environment influencing the person.

By using the trait-factor approach, career counselling can be seen to be a personalized process that combines both intuitive and cognitive techniques to help the client understand him/her self (education, training, work experience, interest, skills and personal traits), explore career options, and clarify and attain desired career goals. In this way the processes of career counselling offers insight, guidance and support to help clients to understand and manage different career and lifestyle issues.

2.2 Developmental approach

Although the term 'developmental' covers a range of models, these approaches have two basic features in common. First, all assert that choosing an occupation and adjusting to the world of work is a continuous process which carries on through life. Second, the language of developmental psychology is used to describe and explain the process of career development. Key variables in the various models are the notions of developmental stages, developmental tasks, and career maturity.

Developmental counselling approaches have evolved in much the same way as other psychotherapeutic systems. All such systems represent efforts to deal with a wide range of human needs and characteristics in a comprehensive yet consistent way. Developmental counselling is a framework for understanding clients and helping to set goals on their behalf. It is not a theory about counselling processes.

The developmental approach provides a framework and rationale that builds on the positive potentials of people to grow, achieve, and build competence in dealing with the challenges that are likely to confront them in life. It often involves the dissemination of specialized information and/or the acquisition of specific skills.

Careers counsellors, for example, may provide clients with information about occupations or educational opportunities as well as information about the self in relation to psychologically relevant aspects of the environment. They may also include coaching in social skills or other practical training relevant to the potential problems of individual clients. In this way they can be seen to take a developmental approach to vocational guidance and choice.

Since developmental counselling sees people as thinking, feeling, active beings, it is also beneficial to couple the exploration of deeply personal hopes, fears, and aspirations with practical information and adaptive skills that can help to remove obstacles to goal attainment and thus toward higher levels of development and satisfaction.

2.3 Person-centred approach

The person-centred approach takes the developmental approach further. It views clients as being the best authority on their own experience, capable of fulfilling their own potential for growth. At the same time achieving potential requires favourable conditions; under adverse conditions individuals may not grow and develop fully. In particular, when individuals are denied acceptance and positive regard from others — or when that positive regard is made conditional upon the individual behaving in particular ways — they may begin to lose touch with what their own experience means for them, and their potential for development may be stifled.

Person centred counselling is a non-directive method of providing support and enables clients to utilise free-association and free-thinking during counselling sessions. By actively listening and mirroring, during the one-to-one counselling session, the counsellor provides the client with sufficient positive feedback to encourage him/her to explore difficulties further.

This method of supportive therapy was developed by Carl Rogers in the 1940s. His non-directive approach to counselling focuses on the 'here and now' principle, and encourages clients to explore and create positive change for themselves.

Having exposed feelings and emotions the client is then more able to think the issues through, until clarity is achieved. This allows the client to understand the meaning behind their feelings and emotions, and to decide what positive steps, towards change, to take next. It also increases self-awareness and offers personal insights.

Person centred counselling also focuses on the personal relationship between a counsellor and his/her client. The development of trust and understanding within this counsellor/client relationship encourages self-realisation, and enables the client to acknowledge the problems and issues they are disclosing, and to think up solutions, with gentle encouragement and guidance from the counsellor.

A counsellor's positive attitude is important in facilitating a progressive counselling relationship, and it is their job to encourage, challenge and support the client at all times. Demonstrating empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard, throughout the one-to-one counselling relationship with a client, will provide the client with understanding, clarity and support, in order to make steady progress to self-realisation.

Advantages of Person Centred Counselling

- This type of therapy concentrates on the here and now, and encourages the client to think in present time.
- It recognises and values the client.
- It encourages self-expression, self-awareness, self-development and a greater understanding of self.

2.4 Psychodynamic approach

Psychodynamic career counselling refers to approaches that attempt to understand, and make meaning and use of, individual motives, purposes and drives to facilitate career exploration.

The term 'psychodynamic' refers to systems that use motives, drives, and related covert variables to explain behaviour. In its traditional sense psychodynamic therapy helps clients understand the root cause of their problems and issues. It also helps equip them with knowledge and suggestions to enable them to cope with further difficulties.

This form of counselling has roots in the theories of Sigmund Freud, and was initially developed in the 1940s. Through supportive counselling a client can identify subconscious thoughts, and to understand how these thoughts affect behaviour. This is done by reflecting and looking inward at the feelings, thoughts and reactions a client expresses.

Problems like depression, anxiety, anger and social isolation can all be successfully treated and improved using some form of psychodynamic approach. However, this form of counselling relies on effective interpersonal exchanges between the counsellor and client, in order to establish and develop positive strategies that a client can use to create changes.

Some counsellors, psychotherapists and other therapeutic professionals may use a nondirective approach to counselling. They encourage the client to express feelings and emotions while they listen and watch out for clues as to the root cause of the issue. This provides much useful information for both the client and the counsellor.

Other therapists work in a more directive manner and will guide and lead the client into specific areas of discussion.

Psychodynamic approaches to counselling take many forms. However, there are key principles that give careers counsellors tools to provide the kind of supportive guidance that is conducive to creating a positive counselling outcome.

These include:

- The view that internal experiences relate to relationships with other people.
- The use of free-association, and other techniques, can provide additional information, understanding and the exploration of problems.
- The acknowledgment that insight is essential in order to achieve positive progress and successful outcomes.

2.5 Behavioural approach

Behavioural approaches to careers counselling/guidance place more emphasis than others on the 'mechanics' of career decision making. These (social) cognitive approaches view people as active shapers of their lives, who reflect, observe, and think about their feelings and cognitions and to monitor the impact of their own actions on their environments.

There is a strong emphasis on thinking processes as compared to behaviours, suggesting it is individual's belief systems that affect their behaviours while at the same time there is an acknowledgement of the powerful mediating impact of contextual factors.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) suggests that career behaviour is a result of an interaction between self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goals. Self efficacy is defined as 'people's judgements of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance'.

Outcome expectations interact with self-efficacy. These are 'a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes'. Environmental factors are perceived as controlling or influencing the outcome rather than the level or quality of performance.

Goals influence whether behaviour will be initiated. Individuals set goals to organise behaviour and guide their actions. If a person feels confident in a task this may lead to more interest, rewards and confidence about desired goals. Goals are self-motivating and a source of personal satisfaction.

SCCT can be applied both to understanding of clients' situations and to the development of the counsellor role. In this regard counsellors need to develop 'explicit awareness' of how, consciously or unconsciously, their own belief systems and world view can intrude in the interview. Intrusion of counsellor beliefs can reveal 'how biases and values can determine

the questions asked of clients' and can undermine clients' self efficacy beliefs and sense of self agency.

Practical approaches to developing understanding the relationship between self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals take the form of practical and concrete activities such as:

- Creating a Business or Career Plan
- Personal Career Plan
- Computer Simulations
- Discussions on current events involving career development
- Watching and commenting on relevant videos
- Listening/commenting on guest speakers
- Exercises and role play
- Field trips to local businesses
- Formal mentoring
- Apprenticeships/internships
- Self-management training (e.g. emotional intelligence, goal-setting, time-management, etc.)

3. The career counselling interview

Whatever model (or models) of career guidance is adopted the most common approach to gathering the kind of information needed to develop the counselling process will be the interview (or interviews). This is probably the event that most people associate most directly with careers guidance.

There is no simple 'formula' that can be used to develop an interview technique, structure or programme. This generally depends on the approach taken for the counselling process. For example a trait-factor or a psychodynamic approach may imply that the interview takes place early in the counselling process. A developmental or behavioural approach, on the other hand, may imply the interview to take place further into the process.

Research suggests that clients who have participated in careers education programmes before the interview gain more from the interview itself.

Furthermore the interview structure often varies between professional groups. In higher education careers services, for example, there has been a move away from individual hour-long interviews, with emphasis placed on access to information and group work. In other contexts the interview is still seen as a central core of provision. For example, adults receiving guidance through (UK) Training and Enterprise Councils are sometimes given a voucher to 'pay' for an intensive interview as part of the service provided.

Guidance interviewing practice also varies between professional groups. Practitioners working in independent career counselling and outplacement agencies are more likely to offer clients a battery of tests (which may include interest and personality inventories and aptitude tests) and to make recommendations based on interpretations of results. Outplacement counsellors are likely to focus on coaching and support in job hunting and may be more prepared to devote more time to providing emotional support to clients who are recovering from the trauma of redundancy.

However the interview is conducted, career guidance professionals need to recognise the importance in the process of their own training in skills such as listening and data gathering, attitude, attribution and communication channels, and guidance and persuasion. In this regard the nature of the interview and the techniques used within it are likely to reflect the approach adopted.

In this regard the following approaches and methodologies are available (Adapted from Kidd, 1996²):

<i>Orientations</i>	<i>Approaches</i>
Person-environment fit	Seven-point plan (Rodger)
Developmental	FIRST (Bedford)
Person-centred	Client-centred counselling (Rogers) Personal construct theory techniques
Goal-directed	Skilled helper (Egan) Interpersonal interaction models

² Kidd, J.M. (1996) The Career Counselling Interview. In A.G. Watts, B. Law, J. Killeen, J.M. Kidd & R. Hawthorn *rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp 189-209.

3.1 Person-environment fit: Rodger's seven-point plan

This is simply a list of questions organised under seven headings. Rodger suggested that these should be regarded as a short list of items that need to be considered in guidance, shown below. Although the list focuses on the content of the interview rather than on process issues, many guidance practitioners still appreciate the aide mémoire provided by the seven headings.

Heading	Questions
1. Physical make-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the client any defects of health or physique that may be of occupational importance? • How agreeable are the client's appearance, bearing and speech?
2. Attainments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of education has the client had? • How well has the client done educationally? • What occupational training and experience has the client had already? • How well has the client done occupationally?
3. General intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much general intelligence can the client display? • How much general intelligence does the client ordinarily display?
4. Special aptitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the client any marked mechanical aptitude, manual dexterity, facility in the use of figures, talent for drawing or music?
5. Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the client's interests intellectual? practical? practical-constructional? physically active? social? artistic?
6. Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How acceptable does the client make himself to other people? • Does the client influence others? • Is the client steady and dependable? • Is the client self-reliant?
7. Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the client's domestic circumstances? • What do the other members of the family do for a living? • Are there any special openings available for the client?

3.2 Developmental approach: Bedford's FIRST

Central to developmental approach is an initial diagnosis of the stage reached by the client at the start of the interview. This is assessed along five dimensions, using the mnemonic FIRST. Progress made during the interview is assessed along the same dimensions, and each dimension is viewed as contributing cumulatively towards the goal of 'vocational awareness' and provides an evaluative framework for the assessing career development.

Dimension	Question
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How far has the person narrowed down options?
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well-informed is the person about the career options s/he has in mind?
Realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How realistic is the person (both in relation to own abilities and the constraints of the market)?
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How aware is the person of the range of options available?
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent has the person worked out the practical steps necessary to achieve his/her career objective?

Bedford argues that the fundamental skills and techniques required by the interviewer comprise seven distinct features:

1. Establishing the broad purpose of the interview.
2. Creating a friendly, encouraging atmosphere.
3. Gathering information.
4. Identifying the person's needs.
5. Giving information.
6. Summarising progress made during the interview.
7. Clarifying the next steps to be taken.

Throughout this process behaviourally anchored rating scales derived from the framework can be applied in the evaluation of guidance interventions, although this requires observers to rate interviews individually and the reliability of the assessments depends on their skill in using the scales.

3.3 Person-centred approach: client-centred interviewing and personal construct techniques

The essence of the client-centred approach is that the most important influence on the progress made in the interview is the relationship between the interviewer and the client. Interview techniques are played down; the attitudes of the practitioner are the main focus. These are normally described as:

- Genuineness - being integrated and real within the relationship.
- Unconditional positive regard - respecting the client in a non-judgemental way.
- Empathic understanding - understanding the client from his or her own internal frame of reference, and endeavouring to communicate this to the client.

The phrase 'person-centred counselling' appears to be the preferred term nowadays. The term emphasises more clearly the importance of the interactive and egalitarian relationship between the practitioner and the client. Also, it highlights the importance of what they call the 'person to person' encounter of the two parties.

In general there are four 'axioms' of person-centred career counselling that emphasise the personal and professional skills of the counsellor in gathering and interpreting information:

1. The person-centred career counsellor has attitudes and behaviours that focus on promoting the inherent process of client self-development.
2. There is an initial emphasis on a certain area of client concern, that of work.
3. There are opportunities for the client to test his or her emerging concept of personal identity and vocational choice with real or simulated work activities.
4. The person-centred career counsellor has certain information and skills available to the client through which a career goal can be implemented.

As a development some practitioners have argued for the use of personal construct theory approaches (from Kelly, 1955). Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) is fundamentally a theory of personality which stresses the unique ways in which people make sense of the world. The central building block of the theory is the construct, a bipolar discrimination, made between objects of the individual's experience. Thus it has choice built into it. Individuals are viewed as constantly testing out and elaborating their systems of constructs.

Techniques that the interviewer might use to enable the client to progress include:

1. Eliciting constructs by asking the client to describe ways in which certain 'elements' (which might be jobs) are similar or different.
2. 'Laddering' up the hierarchy of constructs from concrete subordinate constructs to super-ordinate constructs which have a wider application (one way of doing this is to probe why certain things are important to the individual).
3. 'Pyramiding' down the hierarchy of constructs from super-ordinate constructs to subordinate ones (perhaps by asking how things differ).
4. 4. Asking the client to complete a 'grid' using certain constructs on a small range of elements (possibly jobs).
5. Employing self-characterisation: for example, asking clients to describe how they see themselves in a year's time, or in a particular position at work.
6. Encouraging the client to develop action plans by moving towards tighter constructs.

3.4 Behavioural approaches: Goal-directed orientations

Behavioural approaches recognise that clients are active sentient beings who interact with the world (their career choice) based on learned rules and successful behaviours. In some regards PCP can be considered to be a behavioural approach to career orientation and choice, as can social learning and attributional approaches.

The social learning approach argues that individuals acquire beliefs about themselves and about the world of work through two kinds of learning experiences: instrumental (how individuals develop preferences through participating in a range of activities, with successful activities being preferred/ learned) and associative (the exposure of individuals to how occupations are associated with complex combinations of values.)

One task of the career counsellor is to assess the strength of clients' beliefs about themselves and about the outside world. Then to challenge inaccuracies and strengthen accurate beliefs.

Inaccurate beliefs can be countered and challenged using such strategies as:

- examining assumptions underlying expressed beliefs,
- looking for inconsistencies between words and behaviour;, and
- confronting illogical frameworks of beliefs.

More rational behaviour needs to be reinforced by expressions of approval and appreciation. Therefore encouraging the client to learn by experience in the real world i.e., by participating in work-simulation and work-experience schemes.

The central features of the social learning approach are thus cognitive restructuring and teaching decision-making skills. A procedural model developed by Egan (1990)³, in which different communication skills are emphasised at each stage, can be used to develop this approach:

Stage	Steps
1 Identifying and clarifying problem	1a Help clients to tell their stories. situations and unused opportunities 1b Help clients to become aware of and overcome their blind spots and develop new perspectives on themselves and their problem situations. 1c Help clients to identify and work on problems, issues, concerns or opportunities that will make a difference.
2 Developing a preferred scenario	2a Help clients to develop a range of possibilities for a better future. 2b Help clients to translate preferred- scenario possibilities into viable agendas. 2c Help clients to identify the kinds of incentives that will enable them to commit themselves to the agendas they fashion.
3 Formulating strategies and plans	3a Help clients to brainstorm a range of strategies for implementing their plans. 3b Help clients to choose a set of strategies that best fit their environment. 3c Help clients to formulate a plan: that is, a step-by-step procedure for accomplishing each goal of the preferred scenario.
All stages	Help clients to act on what they learn throughout the helping process.

³ Egan, G. (1990) *The Skilled Helper (4th Ed)* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole

4. Psychological Constructs in Counselling

4.1 Definition of psychological constructs

The word construct itself is derived from the Latin word “construere” which means to “build”, “erect”, “stack”.

Hypothetical constructs are to be understood as characteristics, conditions or instances that are not directly observable, but have to be made indirectly accessible through (behavioural) observation. Hence constructs are, although acknowledged, still non-observable phenomena.

Many psychological categories can be defined as constructs. Through observable and measurable indicators it is possible to make them accessible to empirical research. The construct “anxiety” for example is measurable through the indicators “high pulse”, “quiet talking” or “perspiration”.

Examples of well-explored psychological constructs are:

- Cognitive abilities like deductive thinking or memory
- Attitudes towards work like achievement motivation, frustration tolerance or resilience
- Social competences like willingness to cooperate, interpersonal skills or assertiveness
- Communication types
- Intelligence
- Stress
- Gender roles
- Ability to learn

4.2 Personal Construct Theory

The American psychologist George Kelly developed this psychological theory of human cognition in the 1950s.

In Kelly’s opinion there is no impartial reality or absolute truth. Each human being is a scientist as he is building interpretations respectively hypotheses about events and situations that serve as predictors for future events. With the help of these individually typical constructs the person tests the occurred events for their coherence as well as the constructs for their usefulness and modifies them if necessary. Thus every individual is free to develop their own system of constructs and at the same time restricted in his actions because of the nature of his constructs. Therefore Kelly’s theory deals with the images that different individuals create of the world and themselves.

People develop constructs as internal ideas of reality in order to understand the world around them. They can be based on observations or experiences. Every construct is bipolar, specifying how two things are similar to each other (lying on the same pole) and different

from a third thing. They can be expanded with new ideas. For example, if we see a person hurt someone and two others helping the injured person, it could lead to the construct cruel-helpful. There are two kinds of constructs, “core constructs” that are vital for the person’s functioning and “peripheral constructs” that can be changed without essentially modifying the core constructs.

The more individual constructs a person uses to categorize and differentiate his social environment, the more cognitively complex he is.

4.3 Personality Theories

Theories of personality are systems that describe, explain and predict individual psychological characteristics of people. They discuss three underlying questions:

- Structure: What kind of person is he/she?
- Process: Why is he/she behaving like this?
- Development: How did he/she come to be like this?

The question “What?” refers both to the static, stable aspects of human behaviour and experience and to the human characteristics and their relationship to each other. Structures can be distinguished by:

- Their basic units, that are used to describe the structures (i.e. traits, types, habits),
- Their complexity: simple systems with few essential constructs vs. (vs. stands for “versus” in Latin and means “opposite” in the following text) complex systems (i.e. trait-oriented approach),
- Their construction: non-hierarchical vs. hierarchical.

The question “Why?” refers to the dynamic aspects of human personality like motivation of behaviour and experience.

The question “How?” refers to those determinates of the human personality’s development, that are constituted either by environment or disposition.

Psychological theories seem to be impartial at first, but in reality there are many different influencing factors:

- The underlying ideology or worldview: alternate ideologies lead to different theories.
 - Complex and dynamic vs. simple and mechanistic models
 - Determinism vs. free will
 - Humanistic and phenomenological vs. scientific and pragmatic
 - Constitutional and hormonal factors vs. “tabula rasa”
- The national parentage
 - European tradition (philosophical, pessimistic) vs. Anglo-Saxon tradition (pragmatic, optimistic)
- Personal opinions and “Zeitgeist”

4.4 Relevant psychological constructs in counselling

The following, for counselling relevant, psychological constructs will be presented in this chapter: cultural background, gender, attitudes and attributions, achievement motivation and frustration tolerance. First a theoretical introduction is given to each construct, followed by a case example that provides further practical insight into the actual counselling situation.

4.5 Cultural background

Culture describes an imaginative, competitive, collective practice of generation, preservation and change of symbolic differences and inequalities. Intercultural in this context involves situations, in which various collective practices of difference and inequality make contact in a social space.

Intercultural counselling means a situation in which a counsellor who represents the cultural majority deals with a client who is part of a cultural minority (i.e. a Turkish mother visits a centre for educational counselling in which the staff is all Austrian).

The counsellor has to get involved in a dialogic exploration in order to understand important cultural views of the world, patterns of communications and action strategies of his client as factors like age, social and economic status, sex, course of migration, different peculiarities of acculturation etc. shape the cultural world view of a person differently. In order to do this, he has to have the ability to act in an intercultural competent way.

“Intercultural competence” means a set of abilities that helps a person to act efficiently, independently and culture-sensitively in a situation of cultural overlapping. The objectives of intercultural competence are:

- To recognise and accept the general attachment to culture in human behaviour
- To perceive foreign behavioural patterns but not to judge them
- Cultural self-perception
- To identify foreign cultural standards
- To develop understanding and respect for foreign cultural perspectives
- To build a productive and respectful relationship with people from foreign cultures

Also important is the counsellor’s personal readiness to learning processes in situations of cultural overlapping. Multicultural Teams for example show stronger self-reflexion regarding topics like own cultural patterns that have been learned throughout socialisation in life, but also cultural patterns of the profession or organisation. As it can be unsettling to question one’s own working tradition and counselling processes, an open and trusting atmosphere is of high importance.

Case example – part 1:

Anna K., an Austrian counsellor with 20 years of experience in vocational counselling meets Omar B., a 38 year old chef from Saudi Arabia who moved to Austria five years ago with his wife and two children because of a better job offer.

He has been working in his profession as a chef in an Arabic restaurant in Vienna's first district since then but wants a change of profession now because of the exhausting working hours that come along with this job. As he has been working as a chef his entire adult life he doesn't know in which direction he wants to go, he just knows that he is tired of cooking.

The company's secretary said that his German sounded good on the phone, although not entirely fluent and a bit rough.

Today Omar B. is due to come into the office for his first counselling session.

How does the counsellor have to prepare for the first meeting with her new client?

Possible solution:

As Anna K. doesn't have a lot of information about her new client apart from the fact that he is a chef from Saudi Arabia who moved to Austria with his family five years ago. It is recommendable to her to be well-prepared for the meeting. Omar B. comes from a country with a paternalistic system and therefore has a cultural background that is different from hers. The counsellor can't know whether he is a liberal person or not and should be aware of her role as a woman dealing with a man from his society. There are certain manners and rules that apply to Arabic mentality and she has to be aware of them in order to lead a productive and polite conversation and show herself as a competent business partner.

Proper appearance:

- Her clothing must not be snug and she shouldn't show too much of her skin. If she wants to be really appropriate, she will even cover her wrists. If she is wearing a Christian symbol like a cross around her neck, she should close her blouse entirely.
- She should not wear too much make-up or too colourful nail varnish as this could convey an inadequate impression.

Encounter and greeting:

- At the greeting she should wait until her clients offers his hand to her and should not be offended in case he doesn't. He would be behaving according to his cultural tradition and doesn't mean to be disrespectful. In Saudi Arabia it is common that men kiss each other when they meet and that they walk next to each other holding hands, but it is seldom seen that women and men even touch each other in public.

- Questions of the family's health and well-being belong to the beginning of a respectful encounter and must be answered in a positive way. On the other hand the counsellor should not ask directly about her client's wife, this is not common practice.

Behaviour:

- Although in business situations in Arabia foreign women are treated as equal associate partners, the counsellor should still be aware of the fact that women have a different hierarchical status there as men and have to behave cautiously in public. Therefore it is still recommendable to go about business carefully.
- She should know that in dealing with people from Arabic areas it is not appropriate to gesticulate too much, also it is frowned on to point at someone with a finger or the tip of the toes. This should be regarded in the chosen sitting position, it can already be an affront if she keeps her legs crossed and accidentally points her foot in her client's direction

Rules of communication:

- The Arabic area is characterised by an expressive and loud style of communication. Their manner of speaking can sound aggressive and impolite to our ears which she should be aware of in order to not being offended.
- Arabic people also have a strong orientation towards relationships and indirect communication. Especially negative topics will not be directly addressed. Generally they have a high sensitivity and are aware if people sham so the counsellor should be authentically polite, understanding and serene in order to show her competency.
- She should contain herself and not lavish her client with instructions, recommendations and criticism. Sensitivity in the conversation is of high importance.

Nevertheless it is very important to keep in mind that this is a revolving process and that a construct like cultural background has to be questioned again and again, i.e.

The authors know of a man from Cuba, who has been working in Germany for many years with people from the Near East. Once visiting a family he was supposed to counsel he tried to behave as he had always learned and acted and knew was well accepted. He knocked at the door of their flat, took off his shoes and waited to be let in. When the door opened a kind of weird atmosphere filled the room: as this particular family was a very liberal one that had adopted the German customs it was not common to them to take off their shoes in front of the door. In the end the counsellor was able to manage the situation. From that day on he had learned to always question his own constructs.

4.6 Gender roles

Gender as a structural category is important for an individual's perception and processing of the world, the development of identity, the elaboration of behaviour patterns and for the way to interact in everyday life. Independent of time and culture absolute terms regarding the allocation of roles can be found: men have almost always been responsible for production and women for reproduction. As production comes with a higher prestige in society than reproduction, men have had a higher claim to power both in general and over women and children in particular throughout history.

This has been changing over the course of the last 50 years during which women have advanced into men's territory so that today they constitute an essential element of the production part and can control their ability to reproduce. But although they are in theory now entitled to do the same work and live life in the same way as men do, within the system the hierarchical structures still favour men. An example from work life would be that executive positions are still mostly carried out by men, while women get hierarchically stuck behind them. Hence women have to carry both weights, the responsibility of the production (i.e. work) as well as the reproduction (i.e. family).

Also the differences in female and male characteristics that have developed through the roles women and men have taken on in the course of history have asked for different approaches to social life and life in general. Certain characteristics like passivity, emotionality, better ability to communicate, etc. are attributed to women whereas men are said to be stronger, more rational, control-orientated, etc.

These facts show that it can be recommended to distinguish between counselling women and men but also between who is counselling them.

Women and counselling

Women tend to react more sensitively to the setting of the counselling than men which has to be taken into consideration. Factors like location of the centre of consulting (easy to reach, nice neighbourhood, etc), an easy registration, the way of communication in the centre, short waiting periods, a nice atmosphere in the centre, etc. are to be considered when it comes to female clients.

Although there is no sex-specific counselling theory or method and all the existing theoretical approaches and practical methods are used, woman counselling still differs from other forms of counselling. The following topics have to be factored in when it comes to women as counsellors as well as clients:

As a matter of principle it is recommendable that a female client is counselled by a woman, especially when it comes to difficult topics like violence. Between two women the hierarchical structure is not as strong and it is easier for the counsellor to build up a trusting

relationship and emotional contact, which facilitates the communication about burdens, fears and problems.

The downside of the lower hierarchical inclination in the counsellor-client relationship is that female counsellors have to prove themselves to clients more than male counsellors. The trust of advice-seeking people in the counselling process is usually unstable at the beginning and female counsellors stand under a lot of pressure to present themselves as experts in their field. From this point of view male counsellors have an easier position their competence is hardly ever questioned right from the beginning on.

Male counsellors can also be of advantage when it is necessary to show the female client the other sex's point of view ("How would a man react in this situation? How could a man think about this topic?"). This is also valid when it comes to female counsellors and male clients.

Another factor that has to be considered when it comes to female counsellors is that the emotional connection to their female clients can become too strong, especially when it comes to gender-sensitive topics ("I don't get a promotion in my job because I am a woman!") or other topics the counsellor can identify herself with. The counsellor has to be conscious about this problem and hold on to her impartialness in order to being able to help her client with her specific situation.

Men and counselling

Men and their individual problems like fears or the slow change of the masculine identity have only become a topic in counselling over the past decade. But even today men who seek professional advice and help are looked onto sceptically by society. Hence a few things have to be taken into consideration:

There are men who accept their helplessness in a specific situation and who have no problem with seeking professional advice. They can therefore open up more easily to a counsellor and accept recommendations and help.

Others have bigger problems with accepting help, as they don't manage to break out of their male role that dictates them to be strong, manage problems on their own, even if they are in a situation of crisis. Rationalising and control strategies dominate their behaviour and the counsellor is perceived as the "enemy". In this situation the client has to begin to accept that his behaviour is a sign of his fight against his own helplessness. The counsellor can help him by showing that he understands and accepts the client's reactions but that he also wants to get to know "the other man" behind this mask. The client has to be able to feel safe in the counselling environment in order to reduce the negative behaviour and start to work on his issues.

Usually this is easier to do if the counsellor is male, because men who receive counselling often have a disturbed self-image that involves a defensive posture towards women. On the other hand it can sometimes, especially in the context of therapy, be easier for female counsellors to connect with male clients. Men open up easier emotionally to women than to

men, even if the topic is sensitive, like violence against women or children. A case in which the topic “women counsel men” is especially sensitive is when a male client from a country with a patriarchal system is counselled by a female counsellor.

Case example – part two

The Saudi Arabian client Omar B. Has arrived at the counselling office of Anna K. Where she welcomed him according to all the information she had researched before about Arabian culture. He was impressed with her efforts of preparation but said that it wouldn't have been necessary as he was by now sufficiently adapted to Austrian culture and way of thinking. Nonetheless he expressed his gratitude for her considerateness.

Now, after the first few minutes with her new client the counsellor's first impression of him is that he is an intelligent and liberal man who seems to be well adapted to his new home country.

Ten minutes into the conversation Omar B. Is still polite and friendly, but it seems to the counsellor that he doesn't quite open up to her. She has to get every bit of information out of him with a lot of effort, but on the other hand he keeps trying to ask her a lot of questions about her education and vocational experience.

What could be the reason for her client's behaviour and what is the best course of action in this situation?

Possible solution:

As Anna K. already has many years of experience in vocational counselling, she is conscious of the fact that her sex can play a role in other people's perception of her as a counsellor. She had been confronted with situations like this sometimes throughout her career. Clients, especially male ones, sometimes attribute less competence, less experience, more emotionality and therefore less objectivity to the sex “female”. As she knows her own abilities and is confident that she could help Omar B. if he trusted her and opened up, she knows better than to be offended by her client's doubts and decides to answer his question up to a certain degree.

As far as questions about her education and work experience are concerned, she has no problem with providing the requested information. She knows that this will ease the client's uncertainty and will help building a trusting and productive relationship. Therefore she answers Omar B.'s questions but tries to lead him slowly and in a structured way to the actual content of their conversation.

The counsellor starts by telling her client about the further steps of the counselling process, beginning with the structure of the present session. A way of expressing herself could be:

“Just so that you know, the plan for today is to ask you a lot of questions regarding your personal history. This is called an anamnesis and is part of the beginning of each counselling process. The information I will ask you to tell me will help me to fully understand your

current problems. Only if I have full insight into the happenings of the past years and important steps in your life can I try to work out a good solution together with you.”

Then she will also tell him about the general process of counselling that is applied in her specific organisation. This will include information about the duration and charges of each counselling session, a possible potential analysis (including information about its procedure and use), possible problem solving or relaxing techniques (i.e. visualising, mental training, imagination, progressive muscle relaxation, etc) and other important information.

The reason for this way of action is that if clients sense that the counselling process has a formal structure, it gives them security and eases their doubts.

4.7 Attitudes

An attitude is a person's subjective evaluation of certain objects (persons, behaviours, ideas, etc.). Attitudes consciously or unconsciously influence the choice and evaluation of perception contents and also the person's reaction to these contents.

An individual's attitude is linked by associations and conceptual relations (like subordination, placing over, characteristics or contradictions). The relation between two attitudinal objects is an opinion. It can be positive, negative and also neutral.

Attitudes come into existence by developing a relationship between two or more attitudinal objects. This can happen through conditioning, communication, thinking processes, cultural opinions, etc. A change in attitudes can happen in two ways: by admittance of new opinions or changing of existing opinions.

An important aspect of attitudes is their influence on the individual's perception of the world. In this context they act as a selection mechanism. There are two hypotheses regarding this subject that complement each other:

- The hypothesis of perceptual vigilance says that positive stimuli are more easily perceived than neutral or negative ones which means that they are recognised faster and even under adverse circumstances.
- The hypothesis of perceptual defence says that the perception of negative stimuli is more difficult than of neutral or positive ones but only if there are no consequences when the stimuli are not perceived. If the perception is linked to possibilities of action negative stimuli can be perceived as fast as positive ones.

The same principle applies to the selection of information. Individuals prefer information that supports their own decision no matter if positive or negative, although they also prefer to perceive consonant information to avoiding dissonant information even if it's negative.

Attitudes are also an important selection factor with achievements of learning and memory. Many experiments showed that information that is consonant to attitudes is learned more easily and remembered for longer than dissonant information.

4.8 Attributions

Attributions are subjective, non-scientific opinions about causal connections of things. Their primary scope is social orientation and they are inevitable. People get by in their everyday life by making connections that unburden them. One of the most-mentioned examples in the literature for an attribution is the employee who ascribes success to his own proficiency but failure to his employer's mistake. Attributions are most common in the context of unexpected, negative and important events.

People also tend to see their own behaviour as normal and common whereas they rate other's (unwelcome) actions as exceptional and inadequate. A good example everyone can relate to is the difference in behaviour when driving a car as opposed to being a pedestrian. If someone wants to cross the street and no car stops to let him, he will be as annoyed as if he was the one driving a car and some pedestrian just walked across the street.

There are two dimensions of attributions, internal and external control and stability and variability of the subjective causal factors. Through combination of the dimensions arises a matrix with four arrays.

	internal	external
stable	abilities, proficiency	a problem's level of difficulty
variable	effort, volition	luck, chance

Both internal and external factors can be stable or variable. Abilities are stable, effort and volition instable internal causes. If a person succeeds in a task and thinks it is due to his/her abilities, he/she will expect to succeed again in similar tasks in the future. In case he/she thinks the success is due to effort, no such expectation will follow, as effort can change (fatigue, lack of interest the next time).

The same principle applies to external causes: luck and chance has unstable external causes, whereas the complexity of a situation or difficulty of the problem is regarded as stable factors. The level of difficulty of a problem cannot change; it stays constant unlike luck or chance.

Applied to personality this means that people who generally attribute their behaviour to situational factors, behave inconsistently and situation-dependent. If however they attribute their behaviour to internal factors (personality characteristics), they will act consistently and independently to the situation.

Case example – part 3:

The Austrian counsellor Anna K. has carried out the anamnesis of her Saudi Arabian client Omar B. After telling him more about her education and work experience and providing him with information about the structure of the counselling process, she noticed that he started to trust her. He began to answer her questions willingly and openly. The following information arose from the questions:

- Omar B. sees himself as a liberal man. He moved to Austria in order to get his family out of a very patriarchal country, where women have no rights and the structure is too rigid to live life the way a person wants to.
- After he was recommended to a high class Arabian restaurant in the centre of Vienna, he moved to Austria with his family (a wife and two children, a boy of 10 and a girl of 8). His wife works part-time in a centre that offers migrants psycho-social help and his kids are well-integrated in local schools.
- He has been working successfully as a chef in the restaurant for the past five years where he is responsible for a team of five. He has a sous-chef, three apprentice chefs and a man who helps with the dishes and keeps everything in order.
- Recently he's been having problems at work.
 - He isn't satisfied with the new manager whom he described as an "idiot" when Anna K. asked what his problem was with him. His working hours have always been long and exhausting, but the new manager extended business hours and now he rarely gets home before 2 am.
 - He has always liked to work with the apprentices as he enjoys explaining things to people and teaching them. But lately it seems that they lack motivation and make a lot of mistakes which he has to make up for afterwards. He admits to being impatient and cross with them but justifies it with their laziness and lack of accuracy.
 - His work in general he describes as boring as he cooks always the same and doesn't have any variety and apart from contact with his colleagues he doesn't really interact with people which he misses.
 - The client also noticed that it is difficult to get up in the morning to go to work, and he has overslept a few times lately.
 - His only joy nowadays is his family but even his wife told him that he changed throughout the last year and that she rarely sees him laughing or even smiling.

How shall Anna K. interpret the gained information and what could be the correct course of action in this case?

Possible solution

Having the feeling that everything is going wrong, one way to act for human beings is to attribute this to external factors. This is easier than to seek for the reasons in one's own behaviour and acting. One explanation for this is that a person is stressed by the situation that much that the person feels not to have the resources to solve the problems and the only way is to look for external factors causing this.

If such a process is started it very often happens that a person then just sees a part of the things happening and just sees a part of effects of certain causes – especially those effects that fit to the own attitudes.

In our case it could be helpful to ask the client to take over the role of a guest of the restaurant and to ask the guest to describe how he sees this restaurant, especially to describe quality and service. This should facilitate to take over the perception of the others and to help the client to find out if the new manager has brought forward the restaurant at least in some scopes.

A different reason for the problems might also be that the client now needs to do something different because he has been working in that restaurant for too long. Maybe it is necessary for him to work in another profession or field.

Helpful at that point might be an analysis of interests and potentials. This is to find out what he is interested in – and maybe could not see at the moment – and to find out what he is highly trained in and what his strengths are. In the end this could be helpful even to show what it is in the client's work and life now that is important or necessary to him.

4.9 Achievement motivation

Murray (1938) defines human beings as active organisms who not only react to the pressure of situations but seek them out and shape them. He defines two central terms, "need" on the personal side and "press" on the situational side. With "press" he means the target state that a certain situation makes a person hope for. Press evokes a need and a need looks for the corresponding press.

Based on Murray's theory we can distinguish between a "motive" as a person's general disposition (typical behaviour) as opposed to "motivation" as the situational tendency towards a certain action. John Atkinson (1964) postulated two different motives that influence a person's motivation: the need for achievement and the fear of failure. The first motive induces people to seek out achievement situations to prove themselves, the second to avoid such situations.

People that are high need achievers seek moderately challenging situations as they offer an optimal balance between challenge and expected success. In comparison to that, people with strong fear of failure will choose relatively easy tasks with a high probability of succeeding or rather difficult ones where the shame of not succeeding is not high.

Of course it has to be taken into consideration that there are different kinds of achievement motivation for different situation. People who are very good at intellectual tasks but bad at sports for example will show a high need of achievement at their work but avoid athletic performances.

Another aspect of motivation is action control which helps a person to overcome difficulties, impediments, distractions or alternative behavioural options in order to finish an initiated action. Parts of action control are selective attention (focussing one's attention on the important details), sparing information processing (disregarding irrelevant details) and action supporting feelings (i.e. hope, pleasure).

The success of action control depends on whether an individual is more action or state orientated. Action orientation (activity, action control) is present when an individual's attention is allocated evenly to the following four aspects: the target state, the actual state, the discrepancy between the two and the action options to reach the target state. State orientation (hesitation, passivity, etc.) means that the attention is focused too much on one of the aspects. There are different kinds of state orientation:

- Goal-centred: dreaming of the target state without knowing how to reach it
- Failure-centred: wailing about the awkward actual state without really doing anything to change something
- Planning-centred: thinking about the pros and cons of different options of action without implementing any of them
- Success-centred: one-sided concentration on past success

In the context of counselling it is also useful to mention the term self control which makes a person chose the momentarily more unpleasant option that brings a bigger gratification later on instead of the option with the smaller gratification that could be received in the present. An example would be that a person waives the cinema visit (pleasant alternative with smaller gratification) to study (unpleasant alternative with no immediate gratification) in order to pass an exam in a week's time (bigger gratification).

All these factors have to be taken into consideration in a counselling situation as not every person that seeks counselling will do it out of his own motivation. Often they are sent by relatives or friends and don't see their problems themselves. Therefore their motivation to go through with counselling will depend on their personal situation.

4.10 Frustration tolerance

Frustration is the feeling of real or alleged discrimination or missing out when expectations have been disappointed. Hence it is about the real or alleged circumvention of motivational satisfaction. Accordingly frustration tolerance means the ability to endure frustration over a longer period without showing signs of aggression or anger. Furthermore the person has to be able to continue his tasks without a drop in his performance in disappointing situations. This construct is important in this context, as sometimes counselling will not show results right away. The client will need a high frustration tolerance in order to endure the ups and downs the counselling process involves.

It is possible to learn to handle frustrations without negating them, without being aggressive towards oneself or others (these are the three ways of behaving for people with low frustration tolerance). It is possible to measure this with the help of tests, important is to find out on one hand whether a person does experience more or less frustration compared to others and / or on the other hand has better abilities to handle frustration. Everyone who develops a training based on the results of tests has to take these two sources of handling frustration into consideration.

Case example – part 5:

During the process of counselling Omar B. could not see any development for himself. Nothing has improved until today and he feels and acts for example like this:

- Omar B. Always feels treated unjustly and is upset because of little things happening. He complains about all that again and again.
- He tends to act in an inappropriate way and even gets aggressive and maybe uses physical violence.
- He might eat too much or even use drugs because he could not stand the frustration.
- Omar B. might try to avoid doing things he doesn't like to do he connects to failure
- He might feel helpless or even get depressed or gives up very quickly if things don't work as he expected them to

How could the counsellor Anna K. React in this case?

Possible solution:

One solution would be to develop an individual training that helps the client to handle frustration and stress. This training is based on the results of the anamnesis and test.

Examples for single tasks of this training are:

- Write down all those situations of minimal frustration tolerance with the help of easy checklists for three weeks.
- Try to tolerate such frustration for example keep things in disorder. This could be to let the playing tools of your children where they are and try to stay relaxed.
- Write down attitudes that are helpful for you on small cards and put them into your pocket to have them at hand everywhere – like “nice try, take another one”, this could be helpful if something goes wrong.
- Ask yourself if a situation you tried to avoid could be tolerable if you got one million Euro. If you say yes you proved that you can stand it.

These are just some examples to explain the way of a possible solution for the client on the long run. It aims on the change of attitudes and the change of negative appraisals of situations, causes and results.

This example also shows that different constructs sometimes are close to each other or overlap to a certain extent.

4.11 Self Image

All constructs mentioned above are in close connection to the construct "self image" of the people involved in a certain situation, which in counselling are the client and the counsellor. The various existing definitions have in common that it is the perception of oneself and one's attributions. The expression is used in different ways and self image, self perception, self esteem and others point in similar directions.

The way someone sees himself and the way he judges this lead to certain attributions and behaviour.

There are different dimensions that all together build the self image:

- Cognitive dimension: This means biography, experiences, values, ideals, wishes, talents, strengths, social status, physical body etc.
- Emotional-affective dimension: This means the extent to which I like or dislike the person I am
- Evaluative dimension: This dimension is a result of the other two. It is a component that leads from the attitude to the behaviour one “allows” him.

This could be tested with the help of psychological instruments too. These tests are very often based on three categories:

- Value: Positive – negative – ambivalent
- Stability: Value is constant or volatile / fragile
- Congruence: Within a social environment self image and public image should not differ too much from each other in order not to cause persistent or social conflicts.

The basic assumption herein is that everyone tries to achieve a positive stable and congruent self image.

For our case example this could mean if both of the acting persons, client and counsellor are living with a more or less positive stable and congruent self image they are able to act and achieve realistic goals. If not it would be very difficult. This shows how important it is that counsellors have a positive stable and congruent self image. Otherwise they are not able to act independently and appropriately because they have to deal with their own insufficiencies.

If a counsellor is not able act independently and appropriately how should he/she perceive other persons and their behaviour impartially? If the perception is not appropriate how should the anamnesis come to good results and how should insufficient anamnesis lead to a good counselling?

4.12 Communication Types

In this chapter we would like to introduce the eight communication styles according to psychologist F. Schulz von Thun (Friedemann Schulz von Thun: Miteinander reden 2 - Stile, Werte und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung. Differentielle Psychologie der Kommunikation. Rowohlt, Reinbek 1989).

Communication types or styles are constructs too even if this is not mentioned very often in books or journals. There are different classifications and we decided to present these communications styles because of their clear distinction and their usability in trainings for explanation and behavioural change.

The needy-dependent style

Individuals acting this way try to get help from others and tend to seem weak, helpless and almost not able to exist on their own. They give their communication partners the feeling of being strong and competent.

The helpful style

These people present themselves as strong and offer support to others. As long as they handle problems and weakness of others they avoid confrontation with their own problems.

The selfless style

These persons present themselves as unimportant and small. Only in doing something for others they see their own value. They cannot handle refusals and therefore do whatever others want to be done.

The aggressive - demeaning style

Individuals who act this way raise themselves over other human beings and to justify this they concentrate on their failures and weakness. They use this knowledge to degrade others out of fear that their own weakness might be noticed. Very often these persons have a very weak self esteem.

The self - praising style

Persons like this have to fight for their self esteem without an end. They attribute no high value to themselves and therefore always have to demonstrate their value to themselves and others.

The determining - controlling style

People using this style want to control their whole environment. They set up rules and ask all others to keep them. That is their way to protect themselves from unexpected surprise and loss of control.

The self - distancing style

Persons try to keep other persons in a certain distance. They try to keep others physically and emotionally away and they try to look on everything in a very rational way.

The "news scoop" - dramatizing style

Persons like that like to talk about themselves. They have a lot to talk about and can illustrate this to others in a very emotional way. Very often those emotions do not feel true. Talking a lot about themselves they keep everyone away from their true self.

This chapter can only give a short overview of the construct of communication styles. In his book F. Schulz von Thun describes possible ways of development of these behaviours and gives hints how to support people acting in a certain communication style and therefore provides good materials for training.

Conclusion

Coming to the end of describing psychological constructs the authors would like to emphasize again the high importance for every counsellor to be conscious about the impact of psychological constructs in general and their different aspects in particular for the counselling process.

As said before, psychological constructs cannot be seen directly and therefore one has to learn about them with the help of indicators in order to being able to use them as predictors to give advice to clients.

5.1 Communication skills

In its most straightforward sense, effective communication may be understood as occurring when the intended meaning of the sender and perceived meaning of the receiver are the same. Yet the level of skill required for effective communication to occur, belies the simplicity of this definition. After examining studies involving hundreds of large organisations, Goleman (1997) concluded that a high level of individual success at work was characterised by 'emotional intelligence', or skills of social awareness and communication. Typically, these included the ability to motivate and influence others, to give honest feedback sensitively, to empathise and develop relationships, to monitor one's own behaviour, to handle emotions both of self and others and to read interpersonal situations and organisational politics. However it is important to note that emotional intelligence, or the skills of social awareness and communication, can be developed and honed.

A first step in unravelling the complexity of interpersonal communication is to understand the basic process by which communication occurs. Only then can we identify where possible problems can arise and explore skills for enhancing communication and managing such breakdowns.

Human beings are not passive, predictable objects who always interpret meanings and react as they are 'supposed to'. Neither is communication a passive, predictable, one way event. Rather, communication can be viewed as an active process, influenced by all the complexities and ambiguities of human behaviour. It is also fraught with potential points of breakdown. As Clampitt notes,

'We actively construct meanings within a unique vortex that includes the words used, the context of the utterances, and the people involved.'(2005, p.8)

Effective communication is heavily dependent on effective listening, something many of us may not be fully proficient at. An additional purpose of effective listening is to convey interest and respect for the other person. This is crucial if we are to have any ability to help solve problems and satisfy the other person's needs and goals as well as our own.

5.2 Active listening

Effective listening is a specific skill that can be consciously developed and practiced in various workplace situations, whether a meeting, supervision session, telephone conversation or chance meeting in the corridor. Listening is not simply a matter of hearing. Listening is an active psychological rather than passive process, which enables us to attach meaning to all the information we receive. It requires concentration and effort.

As we listen to others we interpret and evaluate the meaning from the verbal and non-verbal information that we receive. We also plan and rehearse our response in preparing to

execute it. While the processes of evaluation, planning and rehearsal occur subconsciously, they can nevertheless interfere with effective listening. It can be important to maintain awareness of this to ensure that the processes that mediate between listening and speaking do not actually interfere with the listening process itself.

Listening Skills

Developing effective listening skills involves two specific steps (Hartley & Bruckman, 2002). These are:

1. To develop the ability to recognise and deal with barriers that prevents you listening with full attention.
2. To develop and use behaviours which help you to listen. Such behaviours can also serve to let the other person know that you are giving them your full attention.

Barriers to Listening

The following list identifies just some possible barriers to effective listening:

Barriers to Listening

- Forming a judgment or evaluation before we understand what is being said, or 'jumping to conclusions'.
- Hearing what we want to hear.
- Tuning out a point of view that differs from our own.
- Formulating and rehearsing our response.
- Being inattentive - thinking about something else entirely.

So what are the keys to effective listening? Careful analysis of skills that are used by people who are recognised as 'good listeners', show that they use a variety of techniques (Hartley & Bruckman, 2002). Some active listening skills are given as follows:

- Stop talking- listen openly to the other person.
- Remove distractions.
- Be receptive to the other person. Demonstrate that you are prepared to listen and accept what they are saying (without automatically agreeing with it). Non-verbal cues can be particularly important here, e.g. maintaining an open posture, appropriate/comfortable eye-contact, leaning slightly forward. These are sometimes known as attending skills.
- Delay evaluation of what you have heard until you fully understand it.
- Try not to be defensive. Try to relax as any tension or impatience is likely to transmit via non-verbal leakage.
- Maintain attention. Respond through your own facial expressions or body gestures such as a nod or a smile without interrupting the other person's flow. This indicates that you are listening, interested and seeking to understand what they are saying and feeling (again, using attending skills).
- Ask the other person for as much detail as he/she can provide; reflect back or paraphrase what the other is saying to make sure you understand it and check for understanding. Paraphrase by asking short non-interrogative questions, using some of what the speaker has said to check your understanding; such as 'so your main concern is...' or 'so what you are saying is...'

Non-verbal Communication Skills

As well as using active listening skills to develop awareness and monitor the non-verbal cues of others, it is important to develop awareness of your own non-verbal cues and their likely impact through close self-monitoring. Some training courses offer videotaping of simulated work situations, and these can be invaluable in developing awareness of characteristic habits or patterns of non-verbal behaviours that you tend to show as well as the possible impact of these (e.g., overly sharp tone of voice mistakenly conveying displeasure; smiling when conveying criticism thus watering down the impact of the verbal message; lack of comfortable eye contact suggesting aloofness or dishonesty).

Use helpful non-verbal communication

- Make eye contact.
- Face the person.
- Be relaxed and open with your posture.
- Sit next to the person you are counselling. Do not sit behind a desk!
- Dress neatly and respectfully.
- Use good body language – nod your head and lean forward.
- Smile.
- Do not look at your watch, the clock or anything other than the person you are talking with.
- Try not to write during a counselling session, unless you are recording key information for the client to take home or for your records. Turn your mobile phone off and never take calls during a counselling session.

Trying to be more practical actively listen and show interest in your client means

- Listen in a way that shows respect, interest and empathy.
- Show the person you are listening by saying “okay” or “mmm.”
- Use a calm tone of voice – not directive.
- Listen to the content of what the person is saying – are there themes?
- Listen to how they are saying it – do they seem worried, angry, etc.?
- Allow the person to express her or his emotions. For example, if she is crying, allow her time for this.
- Never judge a person or impose your own values.
- Keep distractions to a minimum and try to find a private place to talk.
- Do not do other tasks while talking to a person.
- Do not interrupt the person.
- Ask questions or gently probe if you need more information.
- Use open-ended questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no.” For example, “Can you tell me a bit more about that?”

Empathy or empathizing is a more specific skill used in response to an emotional statement.

- Empathy shows an understanding of how the client feels, and encourages the client to discuss the issue further.
- Empathy is different than sympathy. When you sympathize, you feel sorry for a person and look at her or him from your own point of view.
- For example, if the client says, "My baby wants to feed very often and it makes me feel so tired," you could respond by saying, "You are feeling very tired all the time then?" If you respond by saying, "I know how you feel. My baby also wanted to feed often and I was exhausted!" this is sympathizing because attention is on the Peer Educator and her experiences rather than on the client.

We can actually define four characteristics of empathetic listeners:

1. Desire to be other-directed, rather than to project one's own feelings and ideas onto the other.
2. Desire to be non-defensive, rather than to protect the self. When the self is being protected, it is difficult to focus on another person.
3. Desire to imagine the roles, perspectives, or experiences of the other, rather than assuming they are the same as one's own.
4. Desire to listen as a receiver, not as a critic, and desire to understand the other person rather than to achieve either agreement from or change in that person.

Table 1. Skills Associated with Empathy

SKILLS	EXPLANATION
Attending, acknowledging	Providing verbal or non-verbal awareness of the other, i.e., eye contact
Restating, paraphrasing	Responding to person's basic verbal message
Reflecting	Reflecting feelings, experiences, or content that has been heard or perceived through cues
Interpreting	Offering a tentative interpretation about the other's feelings, desires, or meanings
Summarizing, synthesizing	Bringing together in some way feelings and experiences; providing a focus
Probing	Questioning in a supportive way that requests more information or that attempts to clear up confusions
Giving feedback	Sharing perceptions of the other's ideas or feelings; disclosing relevant personal information
Supporting	Showing warmth and caring in one's own individual way
Checking perceptions	Finding out if interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate
Being quiet	Giving the other time to think as well as to talk

SOURCE: Pickering, Marisue, "Communication" in EXPLORATIONS, A Journal of Research of the University of Maine, Vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 1986, pp 16-19.

5.3 Reflecting skills

There are some kind of questions that can be described such as reflective questions or statements that are really comments made before another type of question, which serve to soften the questioning as well as demonstrate to the speaker that they are being well and truly listened to. They typically constitute a short summary of what the other person has said, and may also be considered as a type of paraphrasing or constructive feedback.

Summaries usual occur several times within a problem solving session. Effective summaries may be used to accomplish the following (1) to restate the points already covered; (2) to show the interviewer understands the ideas expressed up to the point when the summary occurs; (3) to check and refine ideas; and (4) to separate what has been covered from problems that have not been uncovered.

There are a number of guidelines toward giving feedback effectively, i.e. so that it can be used constructively rather than incurring overly defensive reactions. The following points are recommended by Levinson (quoted in Goleman, 1996 p.153):

- Be Specific: Feedback should highlight specific events or examples rather than just general advice. It should also be specific about what the person did. (Avoid generalizations i.e. words such as 'never', 'always', 'all' etc).
- Offer a solution: Feedback should suggest ways of resolving any problems. There is little or no point in offering negative feedback where there is no way that a person can improve.
- Deliver the feedback face to face.
- Be sensitive: This is simply a reminder that feedback, even negative feedback, should be delivered in a positive way rather than simply attacking the other person.

Further **guidelines** are given by Wertheim (2005)

- Be problem oriented, not people oriented: Feedback should focus on issues, not the person since the individual usually has little control over personality. It is important that we refer to what a person does rather than to what we think he is.
- Be descriptive, not evaluative: People more readily receive information if the sender describes what happened and communicates the personal effect it had, as opposed to evaluating its goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness.
- Own rather than disown the feedback. Use "I have a problem with your work", not "others have been complaining".
- Check with the other, that they understand what has been said. Check whether they are willing and able to accept it. One way of checking understanding is to have the

receiver try to rephrase the feedback. No matter what the intent, feedback is often threatening and thus subject to considerable distortion or misinterpretation.

- Be open to hear new and possibly disconfirming information: Non-verbal behaviours such as tone of voice, facial expression, posture and gestures, as well as choice of words are crucial here.
- Be Validating, not invalidating, and supportive. It is important to acknowledge the other person's uniqueness and importance.
- Feedback should be helpful to the receiver and directed toward behaviour which the receiver can do something about. A person gets frustrated when reminded of some shortcoming over which he has no control. Ideally feedback should be solicited, not imposed.
- Feedback is useful when well timed (soon after the behaviour; depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, and so forth). Excellent feedback presented at an inappropriate time may do more harm than good.
- It involves the amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount we would like to give. To overload a person with feedback is to reduce the possibility that he may be able to use what he receives effectively. When we give more than can be used, we are more often than not satisfying some need of our own rather than helping the other person.
- Still further characteristics of effective feedback beyond those mentioned, are offered by McClure (2005, P.9):
- Feedback should be regular.
- It should be reciprocal.
- It should include recommendations for improvement.
- It should deal with decisions and action rather than assumed intentions or interpretations.
- It should be based on information which is objective by first hand observation.

Summarizing some of the most beneficial outcomes of reflecting in counseling process we would say that reflecting:

- Provides feedback to the person and enables the person to confirm that she or he has been listened to, understood and accepted
- Helps promote discussion
- Shows understanding of the person's story
- Helps you check if you have understood
- Provides a good alternative to always responding with questions
- Can reflect the content of what is being said, as well as the feelings the person has about the situation
- For example, after the person talks for awhile about her or his feelings and situation, you can say, "So I sense that you feel _____ because _____." Or, "I'm hearing that when _____ happened, you didn't know what to do."

5.4 Conflict Management and counselling

Regardless of where you work, conflict is inevitable because of the wide varieties of backgrounds, and cultures. "However, because it can be both a positive and negative force, people should not strive to eliminate all conflict, only that which has disruptive effects on the organization's efforts to achieve its goals" (Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, and Konopaske, 2006). Conflict can come from many different sources but the most "common causes involve differences between two individuals' or groups' values, attitudes, needs, and expectations" (Conerly and Tripathi, 2004).

Conflict is Inevitable

Conflict should never be eliminated. People are different. Each of us see things different and that diversity is one of the many pleasures of life. We all have different backgrounds, incomes, cultures, family, training, and personalities. No two people are the same and each person will react differently to any given situation. If you eliminate conflict then you will be eliminating people's differences. The best way to deal with conflict is to learn how to have effective and positive conflict. Top managers accept that conflict comes with the job, and should take the time to master resolving differences and working through the important issues.

Conflict Management Styles

Selecting a conflict management style that is right for you depends on how you would answer some questions from appendix A of this document. No style is wrong, and each situation could be dealt with in different ways. According to different journals, and books there are five different styles of conflict management as shown in Figure 1.

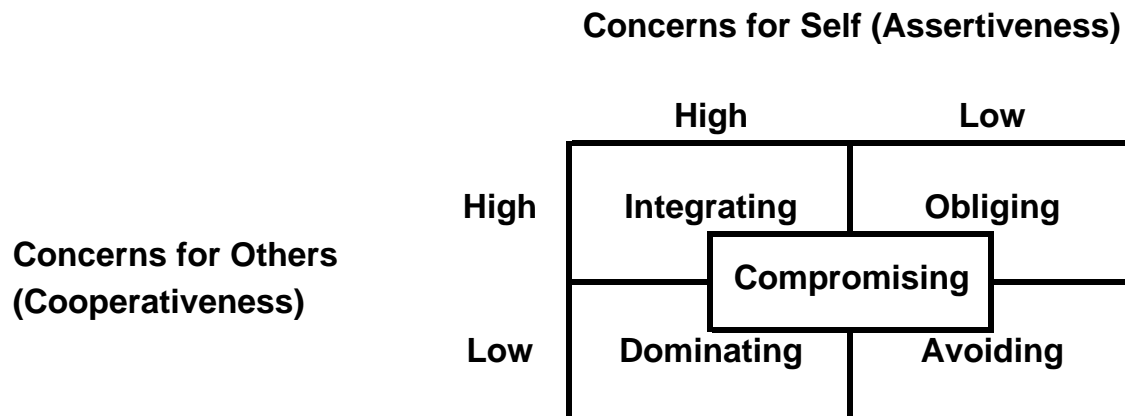


Figure 1: *The Five Approaches of Conflict Management (Chan, Monroe, Ng, Tan et al, 2006)*

Integrating Conflict Style

Having an integrating style is considered as having high concern for self and others. It is also known as a problem solving style. “It involves collaboration between the parties, that is, openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to both parties” (Rahim, 1992). Integrating focuses on gathering and organizing information and it encourages creative thinking and welcomes different outlooks.

Obliging Conflict Style

Using an obliging style is “when individuals sacrifice their own needs and desires in order to satisfy those of other parties” (Hartwick, and Barki, 1999). Some characteristics of an obliging manager will want to be accepted and liked by others, think conflict should be avoided in favour of harmony, set aside or compromise goals, keep their own ideas to themselves, and they believe people cannot deal with conflict without damaging relationships. This style is good to use when one is willing to give up something with the hope of getting some benefit from the other when needed.

Dominating Conflict Style

Using a dominating style of conflict management is only appropriate “when the issues involved in a conflict are important to the party or an unfavourable decision by the other party may be harmful to this party” (Rahim, 1992). It is not good practice to use this style when conflicts are more complex and there is a lot of time to come up with a good solution. This style is also labelled as competing and is identified as a “win-lose orientation or with forcing behaviour to win one’s position” (Rahim, 1992).

Compromising Conflict Style

Using a compromising style is “useful when the goals of the conflicting parties are mutually exclusive or when both parties are equally powerful and have reached an impasse in their negotiation process” (Rahim, 1992). This style should not be used with complex problems needing a problem-solving solution. In addition, this style should not be used when dealing with conflict of values. This style is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative; the goal is to find the middle ground.

Avoiding Conflict Style

Avoiding conflict is considered as being “low in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness” (Eilerman, 2006). This type of person is both willing to give up personal goals and relationships. When using this style a person knows there is a conflict, but decides to ignore it. This type of situation will put both sides at a lose/lose situation. “A person who consistently takes an avoiding approach to dealing with disagreements has likely experienced life events which reinforced the notion that conflict is bad” (Eilerman, 2006).

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Appendices

Counselling and Communication Skills Checklist		
Skill	Specific Strategies, Statements, Behaviors	(v)
Skill 1: Use helpful non-verbal communication	• Make eye contact.	
	• Face the person (sit next to her or him) and be relaxed and open with posture.	
	• Use good body language (nod, lean forward, etc.).	
	• Smile.	
	• Do not look at your watch, the clock or anything other than the client.	
	• Do not write during the session.	
	• Other (specify)	
Skill 2: Ask open-ended questions	• Use open-ended questions to get more information.	
	• Ask questions that show interest, care and concern.	
	• Other (specify)	
Skill 3: Actively listen and show interest in your client	• Nod and smile. Use encouraging responses (such as “yes,” “okay” and “mmm hmm”).	
	• Use a calm tone of voice that is not directive.	
	• Allow the client to express emotions.	
	• Do not interrupt.	
	• Other (specify)	
Skill 4: Reflect back what your client is saying	• Reflect emotional responses back to the client.	
	• Other (specify)	

Skill 5: Show empathy, not sympathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate empathy: show an understanding of how the client feels. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sympathy. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other (specify) 	
Skill 6: Avoid judging words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid judging words such as “good,” “bad,” “correct,” “proper,” “right,” “wrong,” etc. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words that build confidence and give support (e.g., recognize and praise what a client is doing right). 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other (specify) 	
Skill 7: Help your client set goals and summarize each counseling session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the client to come up with realistic “next steps.” 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize the main points of the counseling session. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other (specify) 	

Conflict Styles Assessment and Scoring

The proverbs listed below can be thought of as descriptions for different strategies to resolve conflicts. Read each proverb carefully and then using the following scale, indicate how typical each proverb is of your actions in a conflict. (Conerly & Tripathi, 2004)

5 = Very typical of the way I act in conflict.

4 = Frequently typical of the way I act in a conflict.

3 = Sometimes typical of the way I act in a conflict.

2 = Seldom typical of the way I act in a conflict.

1 = Never typical of the way I act in a conflict.

1	It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel.
2	If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him or her do as you think.
3	Soft words win hard hearts.
4	You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours.
5	Come now and let us reason together.
6	When two quarrel, the person who keeps silent first is the most praiseworthy.
7	Might overcome right.
8	Smooth words make smooth ways.
9	Better half a loaf than no bread at all.
10	Truth lies in knowledge, not in majority opinion.
11	He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day.
12	He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee.
13	Kill your enemies with kindness.
14	A fair exchange brings no quarrel.
15	No person has the final answer but every person has a piece to contribute.
16	Stay away from people who disagree with you.

17	Fields are won by those who believe in winning.
18	Kind words are worth much and cost little.
19	Tit for tat is fair play.
20	Only the person who is willing to give up his or her monopoly on truth can ever profit from the truth that others hold.
21	Avoid quarrelsome people, as they will only make your life miserable.
22	A person who will not flee will make others flee.
23	Soft words ensure harmony.

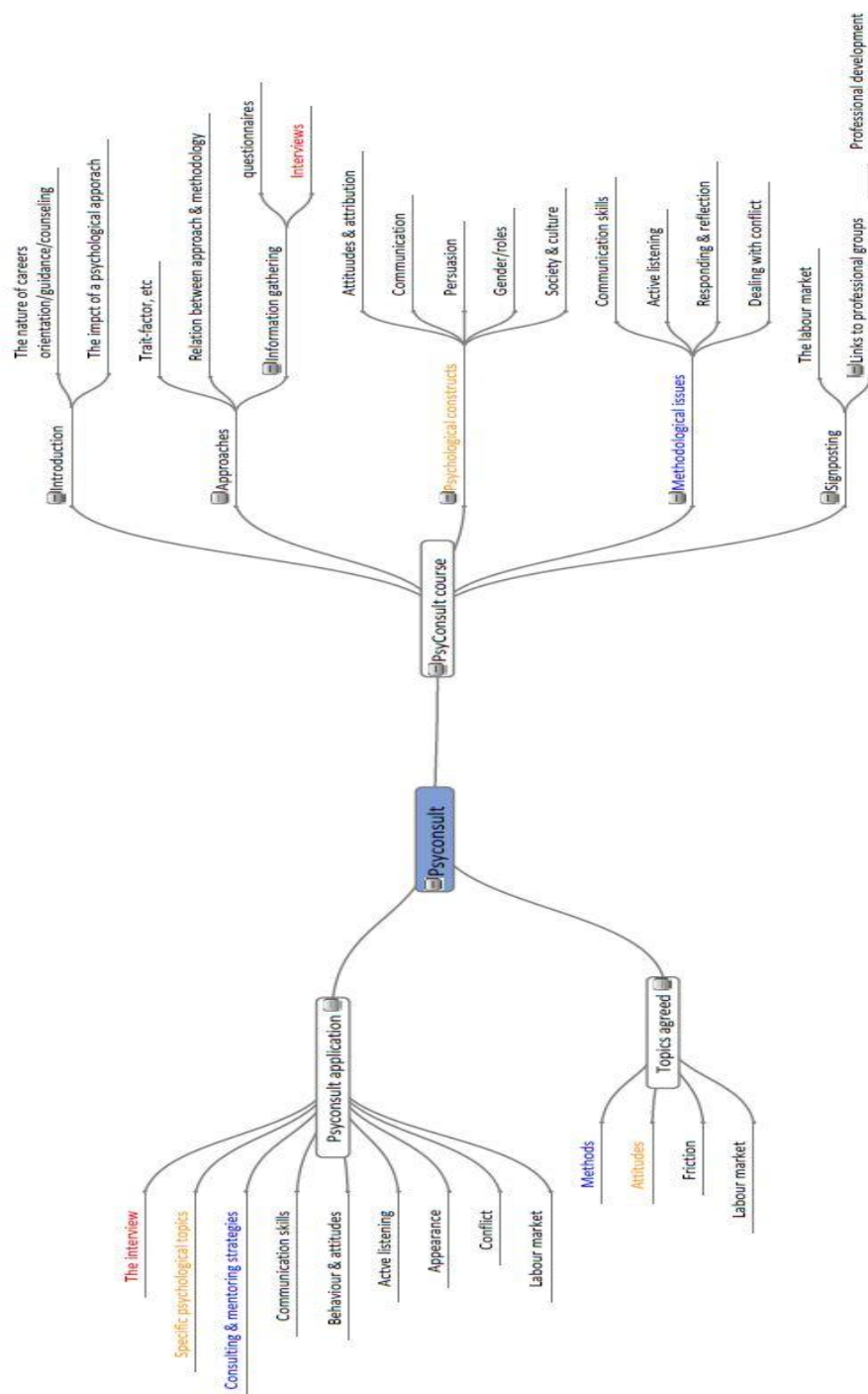
Conflict Styles Assessment and Scoring

24	One gift for another makes good friends.
25	Bring your conflicts into the open and face them directly; only then will the best solution be discovered.
26	The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them.
27	Put your foot down where you mean to stand.
28	Gentleness will triumph over anger.
29	Getting part of what you want is better than not getting anything at all.
30	Frankness, honesty, and trust will move mountains.
31	There is nothing so important you have to fight for it.
32	There are two kinds of people in the world, the winners and the losers.
33	When one hits you with a stone, hit him or her with a piece of cotton.
34	When both give in halfway, a fair settlement is achieved.
35	By digging and digging, the truth is discovered.

Transfer your ratings for each proverb to the appropriate cell in the table below. Then add down the columns to obtain a total for each category.

Withdrawing	Forcing	Smoothing	Compromising	Confronting
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.
26.	27.	28.	29.	30.
31.	32.	33.	34.	35.
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total

Psychological Course Constructs Mapping



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