DISH
Digital Innovation and Skills Hub

Study Unit 2

Core Skills

Core skills Outline

- Communication and action skills
- Mind skills
- Communication process and patterns
- Collaborative working relationships
- Internal frames of reference of members in the community

Study Unit Duration

This Study Session requires a minimum of 2 hours of formal study time.

You may spend an additional 4 hours for revision.

Introduction

This chapters covers, Communication and action skills, mind Skills, Communication process and patterns, Collaborative Working Relationships, and internal frames of reference of members in the community.

Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 2

Upon completion of this study unit, you should be able to:

2.1   Clearly describe the core skills that are necessary for passing over vital communication in community mental health.

2.2   Summarise the different working relationships in community mental health.

2.3   Explain internal frames of reference and their use in creating a free emotional climate during a helping relationship.

2.1   Communication and Action Skills
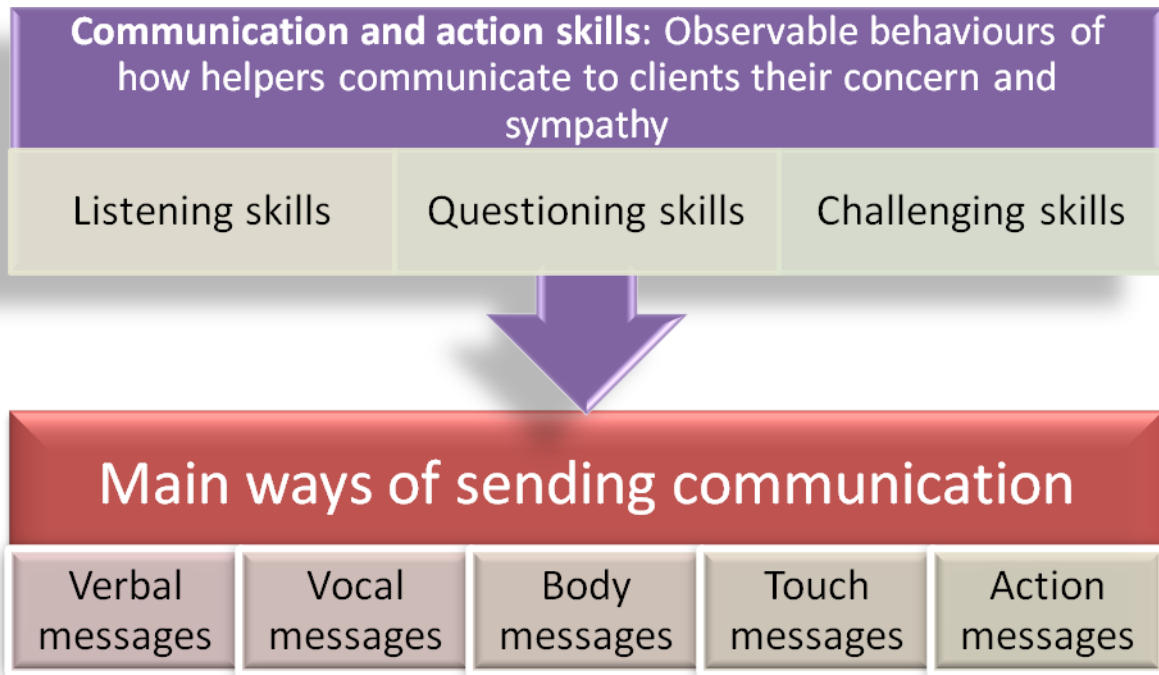
These involve **observable behaviors**- how helpers communicate to clients their concern and sympathy and they include:

- Skills of listening in a session:

- Skills of questioning

- Skills for challenging

Communication approaches

- Verbal communication: messages that are communicated with words

- Vocal communication: messages communicated through the use of voice (tone, volume, emphasis etc)

- Body messages: relating to eye contact and nature of gaze, facial expression, body posture, hand and other gestures, physical distance and proximity

- Touch communication: messages sent through touching part of the body, how gentle or otherwise they are and how that was received, also gesturing touch without actually touching the person

- Action messages: messages when one is not face to face e.g. emails, text messages etc

2.2   Mind Skills

These involve in utilizing thoughts and mental processes to assist the counseling process
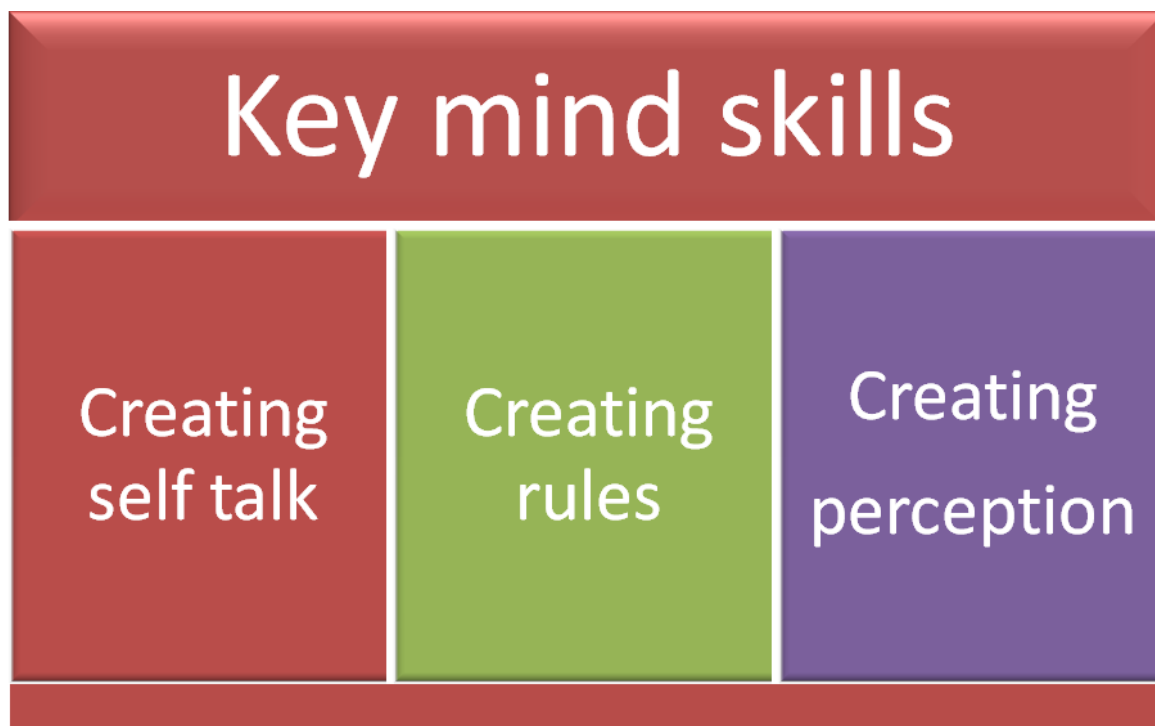
Creating self-talk: helping people to understand they have choices in a difficult situation by making self-statements that affirm their strength, skills, and support factors.

Creating rules: to replace unrealistic rules that people have set for themselves (e.g. I shouldn't show any emotions at any time), with rules that are realistic and helpful (I can choose to show appropriate reactions if needed).

Creating perception: helping people to test the reality of their perception, distinguishing facts and inferences and hence making their inferences as accurate as possible.

Quick think Exercise

Communication skills

1. List and describe the five communication skills

2. List and describe the three key mind skills

Activity Area

2.3 The helping relationship

Helping relationships are different, in some instances it is possible to offer a structured 45-50 minutes of work with clients, in others it could be part of a longer session whilst offering support with bereavement or other stressful events, in yet other situations it could be a brief 15-20 minutes whilst assisting with practical needs (e.g. accompanying people to appointments). It is therefore important to be flexible when using counseling skills relevant to the context

2.3.1 Dimensions of relationship for helping

These are human connections between helpers and clients, during face to face contact and also before and after face to face contact (in one another's heads). It is important to ensure the right message is given to the client at all times and through all communication modes.

Communication could be verbal or non-verbal and it is two ways (client sends and receives messages)

Clients and helpers may have relationships that precede their current contact and hence may already have impressions of each other, the relationship is therefore a constant forming and re-forming of impression.

Clients may constantly be weighing how far they should trust and/or open up

Clients will also continue to think about the helper and the session between contact, the helper might communicate via emails, phone calls, text messages between sessions too

2.3.2 Core conditions of helping relationship

The following conditions are core and for therapeutic engagement

Empathy: this refers to the capacity to comprehend and identify with the client's inner world in relation to:

- ✓ A single statements

- ✓ Several statements

- ✓ An entire session

- ✓ A series of sessions

- ✓ Empathetic climate

Ideally the professional would create an empathetic emotional climate, through their genuine curiosity and efforts to reach out to their clients. Listening to and responding to client's statements and observing, discriminating, resonating and checking out meanings of communication (both verbally expressed and non-verbal).

Counsellor's responding process	
Observing & Listening	Observe and listen to all of the client's communication (communicated verbally, through vocal messages and Body language too)
Resonating	Feels some of the emotions expressed by the client
Discriminating	Sift through what is of importance to the client and the rest to formulates an appropriate response
Communicating	Communicates a response that encapsulates the understanding of the clients inner world as well as external communication
Checking	Enquiring if the response or observation was accurate

The main objective is ensure that the client feels supported and enabled to continue to get in touch with their inner world (experiences)

Unconditional Positive Regard**:** this relates to the level of positive regard and the fact that this regard is not conditional.

- ✓ Being valued for their potential (instead of being rejected for failing) is the foundation for positive change

- ✓ Self-awareness of what is preventing unconditional regard and knowing how to address these (e.g. supervision) is crucial

- ✓ The inability of helpers to feel/show unconditional positive regard reflects a gap in their professional development.
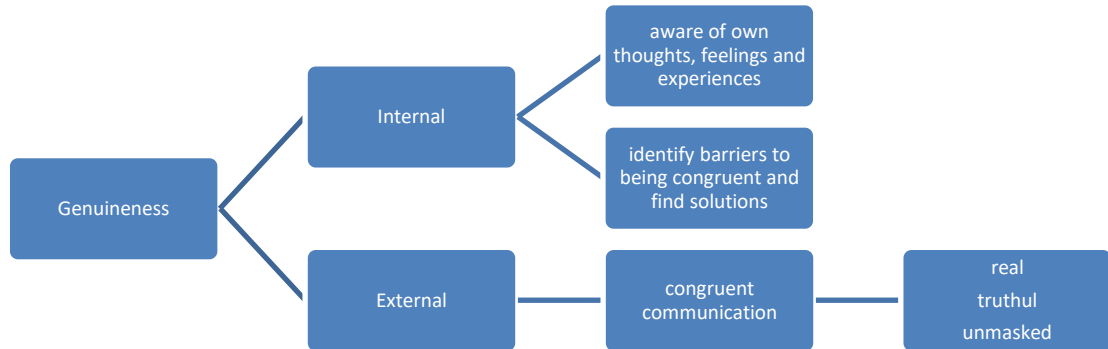
understanding of mental health

unconditional positive regard

understanding of human frailty

level of regard

unconditionality of regard

Liking
Caring
Warmth

non-judgemental acceptance of the client's experiencing and disclosure as their subjective reality

Respect and value a deeper core of clients and identify with their potential for change
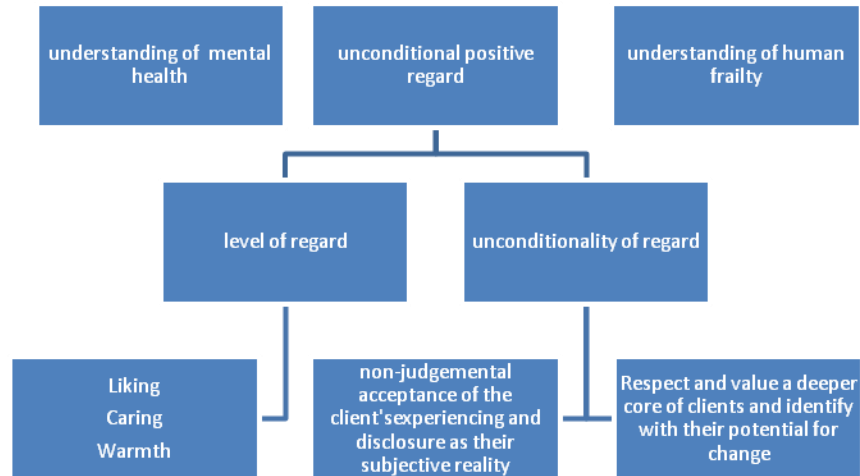
Main objective: to respect client's separateness and accept their unique differences enabling them to acknowledge and fully experience their thoughts and feelings

2.3.3 Genuineness

- This involves honesty and sincerity in communicating congruent messages i.e. verbal, vocal, text and bodily communications send consisted caring messages. NB not how they think they should be but how they are.

- However congruence (genuineness) doesn't mean revealing everything either. Personal disclosures should always be to facilitate the therapeutic engagement and not to benefit the helper.

- Self-awareness helps, helpers to understand and acknowledge situations/issues in themselves that are not ideal for the helping relationship.

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                                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                                    │  aware of own       │
                                    │  thoughts, feelings │
                         ┌──────────│  and experiences    │
              ┌──────────┤ Internal │─────────────────────┘
              │          └──────────┐  ┌─────────────────────┐
┌─────────────┤                     │  │ identify barriers to│
│ Genuineness │                     └──│ being congruent and │
└─────────────┤                        │ find solutions      │
              │          ┌──────────┐  └─────────────────────┘
              └──────────┤ External │──┬──────────────┐      ┌──────────┐
                         └──────────┘  │ congruent    │──────│ real     │
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Quick think exercise

Core Conditions for helping

- What do you understand by the term empathy? Give examples of what it is and then what it is not

- How would the qualities of genuineness and unconditional positive regard enable you to create a safe and supp[Activity Area]ssion for your client?

2.4   Communication process and patterns

Helping relationships are based on two-way communication to help clients change and move on. Sending and receiving, evaluating, and interpreting communication is a continuous process.

A helpful communication pattern is signified by the collaboration in developing workable goals.

2.4.1 Communication patterns

Helpful patterns

- Clients and helpers reward each other through the client's engagement and listening, warmth and openness to engage in the therapeutic process including the client's nonverbal gestures such as smiles, nodes etc

- Building of mutually reinforcing communication patterns which enhance the helping process (e.g. acknowledging helpful practice of helper or acknowledging positive changes in the client)

- Collaborative towards the goal of the engagement e.g. helper's positive and empathic responses result in honest-self exploration which will in turn lead to more empathic responses and so on

Unhelpful patterns

- Helpers demanding too much personal information too soon or inappropriately, could lead to client withdrawal

- Unskilled (unconfident) helpers might refrain from asking crucial information

- Domineering helpers might inhibit clients from opening up

- Talkative helpers might intimidate quiet clients

Helpers who take control by constantly asking questions rather than allow clients to volunteer information about themselves might inhibit free and open flow of conversation (turning session into Q & A)
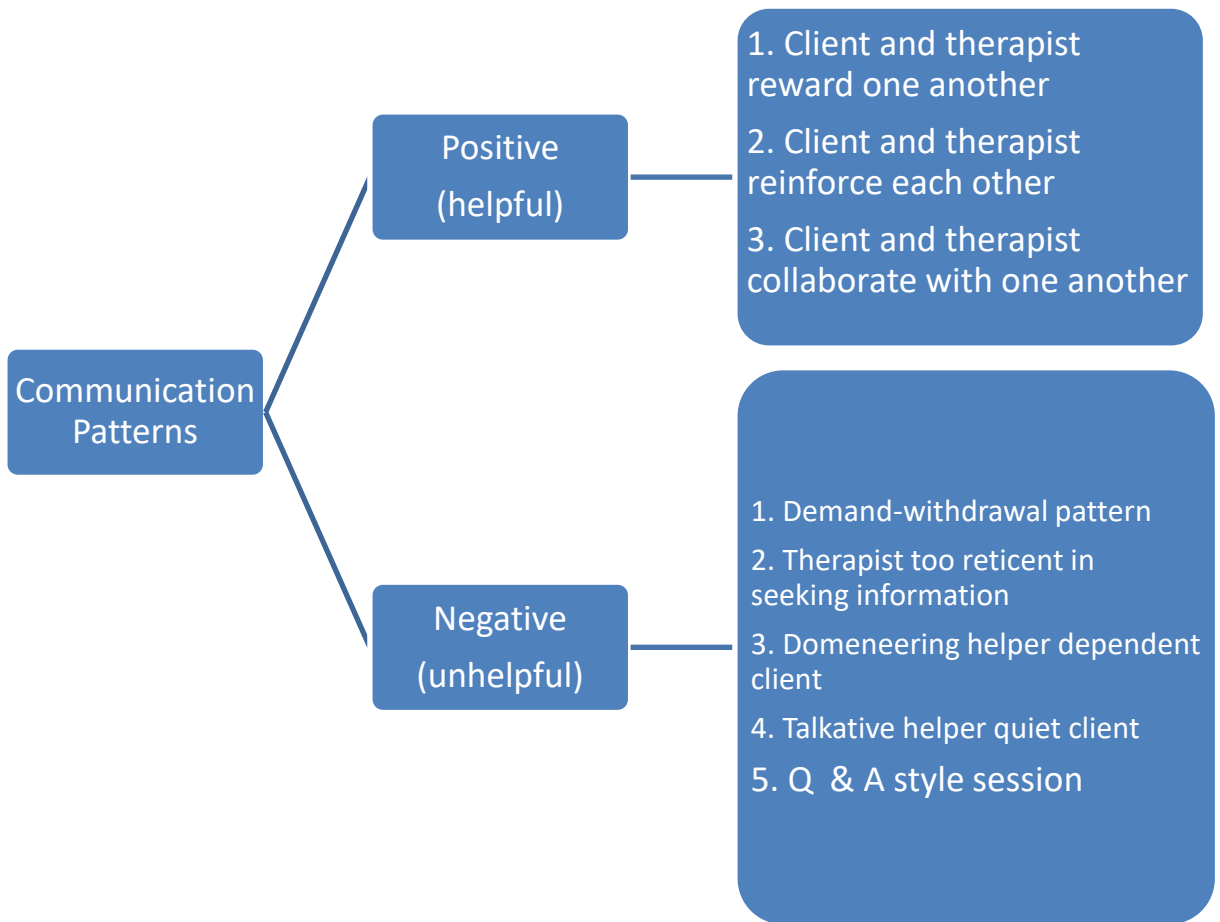
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Activity Area

Quick think exercise

Reflecting on your own communication style in different settings please list:

- ✓ Patterns that you consider helpful

- ✓ Patterns that are less helpful

Now list strategies that would help you improve you communication patterns

Communication Patterns

Positive (helpful)

1. Client and therapist reward one another
2. Client and therapist reinforce each other
3. Client and therapist collaborate with one another

Negative (unhelpful)

1. Demand-withdrawal pattern
2. Therapist too reticent in seeking information
3. Domeneering helper dependent client
4. Talkative helper quiet client
5. Q & A style session

2.5 Collaborative working relationship

A good measure of a successful helping relationship is the extent to which the relationship is considered to be a collaborative relationship. This is based on a positive response to the following questions:

✓ Does the client consider themselves to have been understood by the helper, within the confines of the context they meet one another?

✓ Have they struck an emotional bond that is positive?

✓ Are the client and helper working towards a mutual goal?

✓ Is the client comfortable with the approach and methods used by the helper?

2.5.1 The Helping Process

Although it is clear that the helping process happens in different contexts and with many different goals, it is helpful to have a set of skills throughout the process. The helping relationship is a process of change that takes place through time and change happens at different stages and hence each stage requires different skills to help facilitate the achievement of the desired goal.

Relating: the main task of the stage is establishing a collaborative working relationship.

Pre session:

✓ How letters, emails, phone calls and other communications are handled

✓ How ready and prepared the room/setting is to receive clients to a calm and safe place

Start of session:

✓ Creating an emotionally safe context for clients to open up about their reasons for wanting to access help

✓ Appropriate level of basic information gathering

✓ Allowing clients to get their problems off their chest

Mid session

1. Active listening to identify and summarise the problem
2. If more than one problem is presented to help client on a plan of how to address these (prioritise)

End of session

✓ Ensure any activities between sessions are agreed and made clear to the client

✓ Ensure next session is booked and client is made aware (or arrangements for making the next appointment is clear)

2.5.2 Understanding

The main task of sessions once the client is engaged and comfortable in the context, is to clarify and build on the understanding of the chosen situation. Helper can:

✓ Give the client opportunities to fully describe the situation, encouraging them and enlightening them to think that they can be enabled to manage the situation

✓ Through active listening and questioning clients can be enabled to describe their relationship to the problem, physically and emotionally

✓ Explore coping methods/strategies attempted before

✓ Explore communication patterns they may have developed with significant others

Role plays can be a good way of eliciting actual vocal, verbal and bodily communications employed in relation to the problem.

Using the insight gained from the information elicited helpers can:

✓ Go into the mental process looking at any, self talk, rules or perceptions that had an impact on the problem including those that contribute to maintaining the problem

✓ This can be followed (as appropriate) by the provision of feedbacks and challenges

✓ And following this helper can summarise the ground covered and understandings reached and check accuracy with client inviting them to make any clarification, addition etc

2.5.3 Changing

The main task of this phase is for clients to change so that they are able to deal with problem situation more effectively. Helpers assist by setting goals and strategies to communicate, act and think differently. Additionally helpers develop strategies to maintain helpful changes through:

✓ Facilitating problem-solving: this refers to the assistance to clarify and set goals and then explore various options and generate approaches to implement a defined plan.

✓ Improving communication/action approach: helpers assist clients to identify communication and thought goals, concentrating on not just what clients want to achieve but the communication they want to avoid as well. This is followed by assistance to develop plans to attain communication and thought goals. however the following should be avoided:

> ➢ Exerting Control over clients
> ➢ Taking responsibility for their client's problems
> ➢ Assume the role of decision maker

Instead helpers should

> ⇒ Ensure autonomy enabling clients to 'own' their problem
>
> ⇒ Give them confidence in their own resources for handling their problems

✓ Coaching: To encourage clients to implement jointly formulated strategies, verbal, body and vocal messages as well as self-talk and behaviour, helping them to rehearse and enact in their life. Helpers can also assist in challenging any exaggerated expectations, and replace them with more realistic options.
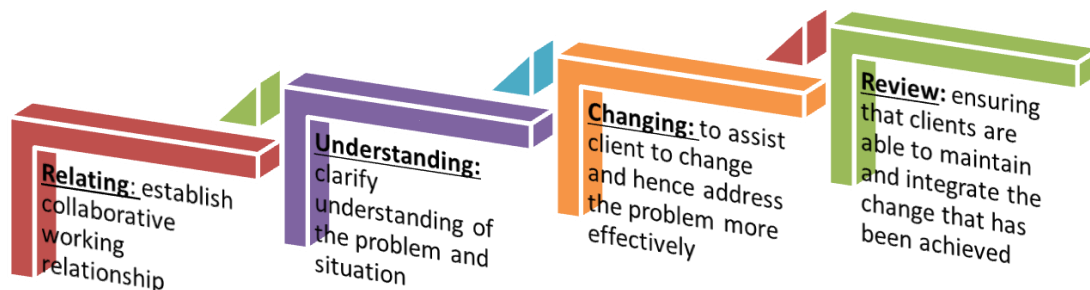
Quick think exercise

The helping process

Describe and put the following steps of the helping process in order according to the stage at which they take place during the helping process.

➢ Change

➢ Understand

➢ Relate

2.5.4 Reviewing

This is a crucial phase where helpers' input not just in the present but also into the future, by encouraging clients to assume responsibility for changing their behaviour both now and in the future. An important element of this is helping clients to review the goals attained, the benefits gained and lessons learned as a result.

Relating: establish collaborative working relationship

Understanding: clarify understanding of the problem and situation

Changing: to assist client to change and hence address the problem more effectively

Review: ensuring that clients are able to maintain and integrate the change that has been achieved

ASSESSMENT 1

What aspect of the process do the following statements represent?

a) Asking the client to introduce the issues and concerns that have brought them here and giving them information about the approaches that the helper would use.

b) Summarising segments of conversations to identify the problem area and helping the client to focus on the one they want to prioritise

c) Asking a client to describe a situation more fully and clarify points further, including how they have tried to cope in the past.

d) Asking clients to describe their thoughts, actions and feeling when certain events occur.

e) A short role play inviting clients to demonstrate exactly how they communicate certain feelings and reactions

f) Exploring options to attain goals already identified with the client

g) Jointly developing a verbal request to ask someone to stop hurting them (the client) and working on the desired tine, timing and body language

h) Helping the client to develop a more helpful self talk and rehearsing it in the safe emotional climate of the session.

2.6 Understanding the internal frame of reference of members of your Community

The single most important skill in a helping relationship is an enhanced quality of listening. It is crucial to monitor and be aware of your listening skills all the time. Listening well is a crucial element of creating an emotional climate that enables clients to feel safe and talk openly.

Many of the components of creating client/helper collaborative working relationships come out of good quality listening.

The extent to which there is a successful collaborative relationship depends on a positive answers to these questions:

- ✓ Does the client feel understood by the helper?

- ✓ Is there some kind of positive emotional bond between client and helper?

- ✓ Are the client and helper working towards a mutual goal?

- ✓ Is the client comfortable with the approach and methods used by the helper?

Without good quality listening all of these are impossible to attain.

2.7 What is active listening?

There is a difference between hearing your clients and listening to them

Hearing: involves the awareness of sounds and recognitions of these sounds

Listening: involves understanding of the meaning of the sounds heard, it involves:

- Hearing sounds

- Understanding words

- Being sensitive to the tone of voice

- Noticing body language

- Accounting for the message being communicated within the social context

However listening well isn't always being the optimum rewarding listener or an active listener.

Both receiving and sending information is entailed in active listening:

- Accurately understanding what is being communicated

- Showing that the message has been heard and understood

For example if a person is telling you that they have just had an unexpected bereavement, as an active listener you should communicate appropriate emotions that demonstrate your empathy with your client.

Inability to listen actively will impact on our use f other skills: e.g. you can't ask appropriate questions if you don't listen actively.

2.7.1 Conditions for active listening

Awareness of inner thoughts

In any person-to-person helping conversation four kinds of listening are taking place:

- Helper listens to client

- Client listen to helper

- Client listens to their inner thoughts

- Helper listens to their inner thoughts

The quality of helpers listening to their inner reality is vital to good listening to others. If a helper listens to herself poorly or excessively they listen less well to their clients.

When they don't listen well or are unaware of their thoughts and feelings, they may not respond effectively or appropriately to what they hear.

If they hear their inner thoughts and feelings excessively then they will not be able to attend to what their client is bring to them.

Respect and Acceptance

Helpers should accept that their clients are individuals with rights to their own rights to their thoughts and feelings. As any human being they are fallible and possess the qualities that could result in happiness or suffering for themselves or others. In this context respect means:

- Suspending judgement about perceived goodness or badness

- Being able to look at others for the unique individuals that they are

- and allow them to grow and develop in their own terms without exploiting them or attempting to control them

this doesn't mean helpers agree with everything that their clients say, it just mean that they are secure enough to accept what the clients say as being their version of reality.

Being Psychologically Present to the Client

This entails being dedicated to creating an atmosphere that allows clients to express what they are experiencing and how it is affecting them. Being 'all there' means:

- Physical presence

- Gathered thoughts

- Gathered senses

- Gathered emotions

Often it is the absence of defensiveness that leads to an accepting attitude to clients and to oneself.

<u>Understanding the Internal Frame of Reference</u>

Active listening is understanding the difference between:

- ✓ The personal boundaries

- ✓ Differences in views

- ✓ Understanding the ability of others to have views about you

- ✓ Your views of you and my views of me are internal realities whereas your views of me and my views of you are external realties and the skills required here are the ability to listen to and understand and then reflect the internal frame of reference as opposed to the often external frame of reference.
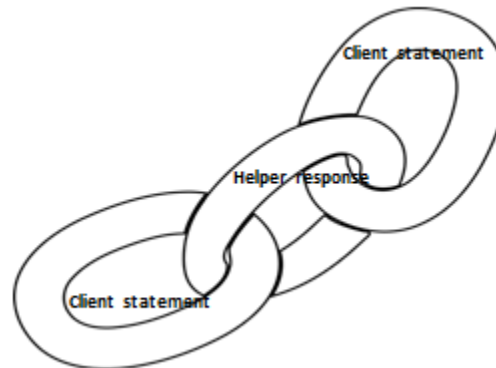
Helpers should always consciously choose to respond with understanding of the clients internal frame of reference ('walking in their shoes', 'from under their skin' and 'seeing through their lenses'), this enables the client to decide of the course and direction of the work, if helpers block them by responding with statements informed by the external frame of reference then the process is interrupted.

Quick think exercise

Below are examples of responses to statements from clients

Assessment

Identifying internal frames of references of clients

Client: I got so angry and snapped at my in-laws when they bought those expensive toys that my on whined about. I mean what happens when he asks for the next new version soon?

Helper: surely there were other ways you could have responded to your in-laws

Or

Helper: You seem to be worried that your son is not going to learn the value of living within your means

---

Client: I was afraid he would get angry so I left it at that

Helper: you are such a gentle person

Or

Helper: you are unsure of how he will take your comments in those circumstances

Quick think exercise

Below are excerpts from helping situations, three potential responses are provided for each statement. Write IN or EX by each response to indicate whether it reflects internal or external perspectives.

1. **Client: some of my friends are on drugs and I have tried it, but I am worried that I might get hooked on a habit I can't afford.**

   (a) I wouldn't take drugs if I were you

   (b) How did you like it when you tried speed?

   (c) You're scared about starting an expensive habit that you might not be able to quit

2. **Client: I have got my first ever job interview coming up and I am afraid of messing it up.**

   (a) This is a case of performance anxiety

   (b) You are worried about making a mess of such an important event

   (c) You should prepare thoroughly for this

3. **I will actually never get used to having my leg amputated just above my Knee**

   (a) Well let's just wait and see how much progress we will make together

   (b) The doctor says that you are doing just fine

   (c) You are not so confident about adjusting to your loss

4. **I am unhappy about the fact that nobody likes me in this school. That is why I stay at home**

(a)   You are upset and lonely here

(b)   Many children take time to adjust to a new school

(c)   Staying at home when you should be in school is against the law

Answers

Responses	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
(a)	external	external	external	internal
(b)	external	internal	external	external
(c)	internal	external	internal	external

Assessment 2

1. Watch and listen to a television or radio interview or a chat show, and observe the extent to which interviewers responds from the interviewee's internal frame of reference and complete the table below

Name of programme:	Date:
Summary of interview:	
Examples of responses from internal framework	**Examples of responses from external framework**
Additional observations :	

2. Monitor your own communication (formal and informal) for a week and become more aware of when you respond to speakers from your own or from their frame of reference. Keep a diary with at least one example, a day for a week.

Day	Example of response	Frame of reference
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		