

Skills

1. Listening and Non-Verbal Communication

Listening is a key skill that allows clients to feel accepted, respected, understood, and connected. It builds trust and helps them express emotions and participate in their care. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, eye contact, nodding, and body posture that show attentiveness.

2. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means restating the client's message in different words without changing the meaning. It shows active listening and helps ensure understanding.

3. Summarizing

Summarizing involves briefly restating the main points the client has shared. It confirms understanding and gives the client a chance to clarify or expand.

4. Questioning

Helpful question
Open-ended questions starting with when, what, how, who, or where encourage detailed responses and support exploration.

unhelpful questions:

Closed questions – Can be answered with yes or no; limit expression

Leading questions – Suggest the answer or reflect the helper's opinion

Multiple questions – Contain more than one question at once; confuse the client

"Why" questions – Can feel judgmental or push the client to justify themselves instead of exploring their experience

Concepts

1. Rapport

Rapport is a mutual feeling of trust, warmth, acceptance, friendliness, and nonjudgmental connection between the client and the doctor. It creates the foundation for a therapeutic relationship. Establishing rapport can begin with simple, non-health-related conversation to make the client feel comfortable and safe.

2. Trust

Trust is a core developmental task as described by Erikson. When trust has not been developed earlier in life, it may be harder to establish in therapy. However, it can still be built through patience, consistency, and reliable behavior from the doctor. Trust allows the client to feel secure in the therapeutic environment.

3. Respect

Respect means recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their behavior. It is unconditional and not dependent on the client meeting certain standards. Psychiatric clients may struggle with self-respect due to past rejection. Doctors demonstrate respect by addressing the client properly, being honest, taking their views seriously, allowing privacy, and being genuinely present during interactions.

4. Genuineness

Genuineness is the doctor's ability to be real, honest, and transparent in communication. It means expressing what is truly felt in a sincere and appropriate way. A genuine doctor does not hide behind a professional mask but responds with authentic emotions, creating a more honest and human connection with the client.

5. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to accurately sense and understand another person's inner experience, beyond their external behavior. It involves perceiving the client's feelings and meaning in the moment and effectively communicating that understanding back to the client. Unlike sympathy, which involves sharing and feeling the same emotions, empathy helps the client explore their emotions without the doctor becoming emotionally overwhelmed. It supports emotional clarity and healing.

Phases of the Therapeutic Relationship

1. Pre-interaction Phase

Preparation before meeting the client.

Reflect on personal feelings and biases; Review client history and available data; Clarify your role and goals.

2. Orientation (Introductory) Phase

Building trust and forming the foundation of the relationship.

Establish rapport and a therapeutic contract; Clarify roles, goals, and boundaries; Conduct initial assessment and explore feelings; Set mutual goals.

3. Working Phase

The core phase where therapeutic progress occurs.

Maintain trust and a collaborative relationship; Encourage insight, reality testing, and behavior change; Address resistance and defense mechanisms; Monitor and evaluate progress toward goals.

4. Termination Phase

The planned end of the therapeutic relationship.

Occurs when goals are achieved or care ends; Prepare the client for separations; Explore and manage emotions related to ending (e.g., sadness, anger, denial); Support the transition and closure.

Boundaries in the Doctor-Client Relationship

Professional boundaries protect both doctor and client. They include:

- Maintaining appropriate physical and emotional distance.
- Limiting personal disclosures.
- Avoiding dual relationships (e.g., social, financial, romantic).

Clear boundaries promote safety, trust, and effectiveness in care.

