

Introduction

In the third edition of this book, published in 2010, I referred to significant developments that were about to take place in counselling and psychotherapy. Perhaps the most important of these initiatives was, and is, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies. This is a government-funded project designed to improve the mental health and general wellbeing of the adult population, through the provision of psychological therapies for depression and anxiety disorders. Such an initiative is particularly relevant in the context of counselling and psychotherapy, since these are the twin disciplines that have traditionally provided support for clients who wish to access talking therapies. However, debate continues apace about the type of therapy best suited to meet the needs of all clients, a debate that is likely to continue for some time into the future. The current focus is still on cognitive behaviour therapy (especially for depression and anxiety) as the approach deemed suitable for clients who wish to avail themselves of talking therapies, although access to a wider range of models is still possible within the Improving Access programme.

My purpose here is not to support any one approach over the others, since I believe they are all potentially effective when used in the context of a good therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client, with the individual client's needs firmly in mind. In this fourth edition of *Counselling Skills and Theory* I wanted to update all the units, with a focus on new developments within individual therapeutic approaches. However, I was concerned to retain all the basic elements contained in the third edition, so I have not substantially altered the contents of the book. One exception to this is the omission, in this fourth edition, of the section on groupwork skills and theory (formerly Unit 9), which dealt with all the theoretical approaches in this context. I am aware that groupwork is a specialised form of counselling that requires additional training, so it made sense to me to omit it from an introductory textbook concerned primarily with basic counsellor training at foundation, certificate and diploma level. It is increasingly the case that many areas of counsellor training (including groupwork) have become more specific in their focus, so require their own particular literature and texts to support them. Having said this, it is worth noting that all the individual theoretical approaches to counselling described in this book can be applied to the group context by counsellors trained to use them in this way.

This fourth edition is intended as a text suitable for students on introductory, certificate and foundation level courses. However, I would like to stress here that each unit is intended as an introduction to the theories described and is meant to stimulate further interest in them, as well as providing impetus for additional research and reading. When I wrote the first edition (1998), I was aware that the students I taught often found it difficult to locate text books that were relatively easy to understand, and which gave them enough information to prompt further research. In revising this fourth edition, my original aim of providing clear and stimulating information on a number of diverse theories remains the same. Each unit in this edition also describes the basic counselling skills that are integral to individual models of counselling. Specific techniques

and procedures are discussed. I have tried to do this without using too much jargon, because I know from my own experience of teaching that students value clarity, especially at the beginning of training when they struggle with theories that seem esoteric and are unfamiliar to them.

Throughout the book I have included examples of good practice, and I have drawn on case material from on my own experience of counselling in different contexts, including further and higher education, groupwork, health care and general practice. Any details which could possibly identify individual clients have been omitted. My method of writing case material remains the same and is creative in the sense that it involves selecting a range of issues seen in counselling and placing them in a slightly altered context or background. In addition, clients' names are changed to ensure confidentiality and other details of age, gender and occupation are altered too. The importance of the client–counsellor relationship is highlighted in each unit, and the personal counsellor attributes needed for effective therapy are also addressed. The central place of training and supervision is stressed throughout the book but is more specifically dealt with in the last unit. There are student exercises in each unit, many of which can be used by students working alone, though some are probably more effective when completed with the guidance of trainers. This is because students, especially those starting training, may experience unexpected emotional responses which, if they are to provide insight and learning, need follow-up discussion and support. Experiential learning is invaluable in counsellor training and can only be facilitated within a carefully planned and supportive educational programme.

There are several additional sections in this fourth edition of the book, including (in Unit 5) reference to, and discussion about, the person-centred approach as an effective and compassionate way of helping clients in different contexts, including nursing and other branches of caring. There is a section on bullying in schools and online in Unit 1, along with a case study to illustrate its main points. Units 3 and 4 are also extended to include new sections on countertransference, contemporary object relations theory and the work of Heinz Kohut. In Units 6 and 7 I look at the evolution of both Gestalt and transactional analysis theory and practice; and discuss how new ideas have been developed and assimilated into these two approaches. In Unit 8 I have abbreviated the section on behaviour therapy and extended the second part of the unit, dealing with cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), to include the work of Aaron Beck and George Kelly. There is an additional section about mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), along with consideration of its contribution to the field of CBT. Using the internet to deliver CBT is also discussed in Unit 8, together with an appraisal of this important approach to therapy in health care today. Unit 9 contains a revised section on cultural diversity in counselling, as well as a new section entitled 'Feminism and counselling'. I am very aware that it is impossible to do justice to these very important subject areas in a text book of this kind, but I am also conscious of the need to include them and to suggest specific and extended texts for further study. Finally, I hope students will be sufficiently stimulated by my synopsis of both diversity and feminism to read more about them.

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