

Guest lecture on Working with Difficult Population In Counselling

A guest lecture on working with difficult populations in counselling was organised on 23rd November 2022. The host of the lecture was Ms. Nishalya Hemavathy. The session started with a small discussion about difference between counselling and therapy. The initial obstacles to counselling include the inability to identify client problems and lack of client's cooperation in therapy. The basic counselling skills of a therapist was highlighted and discussed. Careful use of self-disclosure was emphasized. Hesitant clients, slow to change clients, indifferent clients, oppositional and ambivalent clients were identified as the most difficult clients in counselling.

The special populations that counsellors actively deal in counselling include individuals with suicidal ideations, non-compliant, inactive – uninvolved clients, complex diagnosis and client's lack of boundaries. When counsellors deal clients with suicidal ideations it is necessary that they pay active attention to the messages clients convey and give clients assurance of support from client's family members during critical times. A plan management must be established with clients with suicidal ideations. When counsellors deal with non-compliant clients, they have to remain patient and try to breakdown the strong defence mechanisms of the clients. When counsellors deal inactive & uninvolved clients, they must help clients channelize thoughts and feelings about behaviour change. In Complex diagnosis cases, counsellors must take up counselling only if the clients fall within their area of specialisation. Refer the complex cases to other professionals if it's out of counsellor's expert area. Clients who cross boundaries must be made aware of the counselling process and ethics of counselling.

When counsellors deal with children, they must develop a stable rapport with the child and understand the child's feelings about the problem. Counselling children is very difficult as they take time to develop trust with counsellor. The children are often unable to convey clearly their feelings about trauma and counsellors must understand non-verbal behaviours of the children to get a full understanding about their trauma. As counsellors, it is necessary to understand and respect the cultural differences and individual differences.

After theoretical lesson few students were asked to volunteer as difficult clients and others were asked to observe the interaction between Ms. Nishalya and the student volunteers. Then the session ended with a question-and-answer session. The students received a practical and theoretical understanding about the difficult clients in counselling.