

# Theme 3

## HIV Counselling



Students often cannot wait to start learning about counselling. Well, you have reached that point now. Allow yourself enough time to master the skills that we provide in Theme 3 - there are many people living with HIV and Aids who need your help.

We will approach this part by looking at the expectations and the counselling needs of our clients. The expectations and needs that will emerge can be translated into the following basic questions:

- What can I as a client expect from my counsellor in general?
- What will happen to me during pre- and post-HIV test counselling?
- What counselling support can I expect with special problems such as disclosure, stress management or depression?
- How can my counsellor assist me if my disease progresses and when I need drug treatment?
- What if I have a crisis?
- How will my need for bereavement and spiritual counselling be taken care of?

Counselling entails more than giving psychological support and may cover any of the following areas:

**Medical:** HIV and Aids knowledge, transmission and prevention of HIV, testing for HIV, symptoms, treatments and ARVs;

**Personal and emotional:** feelings of isolation and rejection, anxiety and stress, religious and faith problems, suicidal thoughts and problems with body image;

**Relationships:** partners (sexual), family, friends, employer and colleagues, school;

**Practical:** referral procedures, finances, accommodation, legal, schooling, funeral and wills.

Some of the counselling needs mentioned above have already been taken care of in themes 1 and 2. We will try to address the rest of the counselling needs of our clients in the next five learning units.

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# Learning Unit 12:

## Counselling principles and skills

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**BOTH  
TRACKS**



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## Learning Unit 12 – Basic counselling principles and skills

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# Introduction

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If I were to ask you why you are doing this course, or why you want to be an HIV and Aids counsellor, what would you say? Most of you would say that you want to help other people because you care about them. If this is your answer, you already comply with the first important requirement of being a counsellor, namely to have *compassion* for another person's struggle to live beyond the confines of Aids. If you also have the *willingness* and the *commitment* to walk the walk with this person and their loved ones, you already have a good foundation to build your counselling skills on. This learning unit will assist you to understand better what counselling entails.

## Key questions

Use the following questions as pointers to ensure that you retain your focus on the important issues in this learning unit:

- What is counselling?
- What does the counselling process entail?
- What are the characteristics of an ideal counsellor?
- What counselling skills do I need?
- What counselling skills do I need in Africa?

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## Key concepts

While working your way through this learning unit, look out for the following key concepts. Make sure that, after you have completed this learning unit, you know what they refer to and how they are used (or look up their definitions in the glossary):

<a href="#">Counselling</a>	<a href="#">Confidentiality</a>
<a href="#">Problem solving model</a>	<a href="#">SOLER skills</a>
<a href="#">Congruence</a>	<a href="#">Attending</a>
Genuineness	<a href="#">Empathy</a>
<a href="#">Probing</a>	<a href="#">Respect</a>
<a href="#">Self-disclosure</a>	<a href="#">Referral skills</a>

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# What is counselling?

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Before we talk about what the definition and aims of counselling are, first look at your own expectation of counselling by doing the activity below.

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## ACTIVITY 12.1: WHAT I WANT MY COUNSELLOR TO DO FOR ME

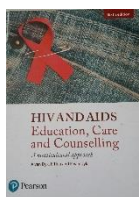
This [Activity 12.1](#) will give you the opportunity to reflect on a problem you have and to think about what you expect from a counsellor.

**Feedback:** The role of a counsellor is not to tell you what to do or to solve your problems for you. The counsellor will help you to manage your own problems.

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Let's go to the prescribed book to learn more about what counselling entails.

### Study



### Prescribed book: p. 342-344

#### Section 12.1: What is counselling?

- Write your own definition of counselling after reading this section. Does your definition mention that counselling is a facilitative process in which the counsellor uses specific skills to assist clients to understand themselves better, to help themselves, and to discover ways to better manage their problems in future?
- In this section we will also look at the purpose of counselling as well as at what can be expected from the counsellor (the role of the counsellor). Focus on the second issue by drawing a table with two columns. In the left-hand column, write down the things that you would expect from your counsellor. In the right-hand column, note the things that should not be expected from a counsellor.
- Look at the 'Counselling house metaphor' in Figure 12.1 and keep this metaphor in mind when you work through this chapter.

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## ACTIVITY 12.2: WHAT COUNSELLING IS AND ISN'T

After considering your expectations of a counsellor, let's also revise what counselling is and what it isn't by doing [Activity 12.2](#).

**Feedback:** What interests me is in which column you placed “giving information”. Most books on counselling will tell you that “giving information” has no place in counselling. But is this true in the HIV and Aids context where clients often need information (e.g. how to use condoms, how to take ARVs or the symptoms of TB)? The magic answer is *how* to give information without giving advice!

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# The counsellor

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You now have a better idea of what counselling is. This is an opportune time to consider the counsellor.

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## ACTIVITY 12.3: MY IDEAL COUNSELLOR

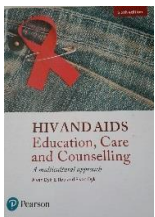
What do you personally expect from a counsellor? Go to [Activity 12.3](#) to share your ideas.

**Feedback:** We all have different needs and expectations. What I want in a counsellor is for him or her to respect me and to listen to me.

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Let's go to the prescribed book to compare your ideal counsellor with the values, ethics and attitudes described there.

### Study



### Prescribed book: pp. 344-349

#### Section 12.2: The counsellor's values, ethics and attitudes.

- Underline all the words that describe a good counsellor.
- Think of a counsellor or person you know with each of these characteristics.
- Explain the ADDRESSING model that can be used to develop counsellors' competence in ethnic and cultural diversity.

In the next section, we will look at the counselling process.

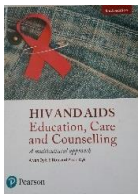
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# The counselling process

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If you look back at your definition of counselling, you will see that we defined counselling as a *facilitative* process. This means that counsellors only facilitate the change in clients – the real hard work must be done by the clients themselves. Let's go to your prescribed book to learn more about the counselling process. (Don't miss the counselling house in your prescribed book. You can even draw your own house and fill in the process of counselling in the foundation (the four fundamental questions), the four floors (the four phases of counselling and the skills required), and the roof (the counsellor's values, ethics and attitudes).

## Study



### Prescribed book: pp. 349-361

**Section 12.3: Four fundamental questions clients should ask themselves.** Apply the four fundamental questions to your own life by doing the activity at the end of Section 12.3 in your prescribed book.

**Section 12.4: The four phases of counselling.** The “bad” news about counselling is that it does not have a recipe because no two clients are the same. Their problems differ, their reactions to these problems differ and a solution that will work for one person will not necessarily work for another. I do, however, have a bit of good news about counselling, and that is that we can provide you with a map that you can use to guide you on your counselling road. This map (or counselling process) consists of four phases. You will learn all about the four phases of counselling in your prescribed book. Watch a video on the counselling process: <http://goo.gl/y552Dr> - it is a bit boring, but it does illustrate the process well.




**The problem-solving model:** Go to the Enrichment box ‘The problem-solving model’ in your prescribed book. Counsellors often find this seven-stage problem-solving model useful in their work. To see how it works, you can apply this model to your problem as stated in activity 12.1.

Don't miss the section on termination of the counselling session at the end of Section 12.4. Lay counsellors, in particular, often battle with the question of how to terminate a session with a client.



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Go to your prescribed book to learn more about counselling skills.

<p><b>Study</b></p> 	<p><b>Prescribed book: pp. 361-377</b></p> <p><b>Section 12.5: Basic communication skills.</b> Since counselling is a conversation or a dialogue between you and your client, you need certain communication skills. Read carefully through the communication skills as discussed in this section and practice them this week on your family and friends. Click on this video link to watch a video on counselling skills: <a href="http://goo.gl/DEsTP6">http://goo.gl/DEsTP6</a></p> <p><b>Section 12.6: Advanced communication skills.</b> It takes a lot of practice to get the advanced communication skills right because you have to “challenge” your client to talk about what is hidden or repressed. These skills are usually practised in practical counselling classes, but reading about them will give you a good idea of what is expected. Make summaries and think of one example that illustrates the following advanced counselling skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advanced empathy</li><li>• Immediacy</li><li>• Helper self-disclosure</li><li>• Information sharing, suggestions and recommendations.</li></ul> <p><b>Section 12.7: Referral skills.</b> After reading this section you should know exactly what it means to refer a client, and also how to refer a client. Watch a video on referral skills: <a href="http://goo.gl/fc7wJh">http://goo.gl/fc7wJh</a></p> <p><b>Section 12.8: Record keeping.</b> This section provides helpful tips on how to keep records of your clients.</p> <p><b>Section 12.9: Supervision.</b> This section provides a very brief introduction to supervision.</p>	 
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## ACTIVITY 12.4 – BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Practice your counselling skills on your friends and family this week by going to [Activity 12.4](#).

**Feedback:** This is a bit of a fun exercise, but please note that it is not advisable to counsel your loved ones. It is hard to be objective when you are intimately involved in another person’s life.

At this stage of your studies, you probably have a very good *theoretical* knowledge of counselling. But to counsel other people you also need *practical* experience. Empower yourself by enrolling for a practical counselling skills course or workshop. Contact your local LifeLine branch and enquire about training opportunities. LifeLine courses are usually very good and are offered at reasonable prices. You are also welcome to contact the Unisa Centre for Applied Psychology ([ucap@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ucap@unisa.ac.za) or 012-429 8544) to enquire about their HIV/Aids practical counselling skills workshop (Module 2) after you have successfully completed this module.

Practice some of the counselling or communication skills that you have learnt by doing the activity below.

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### ACTIVITY 12.5: EMPATHIC RESPONDING

In this activity you are going to practice your skills to reflect feelings and to paraphrase or reflect what a client has said. Go to [Activity 12.5](#).

**Feedback:** It is often very hard to reflect on a client's feelings. I hope that this activity will make it a bit easier.

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In the next section, you will apply what you have learnt about counselling to the traditional African context.

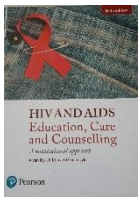
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# Counselling skills in Africa

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In Learning Unit 11 you became familiar with the way traditional African people perceive health and illness. The traditional African worldview has implications for the way we do counselling. In this section you will see how the counselling skills of attending, listening, probing and empathy can be adjusted to accommodate the needs of traditional African clients.

## Study



## Prescribed book: pp. 377-390

**Section 12.10: Counselling in Africa.** Read and make a summary of the following:

- The African perspective on health, illness and healing.
- A philosophy of holism.
- Similarities and differences in counselling contexts.
- An integrative approach to Aids counselling.
- The person-centred approach in Africa.
- Practical guidelines in multi-cultural counselling.
- Counselling families in the African context.
- Language barriers.

For the following activity I need you to take everything that you have learnt in this learning unit into account, with particular emphasis on counselling in a traditional African context.

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## ACTIVITY 12.6: WHAT SIZWE HAD TO SAY ABOUT ARV COUNSELLORS

You will be very interested to find out what some people in our communities think of ARV counsellors. Go to [Activity 12.6](#).

**Feedback:** Counsellors should very sensitive about the perceptions of their work in the communities they work in. Counsellors may have the intention of doing good, but is it always perceived like that by people on the receiving end of the counselling?

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You are now finished with this learning unit. Click on [Assessment](#) to do some self-assessment questions.

# Assessment

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## Study reflection

After completing Learning Unit 12 (counselling principles and skills), you should have acquired the following knowledge and understanding and be able to:

- draw a picture in which you explain the four fundamental questions of counselling as well as the four phases.
- engage in a role-play situation where you practise the following communication skills:
  - attending
  - listening
  - empathising
  - probing
  - paraphrasing
  - summarising

## Self-Assessment 12



Now is the time to pause briefly and to assess whether you have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills. Click on the link [Self-Assessment 12](#) to do a few questions on this learning unit.

**You are now finished with the assessment. Go to Learning Unit 13.**

# Appendices

- Activities
- Assessment
- Glossary

## ACTIVITY 12.1 - WHAT I WANT MY COUNSELLOR TO DO FOR ME

Think of a problem in your life that you might want to discuss with a counsellor. This problem might be a relationship problem (e.g. with a partner, your parents or with your child), a financial problem (you struggle to pay all your bills at the end of the month), a health problem (you are afraid that you are infected with HIV), a behavioural problem (you want to stop smoking) or any other type of problem that you have. Write this problem down. Imagine yourself discussing this problem with a counsellor. Now reflect on what you expect from this counsellor. Start with "I want my counsellor to ...". (You are welcome to blog your expectations of the counsellor.)

[\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

## ACTIVITY 12.1 FEEDBACK

Are your expectations of a counsellor realistic if you compare them with what you have read in the prescribed book (or what your peers have shared on the blog)? Do you understand that the role of a counsellor is not to tell you what to do (or to give advice), or to solve your problems for you? The role of the counsellor is to:

- help clients manage their own problems
- guide them to make constructive changes in their lives
- empower them to be more effective self-helpers in their everyday lives.

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## ACTIVITY 12.2 – WHAT COUNSELLING IS AND ISN'T

Draw the following table.

Counselling is ...	Counselling isn't ...

Read through the following list and place every word or sentence in one of the two columns in the table above. Don't use your prescribed book when you do this activity – trust your intuition.

Listening	Caring
Problem-solving	Spoon feeding
Listening	Caring
Telling someone what to do	Demanding
Helping	Counsellor is in charge
Giving information	Interfering
Client is in charge	Understanding
Giving advice	Judgemental
Sharing	Giving advice
Reflective teaching	Critical Based on trust
Accepting	Social work
Open-minded	Helping person to sort out their own problems
Skilled	Imposing
Only done by professionals	Taking action by counsellor
Genuine	Deal only with facts
Confidential	Based on trust
Supportive	Deal with feelings and facts
“Do-gooding” (to make counsellor feel better)	

[\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

## ACTIVITY 12.2 FEEDBACK

You probably had no problems at all completing your columns. The words that belonged in the “counselling isn’t” column are: Telling someone what to do, giving advice, teaching, social work, imposing, “do-gooding” (it seldom has the client’s needs in mind), spoon feeding, interfering, judgmental, critical, taking action by the counsellor, and deal only with facts. Counselling is also not done only by professionals, but by lay people with proper training in counselling.

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### ACTIVITY 12.3 – MY IDEAL COUNSELLOR

In activity 12.1, you reflected on what you expect from your counsellor. I want you to think about your counsellor's characteristics. With what type of person are you prepared to share the intimate details of your life? Write down your ideal counsellor's characteristics. Start with "My counsellor should ..." (blog-your characteristics of the ideal counsellor).

[\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

### ACTIVITY 12.3 FEEDBACK

I personally would go to a counsellor who respects me, who listens to my story and shows real interest in it, who doesn't judge me, who assures me of confidentiality, and who is genuine or real. I also prefer a counsellor with a sense of humour and one who allows me to be myself (and this is a challenge for my counsellor!

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## ACTIVITY 12.4 - BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Apply your knowledge about communication skills by practising them on your family and friends:

- **Attending:** Write the letters S O L E R one below the other and next to each letter write the meaning of that letter. Invite your partner for a cup of coffee and ask about his or her day. Practise your SOLER skills while listening to your partner.
- **Listening:** Write down the four skills of listening. Now do the activity in your prescribed book where you have to listen to a favourite song. Do you also appreciate listening in a whole new light? Your song consists not only of content, but also of emotion and some unsaid messages.
- **Roadblocks to effective listening:** Which one or more of these roadblocks stand in the way of your communication with your loved ones? My roadblock is that I often don't wait for the person's full stop before I respond (jump-the-gun listening)! What is your "red-flag" that you need to be aware of? Write it down or blog about it.
- **Basic empathy:** Practise the skills of basic empathy on your partner this week. If he or she is cross with you, don't attack by starting your sentence with: "You are horrible to me ...". Rather say: "I sense that you're feeling cross with me..." The reaction might surprise you. When you know the difference between sympathy and empathy, write an example of each.
- **The use of silence:** Be acutely aware of all your conversations with colleagues this week. Listen for silence and be aware of your reactions to it. Note if the use of silence was comfortable and necessary, or uncomfortable and judgemental. Many people talk so much that they do not use silence appropriately.
- **Probing or questioning:** Practise the use of open-ended and closed questions on your children this week. Note the different answers. Teenagers might, of course, still give you one-syllable answers to open questions ;-).
- **Clarification, reflective commenting and summarising:** These communication skills are very helpful in the counselling context and we can also use them in our day-to-day communication with others. If someone tells you a story this week, practise clarification and also reflective commenting (or paraphrasing). See how surprised this person is by your good listening skills!

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## ACTIVITY 12.5 - EMPATHIC RESPONDING

In the following exercise you are going to practise your skills to reflect feeling and to paraphrase or reflect what a client has said. Imagine that you are listening to each of the people quoted below. Try to communicate to each person an accurate understanding of their feelings. Then paraphrase what the person has said by writing it down.

1. "I've been retrenched from my job because I can no longer cope with it after my HIV diagnosis. I don't know what to do. I've been everywhere looking for work and nobody wants to help me. Please, can you tell me what to do?"
  - a. How would you reflect feeling? Start with: "You feel ..."
  - b. How would you paraphrase this statement? .....
  
2. "My husband has a lot of girlfriends and there's nothing I can do about it. I mean, you know what men are like, and you just have to accept it. But when I try to talk to him about condoms he beats me up – I want to lay charges against him, I've had enough."
  - a. How would you reflect feeling? Start with: "You feel ..."
  - b. How would you paraphrase this statement? .....
  
3. "I met this guy at a club, and we had sex. We should have used a condom, but you know how it is, I mean the condoms were right there, but in the heat of the moment I felt it would be OK. Well, now he tells me he is HIV positive and I am ready to kill him. But how could I have done it? I know better!"
  - a. How would you reflect feeling? Start with: "You feel ..."
  - b. How would you paraphrase this statement? .....
  
4. "My wife died of Aids last year, and this year my youngest son went away to university. The other children are married. So now that I'm retired, I spend a lot of time rambling around a house that's really too big for me."
  - a. How would you reflect feeling? Start with: "You feel ..."
  - b. How would you paraphrase this statement? .....
  
5. "I want to buy a house and I've approach a bank. Apparently the bank would like life cover but I know I'm HIV positive, I found out three weeks ago. I feel as if I'll never be able to own my own house."
  - a. How would you reflect feeling? Start with: "You feel ..."
  - b. How would you paraphrase this statement? ..... [\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

## ACTIVITY 12.5 FEEDBACK

Was it hard for you to reflect your client's feelings? We often have a very limited "feelings vocabulary". A good exercise to do to improve your feelings vocabulary is to take a dictionary and write down all the "feelings" words. For example:

**A:** abandoned, accepted, aching, accused, adventurous, affectionate, agony, alienated, aloof, aggravated, agreeable, aggressive, alive, alone, alluring, amazed, amused, angry, anguished, annoyed, anxious, apart, apologetic, appreciative, apprehensive, approved, argumentative, aroused, astonished, assertive, attached, attentive, attractive, aware, awestruck, awful.

And these are only the feelings words starting with an A! Now do the same for the rest of the alphabet.

When you paraphrased the clients' statements, did you:

- *listen* to the feelings behind the words?
- include not only the content of what the client said, but also the feelings?
- reflect what the client said in such a way that it facilitated an atmosphere of understanding?
- refrain from being judgmental, giving sympathy, taking sides and giving advice?
- prompt the client to tell you a bit more?

The reason for paraphrasing is to check if you have understood what the client has said. It also helps the client to clarify for themselves what they are thinking and feeling when they hear you accurately paraphrase what they have just said. A paraphrase often brings up new thoughts and feelings that can be explored further. In effect, a good paraphrase says: "I'm with you".

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## ACTIVITY 12.6 WHAT SIZWE HAD TO SAY ABOUT ARV COUNSELLORS

Read what Sizwe had to say about the ARV counsellors in the Activity box 'Sizwe on the ARV counsellors' in your prescribed book (from *Three-letter plague*, p 32) and answer the questions that follow:

- In what way (if at all) did the counsellors show openness, respect and empathy for their clients' needs?
- In what way did the counsellors take the traditional African worldview into account? (Think of traditional group customs, the role of secrecy, the role of disclosure, the influence of age and gender in a community, etc.)
- Sizwe saw the counsellors' self-disclosure ("see how healthy we are") as preaching. What should the counsellors have done to bring the same message without it being perceived as "the preaching of a cult"?
- What could the counsellors do to change their tactics from "giving advice" to giving clients all the options and the chance to decide for themselves what to do?
- In all fairness to the counsellors, consider how the important message of testing and ARVs can be brought to a community where it is not always practical to do individual counselling.

[\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

## ACTIVITY 12.6 FEEDBACK

You are probably going to think about Sizwe's feelings and thoughts about the ARV counsellors in Ithanga for a long time to come. Although it is heart-warming to see that counsellors have so much enthusiasm for their course, it also is an eye opener that such enthusiasm is not necessarily well received in the community. With your background information of what good counselling entails, what do you think went wrong for Sizwe?

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## SELF-ASSESSMENT 12

### Question 1

Counselling consist of four phases, which phase below is the first phase?

1. Helping the client tell his or her story
2. Developing understanding of the problem
3. Relationship building
4. Intervention or action

### Question 2

What is another name for reflective commenting in counselling?

1. Summarising
2. Paraphrasing
3. Clarifying
4. Integrating

### Question 3

Complete the following sentence: SOLER is the acronym that summarises the .....used by counsellors when attending to their clients.

1. Listening skills
2. Verbal skills
3. Probing skills
4. Non-verbal skills

### Question 4

Define the term "immediacy."

### Question 5

What is attending skills?

[\[FEEDBACK\]](#)

## FEEDBACK SELF-ASSESSMENT 12

### Feedback Question 1

The correct answer is Alternative 3. Relationship building.

### Feedback Question 2

The correct answer is Alternative 2. Paraphrasing.

### Feedback Question 3

The correct answer is Alternative 4. Non-verbal skills.

### Feedback Question 4

Immediacy is the skill of communicating what is happening in the counselling relationship while it is happening.

### Feedback Question 5

“Attending skills” refers to the ways in which counsellors can be with their clients both physically and psychologically.

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# GLOSSARY

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## Attending

A basic communication skill in counselling. This term refers to the way in which counsellors can be “with” their clients, both physically and psychologically. Effective attending communicates to clients that they can share information about their worlds with you.

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## Confidentiality

Not to disclose any information, such as HIV status, to anyone under any circumstances, without the express permission of the client.

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## Counselling

A facilitative process in which the counsellor, working within the framework of a special helping relationship, uses specific skills to assist clients to develop self-knowledge, emotional acceptance, emotional growth and personal resources.

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## **Congruence (or genuineness)**

This refers to a counsellor's attitudes to and behaviour with clients, e.g. being honest, transparent and authentic in the counselling relationship. According to psychologist Carl Rogers, there should be a match between a person's behaviour (or presentation) and his/her inner experiences.

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## Empathy

The ability of a counsellor to set aside his or her own frame of reference in order to see the world from the client's point of view — it is an attempt to understand the world of the client by temporarily “stepping into his or her shoes”.

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## Probing

A counselling technique involving statements, questions and interjections from the counsellor. It enables clients to explore their life stories and problems more fully.

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## **Problem-solving skills (Problem-solving model)**

Refers to understanding the problem; discussing alternatives and possible solutions to the problem through brain-storming; exploring the consequences of all alternatives discussed; deciding on the best option; looking at how to go about doing it; and taking action.

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## Respect

An attitude in counselling that portrays the belief that each client is a worthy being who is competent to decide what he or she really wants, has the potential for growth, and has the ability to achieve what he or she really wants from life.

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## Referral skills

The process of sending a client to another professional or organisation for specialised help. Referral should not be used to “pass the buck” but should be seen as co-opting of additional helpers into the counselling process.

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## Self-disclosure

This literally means to “disclose yourself to another person”. It refers to the ability of the counsellor to share with the client, in an appropriate and constructive manner, information about his or her own feelings, experiences or behaviour.

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## **SOLER skills**

These are non-verbal skills that are used by counsellors when attending to their clients to show their inner attitude and values of respect and genuineness.

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