

SKILLS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IHSM PHASES

PRELIMINARY or PREPARATORY PHASE SKILLS

- ✓ **Tuning in to self:** The worker's effort to get in touch with potential feelings, concerns, or beliefs that the worker him/herself may bring to the helping encounter.

Relevance to practice: Worker self-awareness is essential to avoid worker feelings and bias from adversely impacting the intervention and helping process.

- ✓ **Tuning in to others:** The worker's effort to get in touch with potential feeling and concerns that the client may bring to the helping encounter.

Relevance to practice: To promote engagement and the collaborative/protective partnership, the worker needs to take into account client feelings and concerns.

BEGINNING or CONTRACTING PHASE SKILLS

- ✓ **Clarifying purpose:** Statement of the helping professional's role or function at the agency, specifically as it relates to the stated problem or issue at hand. Also, includes a simple, non-jargonized statement by the helping professional regarding the general purpose of the meeting or session.

Relevance to practice: Helps the client to be clear about who you are and what you are about; tends to reduce client resistance based on lack of clarity or misunderstanding of purpose.

Example #1: "Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Lindberg. I'm Emily Airhart from Carson County Children and Youth Services. I will be doing the family profile with you today. This is one of several steps in becoming a foster parent. I hope by the end of this process we will know whether or not becoming foster parents for a troubled teen is a good match for you and CYS."

- ✓ **Dealing with issues of authority:** Using communication that invites and assists expressions of complaints about the helping professional, the professional's power or the helping process, as well as clarification about the level of authority that the worker believes is necessary to promote cooperation and change.

Relevance to practice: Child welfare work is necessarily intrusive. The worker is aware of this reality and seeks to use only that level of authority that is necessary

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to promote achievement of required outcomes. The worker is cautioned to explore alternative strategies for dealing with client resistance before increasing authority. However, when higher levels of authority are required, the worker must be able to explain and implement the necessary level of authority.

- ✓ **Reaching for feedback:** Encourages others to respond to the helping professional's explanation of why the meeting is occurring, her role or function at the agency, etc.; confirming a client's understanding of or thoughts/feelings about what has been spoken or done.

Relevance to practice: This skill is crucial for assessing the client's level of understanding of issues, goals, and tasks so that the worker and client have a common and clear understanding of expectations and roles.

Examples: "How do you feel about what I just explained to you?"

"Do you agree with the plan as I outlined it to you?"

"Do you believe you can carry out the tasks that we identified?"

MIDDLE or WORKING PHASE SKILLS

- ✓ **Questioning:** Requests for more information as to the nature of the problem or situation to get a fuller picture of the concern or issue. Questions may be open-ended (How did you decide on adoption?); Probing (Tell me how the injury happened); or more narrowly focused, requiring a forced choice (yes or no answer) or closed-ended (specific data: birthdate).

Relevance to practice: Helps the worker to develop a more complete and accurate understanding of the problem and/or the situation.

- ✓ **Reaching Inside of Silences:** Exploring the meaning of silence by putting feelings into words.

Relevance to practice: This skill demonstrates the worker's interest in helping the client bring to the surface and articulate thoughts, feelings, and issues that are important to the change process but may not be fully formed or connected to the right words.

Example: "I am wondering what you are thinking about as you sit there quietly?"

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- ✓ **Communicating Information:** Providing someone with information he or she needs to consider as decisions and plans are being made. (It can also include the subskills of *Giving Feedback* and *Confrontation* through which the client is made aware of the worker's perception of the status of the change process and the client's work efforts.)

Relevance to practice: This skill involves answering client requests for information or offering information to the client about policies, procedures, resources, etc.

- **Giving feedback:** Observations about what the client has done successfully related to the task at hand and offering suggestions for improvement or future work.

Relevance to practice: Helps the worker and client in building trust in reinforcing useful strengths and in identifying requirements for further work.

- **Confrontation:** The bringing forward and articulation by the worker of discrepancies in client verbalized intentions and actual behavior, identifying client resistance to the established purpose of the session, and identifying apparent denial.

Relevance to practice: This skill is important for promoting real work and addressing obstacles to progress. Confrontation helps to avoid development of hidden or conflicting agendas that may compromise real work. Confrontation need not involve anger. It is the practice of honest communication about gaps or incongruities between client intentions and verbalizations and actual behavior. The client may sometimes use confrontation to challenge the worker's stated purpose and actual behaviors.

Example: "You said that the baby was hurt when he rolled off the sofa onto the floor. That explanation of the injury does not match the medical evidence from the hospital."

Example: "You said that Amanda made up the story of her being fondled by your boyfriend. However, your son, John and one of his friends witnessed the incident. What do you think about that?"

Example: "You say that it's very important for you to get your son back home."

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However, you have missed the last two visits with him and have not tried to find housing. I am confused about what your real priority is.”

ENDING or TRANSITION PHASE SKILLS

- ✓ **Summarizing:** Helping someone to identify the main themes of the discussion during a session or meeting. Summarizing can be used at different points in the interview to close one segment and transition to another and at the end of the interview.

Relevance to practice: Creates the opportunity for both the worker and client to understand and agree upon the content and meaning of the session or interview segment and the implications for next steps.

- ✓ **Identifying next steps:** Helping another to develop ideas about future actions based upon current discussion or overall outcomes accomplished.

Relevance to practice: For work to move forward, the worker needs to assess the relevance of any given session with the client to expected progress on goals. Based on that assessment, the worker expresses what steps are needed next to continue progress. Next steps need to be established in collaboration with the client to assure understanding and compliance.

- **Closing the session or ending the client relationship.**