

Counseling Skills

These are some of the most important counseling techniques you are likely to use in your counseling sessions.

Listening/Observing: Listening is one of the most valuable counseling skills in the therapeutic relationship. It can be used in three ways:

Attending: Attending is the ability to be physically present for the client. It means giving them your undivided attention and making appropriate eye contact, mirroring body language, and nodding. These attending behaviors show your client that you care. In fact, according to Kevin J. Drab, approximately 80% of communication takes place non-verbally [External link](#).

Active listening: Active listening occurs when you are listening with all of your senses. According to the Perinatal Mental Health Project [External link](#), active listening involves listening with your body, heart, ears, eyes, and mouth.

Verbal listening: This is a form of showing you are listening through the words that you use. These verbal cues are used to show attention and to encourage more exploration from the client. This can be as simple as 'yes', or 'go on'. It can also be in the form of paraphrasing or repeating a word of emotion that the client has just said.

Asking Questions: Questions are helpful in the therapeutic environment because they allow you to learn more about your client. The type of questions that you ask will set the tone of the session and the entire counseling process. Questions occur in two forms.

Closed: A closed question is the practice of asking a question that can be answered as a 'yes' or 'no'. Closed questions should generally be avoided in the counseling relationship, as they do not encourage deeper exploration.

Open: An open question is necessary to gather information. An open question is one that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' and it requires reflection or exploration on the client's end. Every open question should be intentional and therapeutic. According to Susan Mills of the Nielsen Norman Group [External link](#), the best open ended questions begin with 'how' and 'what'.

Reflection: Reflections are used in the counseling process to accurately describe the client's state [External link](#) from their verbal or nonverbal cues.

Feelings reflections: Reflections allow clients to hear the feelings they have just expressed. Sometimes you have to look for the descriptive feeling in a client's statement. It can also be helpful to look at a client's nonverbal feeling cues.

Restating/Rephrasing: Restating and rephrasing can build a stronger client therapist relationship. Rephrasing a client's statement allows you to better understand what a client has just said and to gain further clarity, if you have gotten it wrong.

Affirmation: Affirmation is a form of encouragement that is used to affirm behaviors or life choices. Affirmation is important for empowering clients [External link](#). A few common affirmations include affirming progress that a client has made toward a goal or encouraging a client to do what is important to them.

Empathy: Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. It is much more than sympathy in that you are able to show your understanding of your clients feeling surrounding an experience.

Genuineness: Begin genuine is creating congruence between yourself and your words. Every therapist is different and will provide a different therapeutic process. It is important to remain genuine in all counseling techniques and verbal and nonverbal cues.

Unconditional Positive Regard: Demonstrating unconditional positive regard [External link](#) is the idea of accepting your client for who they are. It is a means of expressing warmth and respect.

Counselor Self-Disclosure: This is a tricky counseling skill to maneuver. A general rule to follow is to only share personal information that is beneficial to the therapeutic process. It might also be used to help the counselor relate better with their client.

Stay safe Best of luck