Chapter 4 – Directives

Using Questions

- Questions are an excellent technique for gaining greater control in an interview
- There is also no guarantee that the questions you ask will be of interest to the client

General Types of Questions

- Open questions
- Closed questions
- Swing questions
- Indirect or implied questions
- Projective questions
- Therapeutic questions
Chapter 4 – Directives

- **Open Questions**
  - Are designed to facilitate verbal output
  - Usually begin with “how” or “what”
  - Because “why” questions can incite defensiveness, mostly interviewers avoid using that type of question
  - Brings out the inner child of the client

- **Closed Questions**
  - Are questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” response
  - Restrict verbalization and lead clients to more specific responses
  - Usually begin with words such as do, does, did, is, was, or are.

- **Swing Questions**
  - Can be answered with a “yes” or “no,” but are designed to produce a more elaborate discussion
  - Usually begin with could, would, will, or can
  - Are best used if you have some rapport
Chapter 4 – Directives

- Indirect or Implied Questions
  - Usually begin with “I wonder” or “You must”
  - Are leading, but speculative
  - Can feel manipulative if overused

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Projective Questions
  - Help clients identify, articulate, and explore and clarify unconscious or unclear conflicts, values, thoughts, and feelings
  - Usually begin with “What if” and invite client speculation
  - Can be used to evaluate client values and judgment

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Therapeutic Questions
  - The pre-treatment change question
  - Scaling questions
  - Percentage questions
  - Unique outcomes or redescription questions
  - Presuppositional questions
  - The miracle question
  - Externalizing questions
  - Exception questions
Chapter 4 – Directives

- The Pre-Treatment Change Question is used to get new clients focused on the successes they’ve already started; for example:
  - What changes have you noticed that have happened or started to happen since you called to make the appointment for this session (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007, p. 5)

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Scaling Questions help clients envision potential improvement more precisely; for example:
  - On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the “very worst possible” and 10 being the “very best possible,” how would you rate how well you’ve been handling your anger this past week? (SF & SF, p. 89)

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Percentage Questions also direct clients to focus on how their improvements might look, sound, feel, and smell; for example:
  - How about if you were 50 percent less depressed? What would that look like? (SF & SF, p. 89)
Chapter 4 – Directives

Unique Outcomes or Redescription Questions are designed to direct clients toward describing the unique ways in which they've accomplished a specific task; for example:

- How did you beat the fear and go out shopping? (SF & SF, p. 90)

Chapter 4 – Directives

Presuppositional Questions are questions that presuppose a positive change has already occurred; for example:

- What do you imagine will have changed when you start staying calm even when other students try to make you mad? (SF & SF, p. 90)

Chapter 4 – Directives

The Miracle Question is a presuppositional question, but it's also the most famous of all solution-focused therapeutic questions; for example:

- Suppose you were to go home tonight, and while you were asleep, a miracle happened and this problem was solved. How will you know the miracle happened? What will be different? (de Shazer, 1988, p. 5)
Chapter 4 – Directives

- Externalizing Questions are designed to place the cause and presence of negative symptoms outside of the self; for example:
  - What exactly are you doing when you’re free from that fog of depression? (SF & SF, p. 92)

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Exception Questions are designed to help clients talk about times when their symptoms were gone or less severe; for example:
  - When is your anxiety less present?

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Benefits and Liabilities of Questions
  - Using questions can feel very good or very limiting
  - 5 minute reflection
  - Get with a partner or group and discuss how you feel about using questions. Do you like them or not? What do you see as the benefits or liabilities for you?
Chapter 4 – Directives

Interviewer Curiosity and Professional Ethics

- Be sure to watch out for the urge to ask inappropriate questions

Guidelines in Using Questions include:

- Preparing your clients for questions
- Not using questions as your predominant listening/action response
- Making questions relevant to client concerns/goals
- Using questions to elicit concrete behavior examples and positive futures
- Approaching sensitive areas cautiously
- Avoid "Why" questions.

Directive Action Responses

- Explanation or Psychoeducation
- Suggestion
- Agreement-Disagreement
- Approval-Disapproval
- Giving Advice
- Self Disclosure
- Urging
Chapter 4 – Directives

- Explanation or Psychoeducation consists of statements designed to make something about therapy more understandable to the client.
  - Explanations may focus on (a) the process of counseling; (b) the meaning or implications of a particular symptom; or (c) instructions for how to implement a specific piece of advice or therapeutic strategy.

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Suggestion
  - This response originates from hypnosis and involves bringing something to someone’s mind indirectly.
  - Suggestions can be given under hypnosis or when clients are fully awake.
  - Suggestions can elicit resistance.

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Agreement-Disagreement
  - Agreeing with clients can enhance rapport and serve as reassurance.
  - It may also reduce the client’s motivation for personal exploration.
  - Disagreeing with clients can be dicey; specifically, it can be unethical to disagree with clients on values issues.
Chapter 4 – Directives

- Approval-Disapproval is all about judgment
  - Rendering a favorable or unfavorable judgment about clients or client behavior can be powerful
  - You should be careful providing approval or disapproval and consider your options carefully

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Giving Advice always conveys the message: “Here’s what I think you should do”
  - Many people want advice
  - Many people resist advice
  - Before giving advice, check to see what the client has already tried, because you don’t want to offer stale advice

Chapter 4 – Directives

- Self Disclosure is an incredibly flexible influence strategy that allows you to incorporate many of the preceding techniques under the umbrella of self disclosure
  - Self disclosure can be very helpful when working with culturally diverse clients
  - Self disclosure can be used to share your “here and now” feelings/reactions with clients
Chapter 4 – Directives

- Urging
  - Sometimes some interviewers may occasionally urge their clients to engage in a specific behavior.
  - Urging is most appropriate in crisis situations, but even then, it may be inappropriate or unhelpful.