

CHAPTER 1

Ethics: Core to Professional Helping

Maria: Hi. Are you Ms. Wicks? I'm Maria. Mr. Brady told me that I had to come talk with you.

The opening exchange between Maria and Ms. Wicks, while on the surface appearing quite typical of many exchanged within a school social counselor's office, belies the fact that the relationship that will unfold and the dynamics of their exchanges will be challenging and fraught with ethical challenge.

While the process of helping can appear so natural and most of the time relatively easy, when viewed from the perspective of those in the human service professions, it is in truth complex and filled with challenges for both the helper and the client. Those within the human service professions understand that helping another person cope with a problem or facilitating that person's movement toward a specific outcome is a very responsible process. It is a process that is done with intention and reflection and demands training and professional competence. It is also true that this helping process is not and cannot be formulaic. One cannot simply follow a step-by-step recipe in progressing toward the desired goals.

Within any helping encounter, the professional helper is called upon to make numerous decisions, decisions that call to question his or her own personal values as well as his or her professional codes of conduct and ethics.

4 ● ETHICAL PRACTICE IN THE HUMAN SERVICES

The unique role and influence of the helper within the developing ethical helping relationship is the focus of the current chapter.

● OBJECTIVES

The chapter will present the role that the helper's beliefs, values, and ethics play in shaping the decision-making that occurs within the helping dynamic.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Define helping as a dynamic process, reflecting both an artistry and a science.
- Describe the unique ethical responsibilities and roles of the professional helper within a helping relationship.
- Identify the salient characteristics of the effective helper and the degree to which you currently possess these characteristics.
- Identify the reciprocal roles and responsibilities of both the client and the helper in an ethical helping relationship.

● THE HELPING PROCESS: A BLENDING OF ART AND SCIENCE

The effective helper understands and appreciates the fact that helping is not simply the sterile application of techniques or procedures. While a helper's understanding of what to do may be grounded in theory and research, the when and how to do it require a sensitivity that extends well beyond theoretical knowledge and technical efficiency. Consider the many options and decision points afforded the helper working with Kim and the way that the helper's personal and professional ethics can influence the choices made and the direction taken (See Case Illustration 1.1).

Case Illustration 1.1

Kim

Kim is a college freshman. During her first week of school, she came to speak to a counselor in the University Counseling Center. On entering the office, she stated that she had a "minor issue" and then continued with, "I know school has just started, and I am just a naive little helpless

freshman, but, I (looks down to the floor), well, I . . . (voice becomes soft and quiet) have a kind of . . . well a . . . I guess you could call it a small, but not real small problem, with my roommate. Look, I don't want to seem like a complainer, I'm not . . . am I? But (fidgeting a little), geez, this is kind of embarrassing to talk about, I mean you're a guy (giggles), of course you know that, but . . . oh, HELL, I'm just gonna say it. I think my roommate . . . is . . . well, she, let's say is nothing like me. No, what I mean to say is . . . I really like guys (smiles flirtatiously) even though I haven't had a chance to meet anyone here, except the freshman boys, but anyway . . . I don't think she does, if you know what I mean. Well anyway, you get the idea. Don't you? I just need another room!"

In reviewing Kim's complaint, did you feel that the roommate was the problem, or was something else on Kim's mind? Was there a problem? While Kim was verbally expressive, what did you notice about her behavior? Her style of communicating? Should the counselor have stopped Kim and asked a question at any point? Should the counselor have confronted Kim? How might Kim's style of sharing or even the type of issues and values she is expressing interact with the counselor's values? So many questions, all without simple, clear answers—questions that target not only the steps to be taken by the counselor but also the underlying values, beliefs, and ethics guiding those steps.

As previously suggested, helping is a process for which there is no one tried and true sequence of steps to be applied. Helping is not an automatic, cold, and distant process of problem solving. It is truly an awesome encounter, one engaging clients' and helpers' feelings and values as well as their minds. The complexity and dynamic nature of the helping process is infused with subjectivity, intuition, and often confusion, rendering its facilitation as much of an art as a science. It is important to realize that as with any art, the product reflects not only the subject, in this case the client, but also the artist. Each participant mobilizes his or her values, beliefs, needs, and even dreams to make the very best of an increasingly intimate relationship.

As a contributor to this product and process, what might the counselor depicted in Case Illustration 1.1 have contributed to the dynamic with Kim? What did the counselor feel? What needs and concerns did the counselor bring to this interaction? What feelings, thoughts, and behaviors were stimulated or elicited by Kim? The uniqueness of the helper tints the process and outcome of the helping relationship. Two different counselors working with Kim may have attended to different pieces of her story or her style and may

6 ● ETHICAL PRACTICE IN THE HUMAN SERVICES

have moved toward different outcomes or the same outcome through different paths. Exercise 1.1 provides an opportunity to identify the way the personal uniqueness of each helper can influence the very nature and outcome of the helping encounter.

Exercise 1.1

You as Helper—You as Artist

Directions: Return to Kim's case. As you read the descriptions and review Kim's presentation, try to develop a complete image of the interaction. Imagine you are the counselor. What does Kim look like? Where are you standing? What might you have been doing prior to her coming to see you? What else is on your things to do list? After developing a real sense of the scenario, with you as counselor, respond to the following questions:

- What meaning did you make of all of the varied verbal, nonverbal (e.g., looking down, flirting, etc.) communications?
- How do you interpret the para-linguistic (i.e., intonation in her voice, volume, etc.) messages?
- What elements of her style or her message did you pay attention to?
- How did you "feel" about Kim?
- What did you want to do?
- What are your feelings about the possibility of working with Kim?

Compare your observations and conclusions with a colleague's or classmate's: Did he or she focus on other data? Have other feelings? How might one's focus be influenced by personal values, beliefs, prejudices, or ethics? What role might the "person" of the helper play in defining the nature and direction of this helping relationship?

While the person of the helper will come into play in shaping the process of helping, it is important that as professionals we employ a standard of service, a guide to performance, one that helps to place a governor on the influence that our own personal values and subjectivity can exert within

the relationship. That governor is found within each of the human service profession's codes of ethics. It is a governor that moves our helping from personal to professional.

THE HELPING PROCESS: ● THE MEETING OF CLIENT AND HELPER

Albeit a very unique and special relationship, the helping relationship is *first and foremost* exactly that, a relationship. It is important to note that too often in our eagerness to be of assistance, we rush in with our answers, our directions, and our solutions, trying desperately to do something to “solve the problem.” We must remember that helping is a process that not only assists clients in their goal attainment but also positions them to be better able to cope in the future. It is a process that is *realized* in the context of a helping relationship (Parsons & Zhang, 2014). The quality of the relationship is therefore the keystone to the helping process and thus needs to be of primary concern to all seeking to develop their helping skills.

Helping: A Special Kind of Interpersonal Process and Response

Social encounters and social relationships are not unfamiliar. The normal chitchat nature of these encounters is more or less familiar and comfortable for all of us. The helping relationship, however, is quite different from these typical social encounters. It is a relationship with singular focus on the needs of the client and one in which the role and functioning of the helper is guided by professional standards and ethics of service rather than personal wants or needs.

Helping is a process by which one person, the helper, interacts with another in a way to facilitate this other's (the client's) involvement and movement toward specific outcomes. Unlike most social exchanges, *primacy is given to one member*, the client. It is the client's needs, concerns, and goals that are the focus of the encounter. It is the client's welfare that is the focus of the relationship and the driving force behind the ethical helper's decision-making. Consider the exchange provided in Case Illustration 1.2.

Like other social encounters, this one is marked by verbal exchanges and sharing of information. While it is certainly an interaction, it differs from the more typical social exchange, not just in the content of the interaction but also in the fundamental nature of that content. In this and all helping exchanges, the nature and substance is the matter of the client. As with other social encounters, there is a goal implied, but this again reflects the need and current

Case Illustration 1.2

Telephone Crisis Worker

Crisis: Intervention Worker: Yes, ma'am. I can hear that you are very upset.

I know it seems scary. Yes, ma'am, I am here, I am listening. Could you describe what is happening?

Client: (Voice on the Phone Screaming): My baby is turning blue . . . oh, my God . . . my baby . . . my baby!

Helper: (Interrupting): Ma'am! Ma'am!

Client: (Trying to Catch her Breath): Yes?

Helper: It is important for you to try to focus on what I am telling you. Can you hear me?

Client: Yes . . . but my . . .

Helper: (Interrupting): I know it's hard for you to keep listening to my voice, but you must try. Roll your baby over on her stomach, place your left hand under her belly, and lift her stomach off the floor. Now with your right hand give her a gentle yet firm slap in the middle of the back, between her shoulder blades. Go ahead, you do that and tell me what's happening. I can hear you.

(The helper continues talking as she listens to the mother.)
Good . . . I can hear the baby now, the baby is crying, that's good. Open the baby's mouth, put your finger in, and clears out anything that may be inside her mouth.

Great . . . her cries are clear and strong.

Client: (Sobbing): She . . . she is looking better; she coughed up a plastic grape.

Thank you, thank you . . . you saved her life.

state of the client, not the helper, and emphasizes the utilization of the client's resources and movement toward a specific outcome (Parsons & Zhang, 2014). While the helper in this situation may have been about to take a coffee break or may have felt anxious and wished she could have simply handed the phone to another, it was not her needs that were central to this encounter.

As a result of this “focus on one,” the purpose and outcome of the interaction reflect the needs and goals of that one, and these are specified and terminal. Unlike other social encounters that may be open-ended, with both parties remaining engaged as long as their individual needs are being met, the helping relationship is designed to achieve some specific goal, in service of the client, and then terminate with the achievement of that goal. Once the goal is attained, the need for the helping relationship no longer exists. This outcome-specific and terminal nature of helping cannot be forgotten. Nor can the helper forget that it is the needs, concerns, and goals of the client which are primary to the shaping and development of the helping relationship and not their own. This point is highlighted across our various codes of ethics (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Ethical Principles Promoting the Welfare of the Client(s)

<i>Professional Organization</i>	<i>Ethical Principle</i>
American Counseling Association (2014)	A.1. Client welfare a. Primary responsibility. The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.
American Psychological Association (2010)	Principle E. Respect for people’s rights and dignity Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination.
National Association of Social Workers (2008)	1.01. Commitment to clients Social workers’ primary responsibility is to promote the well being of clients. In general, clients’ interests are primary.
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (2015)	1. Responsibility to clients Marriage and family therapists advance the welfare of families and individuals.
American School Counselor Association (2010)	A.1. Responsibility to students School counselors (a) have a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals. B.1. Responsibilities to parents/guardians School counselors (b) respect the rights and responsibilities of custodial and noncustodial parents/guardians and, as appropriate, establish a collaborative relationship with parents/guardians to facilitate students’ maximum development.

When the needs, wants, and concerns of the helper take center stage at the expense of the client, we have the potential for unethical behavior and a less than helping exchange. Exercise 1.2 should help to clarify this important distinction between a helping encounter and other social interactions.

Exercise 1.2

Helping as a Unique Social Encounter

Directions: Complete the exercise and then share your responses with a colleague or classmate to see how individual differences can impact the responses and the potential for the helping process.

Part I: Below you will find three different types of social encounters in which you may be currently engaged or may be seeking to develop. Select one of these encounters and write your responses to the questions that follow.

Relationships:

- A relationship with a person to whom you are attracted
- A relationship with a person of authority who evaluates your performance (e.g., professor, supervisor, boss, etc.)
- An encounter with a possible employer.

Questions:

- What is your primary goal for this encounter? What would you like to achieve or gain through this relationship?
- Assuming that your goal is achieved, what need(s) within you would be met?
- How might your need and your desire to achieve this specific goal impact your style of interacting? What would you share or not share? How would you share it? How would you behave? As you interact with this other person, what thoughts and concerns might you experience?

Using your written responses regarding your goal, needs, and interactional style, how might these factors affect the nature of a helping relationship should you, the helper, bring them to this exchange? Why is it important for you to reflect on these factors now and as you grow professionally?

THE ROLE OF THE CLIENT IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE ●

On a surface level, the roles and functions of the participants in this formal helping process are clear. The client brings concerns to a trained helper and expects the helper to help formulate appropriate goals and to employ effective strategies that will realize those goals. What could be simpler? But helping, as noted, is a relationship in which the unique roles and responsibilities of the participants are not always simple or clear.

Some helpers, in their eagerness to be of assistance, deprive the client of the opportunity to take an active role within the helping process. These helpers often relegate the clients to the role of a “victimized party” in need of the helper’s assistance and thus place the brunt of the responsibility of the process of change on the helper’s shoulders.

The perspective taken here is that helping is a collaborative process, with both the helper and the client having responsibilities and roles to be played within the process. Such collaboration is evidence of the helpers valuing and respecting the autonomy of the client, a position articulated throughout our various professional codes of ethics (e.g., American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy [AAMFT], American Counseling Association [ACA], American Psychological Association [APA], American School Counselor Association [ASCA], National Association of Social Workers [NASW]).

While there is a unique role to be played by the helper, the client also has both a role and responsibility within the relationship. For example, clients can be expected to not only set and keep appointments and pay fees agreed upon but also to help plan goals, follow through with agreed upon goals, and keep the helper informed about progress toward those goals. And it is the ethical responsibility of the helper to assist the client to understand and enact his or her role.

Freedom and Responsibility to Choose Wisely

If we revisit the client-helper exchange that opened this chapter, we might question both the “freedom” and the “choice” afforded Maria, the client. It is clear, at least from her initial presentation, that her perspective was that she “*had to come to talk with*” Ms. Wicks.

While absolute freedom may not be afforded clients under certain conditions (such as those who are involuntarily committed), even these clients have the freedom and responsibility to choose wisely within the more narrowed range of choice provided (see Chapter 8). Through open communication with the helper, the client will develop a realistic expectation about treatment and treatment outcome. With this knowledge, the client can decide if and to

what degree he or she wants to be engaged in this helping relationship. Even Maria has the freedom to choose to come, to stay, or to even talk. The helper, Ms. Wicks, can assist Maria to understand these options, along with the possible consequence for each. It is then Maria's role, as client, to decide what she wants from the helping process and what she is willing to do to achieve this goal.

Assume Control of Their Participation in the Helping Process

Helping is not something one does to another; it is a process that one does with another. Helping works best when clients enter into the process voluntarily and assume some control over it. Even when a client is required, forced, or coerced to come for help, progress will be facilitated by assisting the client to affirm the relevance of the helping and to develop a willingness to participate in the process. This is true even if the only control clients wish to exert is to terminate the relationship, which is their right. As noted by one organization's code of ethics, counselors respect the right of the client to even "refuse service" (ACA, 2014, A.2.e).

It is incumbent on the ethical helper to assist the client to see the potential benefit of this helping relationship while affirming his or her right to assume control over his or her participation. Case Illustration 1.3 reveals how a helper who believes that the client has the right and responsibility to assume control can facilitate the development of a helping relationship in which control and direction is shared.

Case Illustration 1.3

Maria Assumes Control

The following exchange occurred shortly after Ms. Wicks greeted Maria and invited her to take a seat.

Maria: I don't want to be here, I didn't do anything.

Ms. Wicks: You sound like you don't want to be here, but you are. Would you like to return to class?

Maria: No way! He is a jerk!

Ms. Wicks: Well, we have 20 minutes before the next change of class. If you would like, maybe you could tell me what happened?

	Maybe in talking about it we could come up with a plan to make it better.
Maria:	I don't like talking.
Ms. Wicks:	Well, you don't have to, and if you would rather, you could spend the rest of the period in the career center or reviewing college brochures. But you do look and sound upset and I would like to help if I could.
Maria:	Let me just take a minute. Can I get a drink of water? I'll be right back and I'll tell you what happened.

Imagine the impact on this helping relationship and the possibility of providing Maria help if Ms. Wicks, the helper, took a rigid, authoritative stance, stating "Sit down young lady! If Mr. Brady sent you here, you will stay here!"

The specific details over what falls within the realm of control of the client and what belongs to the helper are not predefined. Early in the development of each helping relationship, roles and boundaries need to be established (see Chapter 8). The specifics will vary according to the nature of the problem at hand, the therapeutic approach employed, and the specific orientation and values of the participants.

Make Use of the Information Provided?

It is hoped that the client will assume a role that shows both an interest in understanding the nature of the current situation and a desire to develop either a different coping style or a different life position. It is, however, a role that they have a right not to embrace. A helper may make recommendations and suggestions that if accepted by the client may facilitate the achievement of his or her goal. The client, however, is under no obligation to follow the specific recommendations or suggestions of the helper. The client can and will decide how he or she will employ the information provided.

The fact that a client can decide to use or not use the advice, the information, or the insight gained by working with a helper may appear obvious. Yet it is not unusual for a helper who has extended himself or herself to a client to feel disappointed, perhaps even angry, at a client who appears to be less than compliant. This point may become a bit clearer after completing Exercise 1.3.

Exercise 1.3

A Client Chooses to Reject Help

Directions: The following is a brief exchange between Alice (the client) and Tim (social worker). Tim has been working with Alice in a program geared to help single mothers find employment. This is the sixth time they have met.

As you read the vignette, try to place yourself in the shoes of the helper. After reading the case illustration, respond to the following questions. As with previous exercises, it may prove beneficial for you to share your responses with a colleague.

Alice: (the client): Hi. Sorry I'm late, but I got a phone call from an old friend just as I was going out the door.

Tim: (the helper): Well, Alice, we have approximately 20 minutes left in your appointment. How about we use the remainder of the session to discuss how well you did with your telephone calls?

Alice: I know I agreed to attempt to call at least three jobs for possible interviews, but this was a busy week. Plus I had a friend in town and we wanted to hang out a little. So I just kinda figured we could do it another time.

Tim: Okay, but in addition to making the calls, you also agreed to complete the interest inventory I gave you. Maybe we could review your profile. Do you have that?

Alice: Oh, the inventory . . . you know what, I remember you giving it to me, but I think I must have misplaced it or something. Do you have another one? I could try to complete it for next time.

Tim: Alice, I am a bit confused. We have been meeting for six weeks, and even though you stated that you really want to work on identifying a possible career path and to get back to work, you seem to have some difficulty following through on the things we discuss. Each time we have decided on some type of "homework," such as looking at ads from the paper or social network sites, going to speak with a nurse's aide about her experiences in that career, or the interest inventory, you have had difficulty completing the tasks.

Alice: Well, I'm sorry, but a lot of the things you suggest seem dumb. And other things are just not convenient for me to do! So what should I do now?

Now that you have read the scenario, respond to the following questions. You may want to share your ideas with a colleague:

- If you were the helper in this scenario, how might you be feeling about Alice?
- How might your feelings about Alice be manifested in your interchange? How may they impact your desire to work with Alice?
- How would you respond to Alice's comment that "a lot of the things you suggest seem dumb"?
- At this point how easy is it for you to remember that the client has a right to choose the degree to which he or she will follow your recommendations?
- If the client called and wanted your assistance with another problem, would you be willing to help?

When a helper has invested time, energy, and part of the self into supporting a client, it may be hard for him or her to accept the client freedom to use or not use the help provided. And yet, that is the client's right, and as professional helpers, we need to guard against the loss of our objectivity and the making of our needs as primary, two conditions that can result in our violation of professional boundaries (See Chapters 10 and 14). Respecting the right of the client to choose can place the professional in personal and sometimes legal pressure points and thus is not always easy to enact. This is more dramatically brought home in situations in which the client's choice is to ignore the helper's recommendations and advice results in the client's loss of life (see Case Illustration 1.4).

Case Illustration 1.4

A Client Chooses Death

Roberto is a 67-year-old widower with two adult children. At the age of 60, Roberto was diagnosed with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). Over the course of the last year, Roberto has experienced a rapid decline in his health and has become depressed. Dr. Sebring, a pastoral

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counselor, has been working with Roberto for his depression. Dr. Sebring has been employing a number of cognitive techniques to help Roberto reframe his life condition in such a way as to reestablish meaning, even with his disease. Roberto has been very engaged in his counseling and employed the various techniques and strategies suggested by Dr. Sebring. As a result of his involvement in counseling, Roberto has found relief from his depression.

Roberto's disease has been progressing, and within the last week, he has lost his ability to swallow. Roberto's physician wants to insert a feeding tube, but Roberto has refused this procedure. Dr. Sebring has continued to work with Roberto, encouraging him to embrace life and to follow his physician's recommendation. Roberto, however, is clear and determined that he does not want to be admitted into a hospital, nor does he want to have the feeding tube inserted. Roberto refuses to accept the recommendations of either his physician or Dr. Sebring, knowing full well that his refusal will result in his starvation and death.

While it may be hard for any helper to accept a client's refusal to accept and follow a recommendation designed to maintain life, the fact remains that the decision, even this life and death decision, rests with the client. It is the client who will ultimately decide if and how to use the information and the assistance provided, even when not following such assistance results in his or her death.

● THE ROLE OF THE HELPER IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

As noted throughout the previous section, the helping process is clearly a joint venture, with significant roles to be played by both the client and helper. But even with the assumptions about client responsibilities, one cannot forget that the client comes to the helping relationship often confused, anxious, and most certainly vulnerable. Helping is a relationship of power: The helper is entrusted to use that power wisely and ethically (see Chapter 10), with the client's welfare being central. This concern for client welfare serves as the organizing principle behind the various roles assumed and practices employed by those within the human service professions. Most standards (see Table 1.1.) include statements such as that presented by the ACA, "The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients" (ACA, 2014, Principle A.1.a).

Although the specific way this obligation and role of the helper is manifested will be influenced by the theoretical approach, the nature of the problem, the unique characteristics of the client, and the context within which the help is provided, there are a number of responsibilities that universally fall to the helper in a helping relationship. Helpers are generally responsible for the following: (a) defining and maintaining a helping relationship; (b) facilitating a helping alliance; and (c) facilitating the client's movement toward some specific outcome.

Defining and Maintaining a Helping Relationship

The helping relationship is oftentimes very intense and almost always intimate. Clients are invited to disclose the very personal details of their lives and their situations. A helping relationship is characterized by a power differential that leaves the client vulnerable to the helper's actions. Therefore, it is the helper who has the ethical responsibility for the nature and direction of the relationship (Parsons & Zhang, 2014). The helper is ethically responsible for creating and maintaining the boundaries that keep the client safe during these vulnerable times (see Chapter 8) and competently providing service that has a reasonable chance of assisting the client (see Chapter 11).

Unlike other relationships in which the goal is to respond to and care for each other's needs, in helping it is the helper's responsibility to address the client's needs and NOT the other way around. The helper is responsible for defining and maintaining some control over the types of information being discussed and the nature of the relationship as appropriate to the client. Relationships in which the helper is using the interaction with the client to meet his or her own needs threaten this principle of professional contact. Returning, for example, to the *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014), we see the mandates to not only avoid sexual and romantic relationships (ACA, 2014, A.5.a) but to also be aware to be cautious anytime extending the boundaries outside of the confines of the professional interaction (ACA, 2014, A.6.b) "to ensure that judgment is not impaired and no harm occurs." Consider the following case illustration (Case Illustration 1.5) as it elucidates this point.

Case Illustration 1.5 highlights the danger when the helper's needs take center stage at the cost of the client. For a human service provider to maintain focus on the client and client welfare, they must be aware of their own unmet needs and the possibility that these may impact their objectivity and ability to provide ethical, effective service. This issue is further developed in the upcoming chapters, especially Chapter 10 (Boundaries and the Ethical Use of Power) and Chapter 14 (Competence and the Ethics of Self-Care).

Case Illustration 1.5

A Helper Who Needs to Be Needed

Aneesha is a school counselor in a public middle school. She has been working for the past month with Leonard, a seventh-grade student. His homeroom teacher referred him to the school counselor. The teacher expressed her concern that Leonard was very shy and somewhat vulnerable to being manipulated by his peers. The teacher thought that Leonard could use some assertiveness training.

Aneesha has recently divorced. She has found herself feeling lonely and has tried to compensate by spending more time at work. Aneesha comes early to school and stays late. She has begun to contact students with whom she had previously worked, checking on their status and asking if they would like to come into talk with her.

Aneesha has worked with Leonard for the past 5 weeks, and his homeroom teacher has noted a change in Leonard. Leonard appears more verbally expressive, both in class and with peers. Further, Leonard has made it very clear to his teacher that he would like to discontinue counseling. Leonard explained to his teacher that he had asked Aneesha if he could stop coming for a while, and she said that it wasn't time yet. Leonard asked if the teacher would talk to the counselor.

The teacher shared her observations with the counselor along with Leonard's request. However, the counselor responded in no uncertain terms that she was the professional and "knew when it was right to stop."

However, prior to moving to these later chapters and their in-depth discussion of this issue, we invite you to consider the following exercise (Exercise 1.4), as it raises your own awareness of the potential for such intrusion of personal needs and violations of professional boundaries.

Recognizing the potential negative impact that one's unmet needs and concerns may have on the helping relationship is an essential step, yet not sufficient. In addition to recognizing these unmet needs, the ethical helper needs to be able to maintain his or her professional role and emotional objectivity throughout the helping encounter. One strategy employed by many helpers in establishing and maintaining the helping relationship is to formally define the nature and boundaries of the relationship in terms of a helping contract. Such a contract provides the client with the information necessary for him or her to provide consent for service (see Chapter 8) and can serve as a means for clarifying the nature, limits, responsibilities,

Exercise 1.4

Recognizing a Helper's Unmet Needs

Directions: Along with a classmate or colleague, review the following case description. Then read the descriptions of the five helpers listed below.

The case situation and client description: The client is a 45-year-old mother of four. She came to a marriage counselor, complaining that her husband was insensitive to her needs as a woman and as a person. In her sessions, she described her husband as traditional and somewhat chauvinistic. She stated that while he was a good provider, he was not willing to allow her to go back to school and develop a career of her own. When discussing their sexual relationship, the woman complained that her husband had a low sex drive while she was very sexual and would like to experiment with creative sexual activities.

Five potential therapists:

- A female therapist who divorced her husband, returned to school, and just completed her degree
- A male therapist who comes from a traditional family and who himself has a stay-at-home wife and three children
- A male therapist who is married and is currently having financial difficulties
- A therapist who came from a broken home in which the divorce process was very drawn out and painful
- A therapist who has been without an intimate partner for over two years

Next:

- Identify each helper's possible unmet needs.
- Discuss the ways that the various helper characteristics and potential unmet needs may negatively impact the helping relationship.

and rights of the helping relationship. In developing a contract, the helper encourages the client to specify goals and expectations as well as to affirm the boundaries of the relationship. While there are no hard and fast rules about the elements of a helping contract, items that seem to be essential to

the informing nature of contracts have been identified by Bennett, Bryant, VandenBos, & Greenwood (1990) and are presented in Table 1.2.

Even though not all helpers endorse the value of a formal contract, all of our codes of conduct and ethical practice direct us to share information within the capacity of the client to understand that information and do so in language appropriate to the client's level of comprehension (see Chapter 8).

Facilitating the Development of a Helping Alliance

A second responsibility of a helper is to facilitate the development of a working relationship with the client. It is important for the helper to attempt to reduce the client's initial anxiety by providing the facilitative conditions for helping. Creating a warm and workable relationship in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance is primary to the helping process.

Table 1.2 Elements of a Written Contract

While we are not suggesting the use of a contract as a risk management technique, one should consult local laws that govern contracting, especially in terms of consumer rights. If a contract is employed, the following are some of the elements to be considered for inclusion:

- Name of helper and client
- A preliminary schedule of sessions
- A date when sessions will begin
- A statement of goals
- A description of the model, techniques, and strategies to be used
- A description of potential negative effects of treatment
- A description of alternative techniques that might be employed, along with a willingness to assist the client to find these alternatives
- Fee structure and payment schedule
- Statement regarding fee policy for missed appointments, telephone contacts, and so forth
- A statement regarding the limits of confidentiality
- A statement of "no guarantee" of success and invitation regarding freedom to renegotiate the terms of the contract at any time
- Signatures that identify client understanding and acceptance

(Adapted from Bennett, Bryant, VandenBos, & Greenwood, 1990)

Therefore, in addition to increasing our self-awareness of the limiting and potentially negative impact our biases may have on the helping process, it is also clear that we, as helpers, need to develop a number of values and attitudes that assist the client to begin to share his or her story.

The effective, ethical helper will demonstrate qualities of acceptance, warmth, and genuineness (Parsons & Zhang, 2014; Principe, Marci, Glick, & Ablon, 2006). While these conditions may not be sufficient for positive outcomes in every case, it does appear that they are key to the helping alliance and contribute in a facilitative way to the positive outcomes of helping. Just as it may be assumed that ethical helpers are knowledgeable and skilled, they must also be people who can demonstrate these facilitative qualities of acceptance, warmth, and genuineness.

As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 14 (Competence and the Ethics of Self-Care), the demonstration of these qualities can be eroded because of conditions such as burnout and compassion fatigue. The very nature of our work makes us vulnerable to physical, emotional, social, and spiritual exhaustion. As such, it is the ethical responsibility of all human service providers to (a) know the signs of burnout and compassion fatigue, (b) engage in strategies that prevent or reduce the possibility of encountering these conditions, and (c) if needed, take steps to protect themselves and their clients if in the grips of either burnout or compassion fatigue.

Facilitating the Client's Movement Toward Some Specific Outcome

In addition to providing the structure and conditions of a helping relationship, the helper is expected to bring special knowledge and skill to the interaction, which, when applied within the helping process, will assist the client to more effectively cope with the issue at hand. A fundamental principle to which all professional groups subscribe is that a helper must be aware of the limitations of her professional competencies and not exceed those limitations in the delivery of her services.

When operating alone in our offices with no faculty member or supervisor looking over our shoulder, our real desire to help the client before us may seduce us into trying new techniques or approaches or even attempting to help with problems that are beyond our training and our experience. Knowing the limits of our competence; being willing to seek ongoing training, supervision, and consultation; or making a referral to another helper when the situations calls for knowledge and skills outside our competency are all characteristic of an ethical helper, a point that will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming chapters.

● CONCLUDING CASE ILLUSTRATION

We began the chapter with a brief introduction to Maria, a client seeking the assistance of the school counselor, Ms. Wicks. We will continue to follow the development of the helping encounter between Maria and Ms. Wicks throughout the upcoming chapters.

As you read the expanded case illustration, try to identify the presence of the various concepts and important terms described within the chapter. Further, as you read the case, place yourself in the role of the helper and begin to identify the various concerns and areas of ethical consideration you might experience in that role.

Maria: Hi. Are you Ms. Wicks? I'm Maria. Mr. Brady told me that I had to come talk with you.

Ms. Wicks: Hi. Yes, I am Ms. Wicks (getting up to shake Maria's hand). Why don't you come in and have a seat? (Ms. Wicks makes a mental note about Maria's appearance. Maria, while appearing annoyed, is a very attractive girl. She looks you in the eye as she speaks and appears self-confident. Maria's manner of dress is somewhat seductive. Her skirt is very short and tight and her sweater has a very low neckline.)

Maria: I don't want to be here. I didn't do anything.

Ms. Wicks: You sound like you don't want to be here, but you are here. Would you like to return to class?

Maria: No way! He's a jerk!

Ms. Wicks: You certainly sound angry. Maria, I know you said you don't want to be here, but since you are I would love to hear what happened and see if I could be of some help? We have 20 minutes before the next change of class. If you would like, maybe you could tell me what happened? Maybe in talking about it we could come up with a plan to make it better.

Maria: I don't like talking.

Ms. Wicks: Well you don't have to. It really is your choice. If you prefer you could spend the rest of the period in the career center or reviewing college brochures? But you do look and sound upset and I would like to help if I could.

Maria: Let me just take a minute. Can I get a drink of water? I'll be right back and I'll tell you what happened.

Ms. Wicks: (after Maria comes back): Well, how was that? Better? You know I really do understand it is a bit strange to talk to someone you don't know. But I've been able to meet and talk with a lot of the people here at school, and it has been my experience that sometimes this has been very helpful. You may or may not know, but I am a school counselor, and I have been trained to help people problem solve. Do you have any questions about what I do here or what a school counselor is?

Maria: No, not really. You spoke with one of my friends who was having problems with his mom and dad. Did you see Jose Ramirez?

Ms. Wicks: You know Maria, one of the things I think is very important when I work with people is that I respect their privacy. In fact, when you and I talk about some things, I will keep them in confidence. I mean, I won't tell anyone about what we talk about without your permission. Now there are some exceptions to that, like if you tell me you are going to hurt yourself or try to hurt someone else, then I can't keep that secret. Your life is too important to me, so I would want to get as many people as possible to help me keep you safe.

Maria: Yeah, I know about confidentiality. I've gone to a shrink before.

Ms. Wicks: Since we have a few more minutes, maybe we could talk about getting together later today so that you could tell me what happened, and maybe together we could decide if you and I could work on it? What do you think?

Maria: Yeah, that's cool. I have a report to give in my next class, but then I have study hall after that. Could I come back then?

Ms. Wicks: (looking at her calendar): Yes, I'm free. That's my lunchtime. How about if we share a sandwich here in the office and get to know each other a bit better?

Maria: Okay.

Ms. Wicks: (reaching in her desk): Here is a pass. So I'll see you at 12:15. There's the bell. Get back to your class, and give a great report! See you in a bit!

Reflections

1. Did you see any evidence of the creation of boundaries to this relationship?
2. Did Maria enact the role and responsibilities of a client, which were discussed within the chapter?

3. If you were the helper in this situation, how might Maria's appearance, style, or story impact your objectivity or ability to be an effective, ethical helper?
4. What do you think Ms. Wicks needs to consider as she prepares to continue to enact her role as an ethical helper, meeting with Maria at 12:15?

● COOPERATIVE LEARNING EXERCISE

The purpose of this chapter was not only to introduce you to the nature of the helping process, the roles to be played by both the client and the helper, and the unique ethical challenges to be confronted within this role of helper but also to have you think about your own self in the role of helping. Being in touch with what you bring to the helping encounter is an essential first step to becoming an ethical and effective helper. Therefore, before proceeding to the next chapter, reflect on the following and discuss your reflections with a supervisor, colleague, or classmate.

- Review your responses to this chapter's exercises. Were you honest? Did you invest energy in responding? If not, why not? What might this suggest about your investment in becoming an effective, ethical helper?
- What did you learn about yourself as a helper? What specific elements of helping as presented within this chapter excite you or concern you?
- Which particular characteristics of the effective, ethical helper do you feel you possess most strongly, and which do you feel you need to focus on developing?
- How might you approach the reading, the exercises, and the reflections in the next chapter to maximize your development as a more self-aware, ethical helper?

● SUMMARY

- The complexity and dynamic nature of the helping process is infused with subjectivity, intuition, and confusion, rendering its facilitation as much an art as a science.
- While a foundation of theory and research serves as the base for effective helping, the dynamic process is highly influenced by the personal application and artistry of the helper as he or she adapts technology and research findings to the unique characteristics of individual clients.

- Unlike other social encounters, helping is a process that places focus, emphasis, and value on the needs of one member, the client.
- The role of the helper is first and foremost to attend to the welfare of the client.
- It is important for the ethical helper to inform the client of the nature and limits of the helping relationship.
- It is essential that the ethical helper be aware of and take steps to assure that his personal needs do not intrude and affect the helping dynamic.
- For a human service provider to maintain focus on the client and client welfare, they must be aware of their own unmet needs and the possibility that these may impact their objectivity and ability to provide ethical, effective service.

IMPORTANT TERMS ●

boundaries

emotional objectivity

burnout

promoting the welfare of the client

compassion fatigue

right to refuse

competence

unmet needs

defining and maintaining a helping relationship

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ●

Print

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Web-Based

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