

How To Assess Differences in Communication Styles

This exercise can be used by counselors and clinical supervisors as a self-assessment tool and a means of exploring differences in communication styles among counselors, clients, and supervisors. It can also serve as a group exercise to help clients discuss and understand cultural differences in communicating with others. This self-administered tool promotes self-understanding and cultural knowledge. It is not an empirically based instrument, nor is it meant to assess client communication styles or skills formally.

Materials needed: Colored pencils/pens and copies of the exercise.

Instructions:

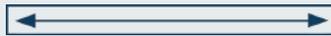
- First, place an X along the line for each item that best matches your style or pattern of communication overall. Communication patterns can change across situations and environments depending on expectations, stress level, and familiarity, (e.g., attending a staff meeting versus spending time with friends); try to assign the style that best reflects your patterns across situations.
- After reviewing your own patterns, compare differences between you and your client, clinical supervisor, or fellow staff member. For example, select a recent client you treated and place a second X (using a different color pen) on each line to mark your perceived view of this client's communication style. Then examine the differences between you and your client and generate a list of potential misunderstandings that could occur due to these differences. Use clinical supervision to discuss how your own patterns can hinder and/or promote the counseling process.

NONVERBAL PATTERNS

Eye Contact

When talking:

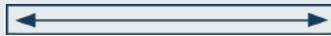
Direct, sustained



Indirect or not sustained

When listening:

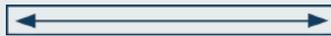
Direct, sustained



Indirect or not sustained

Vocal Pitch/Tone

High/loud



Low/soft

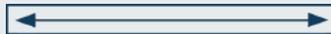
More expressive



Less expressive

Speech Rate

Fast



Slow

Pauses or Silence

Little use of silence in dialog



Pauses; uses silence in dialog

Facial Expressions

Frequent expression



Little expression

Use of Other Gestures

Frequent expression



Little expression

VERBAL PATTERNS

Emotional Expression

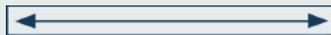
Does express and identify feelings in speech



Does not express or identify feelings in speech

Self-Disclosure

Frequently



Rarely or little

Formality

Informal



Formal in addressing others and showing respect

(Continued on the next page.)