Introduction to the Video

Purpose:
The purpose of this video is to demonstrate how traditional application of Microcounseling Basic Attending Skills and Basic Influencing Skills may differ when counseling client diagnosed by DSM IV –Axis II Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD). Most of antisocial clients avoid participating in counseling by denying or criticizing the value of counseling to solve problems. These clients generally put little value in reflective thinking as a means of changing their behaviors. They generally attend counseling because they have been referred to by the courts, by their families or by their employers. The video therefore has been designed to demonstrate the most effective manner in which to use BAS and BIS communication skills for mental health professional treating person diagnosed as Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) as defined in DSM IV. Though the focus of this video is on ASPD, some of the same communications issues are frequently seen with a person diagnosed as Narcissistic Personality or Borderline Personality Disorder.

The video is not designed to advocate any theory but to demonstrate that BAS and BIS communication skills can be adapted to provide the skills necessary for effective counseling of resistant clients regardless of theoretical orientation. Roger MacKinnon M.D. described the counseling sessions as being similar to a play with a beginning, middle and an end.

“Problems and events characteristics of each phase develop in an expected order; and a brief vignette taken out of context can frequently be identified as coming from one or the other portion of the session. The progression is a result of the emergent emotional interplay between two people just as in a play reflects the developing interaction between characters”

However, in the counseling session, the antisocial behavioral traits often prevent the traditional emotional interplay between client and counselor to evolve. For example, to the antisocial action is more important than thought or communication. Talking to another person is only of use if that person is a means to some concrete end, modifying the emergent emotional interplay between counselor and client. Another factor, that modifies the interplay, is that most antisocial clients are not self referred. Therefore it may require that certain adjustment to BAS/BIS communication skills be utilized when counseling the antisocial. Counseling the antisocial client may be requires a multicultural approach to counseling. There have been a numerous books on training counselors to be effective in working with clients of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Most counselors can, with proper training, be an effective counselor to persons of all ethnic and
racial backgrounds. However, this may not be the case when working with ASAD clients. A number of writers in the field of personality disorders have suggested that the most effective counselors working with antisocial clients should have some degree of entrepreneurial spirit that allows them to be in touch with the narcissism and grandiosity inherent in these clients. Regardless, they must learn to communicate.

**Video Demonstration**
The video contains one case study: A 35 year divorced encounters a man that is dating, his ex-wife, a series of harsh remarks pass between the two men. These remarks generate into a fight. The fight results in a gun being drawn and the arrest of the client. The client has two options, attending counseling for 6 to 8 months or 2 years in jail. He chooses counseling which will require him to look at the dysfunctional behavior that has lead to a series of incidents similar, this being the worst. The video is divided into three phases:

**THE OPENING PHASE:** Defining goals and beginning the establishment of the therapeutic alliance.

**Client’s Goals**
- Unlike the typical client that comes into counseling for some specific reason or some blurred reason, the antisocial comes into counseling usually under pressure of having been referred.
- Consequently, he/she arrives at the counseling session seeking some specific goal(s) and looks to the counselor to help achieve their goal (s) i.e. if referred to by an employer he/she making be seeking help in obtaining workman’s compensation, if the referral has been made by the courts, wants something from the judge and a very common situation is he has been referred to by the spouse, he/she is looking for an ally.
- The antisocial may experience all types of inner pain but seeks only support in dealing with that which is concrete, the real world as he/she sees it.

**Counselor’s Goals**
- The counselor will experience the burden of trying to establish a reason for the client coming to counseling other than as a result of referral by courts, family, and employer. The process of establishing a reason, other than referral, begins with the initial interview and will continue throughout the meeting with the counselor as the counselor strives to establish the therapeutic alliance.
- Frequently counselor finds it difficult in understanding or accepting a person so unlike themselves. On the other hand counselors/therapists often experience voyeuristic or unconscious admiration for the client who seems to experience “gratification or pleasure in what is conflicting or forbidden for normal behavior.”
- In spite of these conditions and limitations, the counselor understands that the
client’s inability to experience satisfaction or gratification in human relationship results in their seeking dysfunctional forms of pleasure and it becomes the counselors goal to help the antisocial client come to understand and hopefully modify their behavior.

The combination of these factors can influence the counselor’s ability to attend to their client. *The counselor’s eye contact, vocal tone, physical posture will be studied by the client.* The antisocial will look for any indication of disapproval that may appear on the part of the counselor. In addition they will look for any indication that the counselor may be in awe of the client’s ability to ignore or be hampered by social behavioral demands. As he or she scrutinizes the counselor, they generally conduct themselves in a manner that they hope will gain some sort of privilege from the counselor for participating in counseling. These attitudes make the first phase of attending skills challenging. However, the skill done well will create an atmosphere for establishing a relationship and will provide the opportunity to be successful in employing the more complex microcounseling skills.

**Questioning: Open and Close Ended**

The use of question with the antisocial client consists of the painstaking effort of making the antisocial client explore how non-conforming, conning behaviors, impulsivity and failure to plan ahead have caused him/her the predicament they find themselves. **Factually oriented closed question** will provide direction without forcing immediate exploration on current concerns. However, closed question have a tendency to intensify that of a hostile attitude toward authority and resistance to external controls. In addition closed questions prevent the client from introducing what the client believes are relevant issues. **The open ended question** will allow the client to discuss the problem as they see it. The open ended question will be easier for the client to respond to than ones focusing on the basis of their behaviors. The danger is that the antisocial client will to take control and focus the session in a direction they want. However since the antisocial persons are able to freely speak of their “subjective view of their situation” without much discomfort, they will also not have difficulty if they so desire in responding in a reasonable manner to the counselor’s questions. Since, the preferred modalities of treatment for these clients tend to be cognitive and behaviorally oriented. Open and closed questions are considered to be an effective and a necessary tool in treatment and counseling of the antisocial client.

**THE MIDWAY PHASE: Exploring the client’s problem**

As counseling progresses the counselor will begin the process of looking at the style of life and the manner in which antisocial relates both to people in general and the counselor. The process of shifting the sessions from what the antisocial client wants to discuss like, their painful feelings or dysfunctional behavior, requires the use of a variety exploration skills i.e. clarification, reflection of emotions, focus and confrontation. The skills that will be employed are a function of counselors, counseling style and their theoretical orientation.

**The skills least threatening to the client is clarification and paraphrasing.**
This skill indicates that the counselor is interested. And involved in what the client says regardless of how the antisocial conducts her/him self. Encouragers do not demand verbal demonstration; allowing the client control while the counselor can maintain a delicate control while a simple nod of the head is sufficient to demonstrate listening.

Paraphrasing on the other hand requires verbal interaction. The antisocial will watch for the signs of being misunderstood by the therapist there by reinforcing and justifying there feelings of distrust of others and being misunderstood even by the counselor. Paraphrasing may lessen the land mines that the client has set into motions. Another advantage is that paraphrasing is responding to what the client is saying and not interpreting their feelings. Paraphrasing seems to modulate affect in a supportive manner. Consequently, tension diminishes between antisocial and counselor, the therapeutic process can grow.

Reflection of Feeling and Emotions address the issue of empathy. Empathy as it relates to treatment of the antisocial client is complex. One reason is that generally the antisocial clients do not feeling empathy or the appreciation of others feelings or has a sense of guilt; a second reason is that the antisocial client’s behavior demonstrates that they consider their needs as more important than others and they lack a sense of guilt: a third reason is their denial of emotions; and a fourth reason is related to the different theories as to how helpful reflections of emotions are when counseling these clients. Alternative to reflection of feelings can be paraphrasing when reflection of effect may not be perceived as supportive.

Counseling and psychotherapy theories consider the need to deal with emotions as the key issues in the treatment of this disorder. Cognitive theory on the other hand focus is on cognition, making the right choices and understanding how dysfunctional behavior affects others as well as how their behavior shapes their lives. The Counselor taking these issues into consideration will decide on the using of the skill depending on the timing of the intervention, relationship that has developed between the antisocial client and the counselor, theoretical orientation.

Focusing can be directed to cultural issues, can be directed toward the therapeutic relationship (I/We) or on the client (you). Because the antisocial is characterized as unwilling to conform to social norms being deceitful, it may be useful for the counselor to understand the world and the culture of the client. They will feel less pressure and less need to defend their actions.

When employing the I/We focus the counselor is focusing on the therapeutic or interpersonal relationship between the counselor and client. Because these client’s disdain for personal relationships, he/she can experiences mutuality in relationship as negative. As the counselor tries to bridge the gap, they may experience the client as pulling back and sabotage the process.

The “you” focus is critical. It can create anger and be rejected by the client. However, as counseling proceeds and communication begins to open and trust develops between counselor and client it is critical that the focus is on “You.” It is only by recognizing on “You” will they begin to recognize that they have responsibility for their behavior.
Confrontation takes place when the counselor directs their attention to the client’s life style and manner in relation to others. As the counselor shift the dialogue from the issues that they want to discuss to issue related to their dysfunctional behaviors, dysfunctional beliefs and feelings, the counselor should expose them not attack them. However, no matter how careful the counselor’s timing, how sensitive the approach may be an argumentative and hostile response can be expected. Counselors faced with these realities may rely more on the use of questions rather than confrontation as a more effective way of clarifying the antisocial problems.

Feedback and Self Disclosure is used in order to let the client know how the counselor sees or hears them and to let the client know how they may be perceived by other. Feedback to be used effectively requires that there has been established a foundation of trust between the counselor and the antisocial client. Since feedback is being sent by a single person, a question remains as to whether they will recognize that his/her behavior effects others in a similar fashion. When the counselor uses self disclose it is to demonstrate or model behavior as well as to aide the client in finding a new perspective on his/her life situation. The self-disclosure should be selective; it should be used to help the client to keep on target and force them to continue to investigate their own problem situation. Another extremely important reason for the counselor to self-disclose is that there are indications, strong indication, that self-disclosure on the part of the counselor facilitates the therapeutic process. In summary self-disclosure and feedback should be in the counselor’s repertoire, using them will depend on the orientation and the style of the particular counselor.

Interpretation in the final skill in the systematic and development skills approach of Micorcounseling. Interpretation involves “restructuring or reconfiguring” of what the client may not be aware of nor want to acknowledge. An interpretation runs the risk of being rejected. Since most antisocial enter counseling by referral, there will be feelings and behaviors that can effectively be addressed relatively early in counseling by interpretation/ reframing. Carefully guided discussion questions lend themselves to restructuring or reconfiguration. For example, in discussing with the antisocial the circumstances leading up to the referral the counselor may have the client look at other situations where reaction towards him/her may lead to similar situations and reactions by others thereby guiding them to begin to identify patterns of behavior. Patterns are an elementary form of interpretation. limiting the need of skill of interpretation

Later in counseling, the client will usually become anxious and angry when exploring deep rooted behaviors thus making it exceeding difficult to pursue. It will also raises the issue of whether such insights may be worth pursuing. Early literature, written by psychoanalysts, stressed the importance of interpretation. Most of the recent literature suggests that cognitive behavior therapy to be the most successful mode treatment.

**THE SEPARATION PHASE:  Encouraging maintaining of the therapeutic alliance**
**Direction and directives** are deliberate intervention and are given with a specific purpose or outcome in mind by the counselor. Remembering that client has been referred, as the counselor makes demands, he is viewed as just one more authority figure that the client will direct their anger and resentment upon. The counselor may have to accept that for every one directive followed three might be ignored. If the antisocial can learn to follow directions, a limited number of directives, they have begun the process of working through attitudes toward authority and are developing a realistic understanding how they are related. By learning to accept direction both inside and outside counseling ht/she may have gained a limited control over their otherwise dysfunctional and self-destructive behaviors, making this skill an important one in treatment.

**Therapeutic Alliance** offers an opportunity for the antisocial client to explore aspects of behavior that they have been unable to acknowledge before. **If this relationship has been well grounded, it offers an important opportunity for the antisocial client to return at a later date when behavior becomes an issue once again.**

**Concluding Statement**

It will be the counselor, depending on their style and their theoretical orientation, to determine how and what skills are appropriate. Whatever the choice, the dysfunctional behaviors of the antisocial client must be modified if they are to achieve any level of interpersonal functioning. The microcounseling skills used in communicating with the antisocial client can provide a vehicle to help the antisocial client to modify their dysfunctional behaviors. The basic attending skills with a special emphasis on listening and questioning are primary. Influencing skills are relevant when a constructive relationship has been established between the counselor and their antisocial client. In addition the development approach provide for a beginning, middle and an end. Though the problems recur over and over again the utilization of the developmental sequence will allow the establishment both the therapeutic relationship and may promote a limited amount of change in the dysfunctional behavior of the antisocial client.