Career Counseling Skills for Contextual Decision Making

Video Leader Guide

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CAREER COUNSELING SKILLS FOR CONTEXTUAL DECISION MAKING

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Leader Guide is to introduce you to a training video entitled Career Counseling Skills for Contextual Decision Making (Warren, 2005) and suggest strategies for using it as a training tool. The video features Dr. Anika K. Warren demonstrating career counseling skills culled from multiple career counseling and development theories and techniques as well as multiple clinical theoretical orientations and multicultural counseling theories. The primary objective of this video is to facilitate the learning of graduate students and professionals interested in developing and/or improving their general, career, and multicultural counseling skills. In this video, Dr. Anika K. Warren demonstrates discrete skills in each segment by using different strategies and interventions to help the client make meaning out of his presenting concerns. This video is designed to be used in conjunction with other training modalities and counseling skills and is not designed to replicate an actual counseling session. That is, this video is not a comprehensive demonstrate of career or multicultural counseling techniques and will not highlight each counseling skill that is important for viewers to become culturally sensitive career counselors.

VIDEO DEMONSTRATIONS

This training video is based on an integration of multiple theories and models of career counseling and development. The video includes six career counseling skill segments. Each segment concludes with discussion questions and comments designed to enhance students training and development. This video features Dr. Anika K. Warren in counseling dyads with Douglas, an Asian/Vietnamese-American gay male client.
Douglas was referred as a video participant by a colleague of Dr. Warren and volunteered to share his personal experiences and career concerns to assist viewers in enhancing their understanding of career counseling and development and multicultural counseling. Prior to participating in this video, the client was not receiving counseling. However, he was struggling with the issues presented in the video, which is why he agreed to participate.

In Dr. Warren works with Douglas, viewers will observe how social, familial, cultural, and other personal factors influence the client’s career development. The career counseling skills highlighted in this video include: conducting an intake session, using cultural sensitivity in counseling, exploring how interpersonal, cultural, and vocational factors intersections in counseling and helping a client prioritize his counseling needs as he transitions from school (college) to work through an exploration of themes he presented in counseling. Since the client used in this video is not an actor it is expected that viewers will treat the material discussed in this video with cultural sensitivity and in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA).
Career Counseling Skill 1: Gathering background information and establishing a culturally-appropriate working alliance

Gathering background information and establishing a culturally-appropriate working alliance are important counseling skills that help the counselor understand the client. By asking open-ended questions and attempting to not make stereotypical assumptions about the client’s life experiences, Dr. Anika Warren attempts to increase her understanding of the client background and his verbal and non-verbal communication styles.

Content: Douglas begins to discuss what brought him to counseling and shared background information about his family, ethnicity, education, and upbringing. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 1 dyad.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out for you?
2. What are your general reactions to the client?
3. How might your reactions to the client benefit and challenge the counseling relationship?
4. What questions do you currently have about the client? How will your questions inform your career counseling work?
5. What theories and models are salient in this segment?
Comments:

Career counselors use career theories in combinations with more general theoretical orientations to generate questions and hypotheses. Skills used in this segment include, but are not limited to:

1. Listening actively, remaining neutral, and establishing rapport.
2. Beginning to explore potential interpersonal and vocational intersections.
3. Using culturally-appropriate language includes listening to the client and using similar language to that which is used by the client.

Theories and Models:

Theories and models used in this segment include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing a working consensus and identifying specific areas in which culture may play a role—as described in the Culturally Appropriate Model by Fouad & Bingham (1995).
2. Emphasizing the need for counselors to focus on the personal nature of the client’s career by exploring other aspects of the client’s life (Savickas, 1993).
3. Understanding that individuals construct their careers in unique multileveled social ecological contexts (developmental contextualism) (Savickas, 2002).
4. Exploring the extent to which an individual's physical environment, culture, race and ethnic group, family, neighborhood, and schools attended influence his or her career constructions (Savickas, 2002).
Career Counseling Skill 2: Developing a thorough understanding of the client’s personal experiences, identities, and background information

This short segment is designed to help counselors developing a deeper understanding of how the client’s personal experiences, identities, and background information intersect; doing so enables counselors to develop a culturally appropriate career counseling treatment plan and an understanding of the client’s self-concept and worldviews.

Content: Douglas provides more in-depth information about his background. Although not directly related to career, Douglas shares information about familial and personal experiences. Such information helps counselors determine similarities and differences between their clients and their clients’ family members. During this counseling segment, Douglas comes out as “queer” and explores what being queer means for him and how it related to and intersects with other aspects of his life. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 2 dyad.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are your reactions to the client and how might your reactions benefit and challenge the counseling relationship?

2. The client just informed you that he is queer. How do you think his queer identity might relate to is career decisions?

3. What challenges might he face in different occupations if he is “out” at work?

4. What are the benefits of a GLBTQ client being “out” at work?
5. What are the challenges and benefits of not being “out” at work in various occupations?

Comments & Questions

Super’s hallmark is that career development is a process of making several decisions, which culminates in vocational choices that represent an implementation of one’s self-concept.

Considering what you know about the client’s life transitions from birth to death, roles, social determinates, and personal determinates, where would you locate the client on Super’s dimensions of the Life Career Rainbow?

Using Super’s lexicon, explore how the following terms related to what the client has shared thus far?

- **Life course** – the meaning sociologists inscribe on *career* when they define it as a sequence of occupations in the life of an individual.

- **Social roles** – the duties and rewards a culture assigns and ascribes to its members based on variables such as sex and race.

- **Life space** – denotes the collection of social roles enacted by an individual, as well as the cultural theatres in which these roles are played.

- **Self-concept** – a collection of perceptions that are integrated and coherent.
Career Counseling Skill 3: Identifying presenting concerns and school and work experiences

This segment focuses on identifying presenting concerns and school and work experiences. As Douglas discusses his presenting concerns, Anika begins to understand and explore his values, skills, interests, goals, and priorities, as well as his feelings and thoughts related to his school and work experiences.

**Content:** This segment focuses on determining what brings Douglas to counseling and assessing his career background and presenting concerns. Douglas talks about how past experiences have impacted his perceptions of his current work and explores his feelings about his current job. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 3 dyad.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why might a counselor ask for background information before discussing a client’s presenting concerns or issues?

2. What questions does the client have about counseling?

3. What issues come up as the client discussed his presenting concerns and work experiences?

4. What did you learn about Douglas’ current work experiences?

5. What are some of the intersections between his work and personal life thus far?
Comments:

As the counselor gathers information to help the client concretize his feeling and thoughts about his work experiences and career goals, the counselor should reflect on her or his knowledge and awareness about career counseling with GLBTQ, Vietnamese-American, male, Buddhist, and/or Asian clients.

If it also important for the counselor to remain current on reading about career counseling with diverse populations.

Although not a comprehensive list, counselors working with clients who have presenting concerns and group memberships similar to Douglas’ might consider reading literature by the following authors:

Chung 2003
Fassinger, 1995
Ponterotto, Rivera, & Adachi, 2000
Prince, Leong & Hartung, 2003
Nghe, Mahalik, & Lowe, 2003
Spokane, Fouad, & Swanson, 2003
Career Counseling Skill 4: Concretizing affective and cognitive aspects of the client’s work experiences

Concretizing affective and cognitive aspects of the client’s work experiences will help the client deepen his understanding of where he is with his career. For example, Anika asks Douglas about his feelings related to his current work. “Name 3 to 5 feelings that come up.” So that Douglas feels comfortable sharing intimate feelings and thoughts, it was important for Anika to maintain a safe environment for him, which meant checking in with him on the direction of the counseling session and exploring challenges that arise based on the information the client shared.

**Content:** In this segment, Douglas reframes his stress as opportunities, continues to express how his relationship with his parents has influence him. He also describes multiple conflicts between his personal and professional life. Anika uses restating and reframing to help Douglas process some the conflicts he is describing. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 4 dyad.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How did you experience the client in this segment? What did you hear? What did you see? What are the counseling themes?

2. How might your own beliefs, priorities, assumptions, and biases impact your work with Douglas?

3. Are you reminded of any career theories or models as you listen to the counselor’s work with Douglas? If so, which theories and models? Why?
4. What challenges might his gay identity present in his current job (being “out” vs.
not being “out”)?

5. To what extent is his gay identity an issue or something that needs to be explored
in career counseling? Please explain and explore your answer.

6. What other directions could the counselor have gone in at this point?
Career Counseling Skill 5: Helping the client examine how social roles and expectations intersect with work-family challenges

In this segment, you will witness Anika helping Douglas examine how his social roles and expectations intersect with work-family challenges, which will assist him in identify appropriate career options. When examining the client’s social roles and expectations in a manner that was culturally sensitive, it was important that Anika not assume the following: that autonomy or affluence are primary decision makers; that career maturity is linear; or that career self-efficacy or career opportunities are equally available to all people.

Content: Anika challenges Douglas to explore the implications of talking with his parents about his work and what it means to tell them the truth about his personal and professional identities. Many of the cultural underpinnings of his decisions, lifestyle, and work-family intersections are present in this segment. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 5 dyad.

Discussion Questions:

1. How might the client’s group memberships as a male, Asian, Vietnamese American, queer, and/or Buddhist have influenced the client’s understanding of his career development and identity?

2. How might the client’s memberships as a male, Asian, Vietnamese American, queer, and/or Buddhist influence the extent to which his work and family challenges intersect with one another?
Comments and Questions:

 Saving Face refers to the notion that avoidance of the loss of face is very important and that loss of self leads to elaborate, subtle, and complex communication patterns that some counselors may perceive as indirect, resistance, and other emotional and behavioral reactions that are sometimes difficult to interpret in session.

1. How might saving face influence the client’s career concerns, choices, and decisions?

2. How might saving face influence the client’s responses to the counselor’s questions and the career counseling process?

3. How might saving face influence the client’s decisions to share his queer status with his parents?
Career Counseling Skill 6: Exploring themes presented in counseling

The final segment focuses on exploring themes presented in Douglas’ prior counseling segments. This clinical strategy will help clients with presenting concerns similar to Douglas acknowledge how various factors intersect with their presenting concerns. Often times, people come to career counseling without acknowledging how social, cultural, familial, emotional, psychological, and other factors contribute to their presenting concerns.

Content: In this brief segment, the theme of “parents” continues to emerge. Anika helps Douglas explore how the intersections and gaps might relate to work and family and helps Douglas begin to own how personal and professional concerns overlap. Following is the list of discussion questions, comments, and/or theories that appear on the screen after the Career Counseling Skill 6 dyad.

Questions:

1. What did you notice?
2. What questions would you ask next? Why?
3. What career counseling skills, techniques or strategies would you consider using next?
4. What other themes might you consider processing with the client? Why?

Comments:

In my work with Douglas, his “parents” emerged as significant individuals who should be considered as he makes personal and professional decisions.
Helping the client explore the intersections and gaps among work and family will increased the client’s self-awareness, which will ultimately improve the client’s ability to benefit from career counseling.