
UNIT 4 INTERVIEWING IN SOCIAL CASEWORK – I

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit aims at providing you with complete understanding of the process of interviewing in social casework. The main objective of this unit is to familiarize you with the basic skills of interviewing in social casework. This unit will acquaint you with the purpose of interviewing and help you to understand how interview can be used as an effective medium of problem solving in social casework.

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- distinguish between interviewing as a general concept and as a specialized and skilled technique in social casework;
- understand the interviewing process and how to interview in social casework;
- enumerate the basic skills of interviewing in social casework;
- outline the essential rules and conditions of interviewing in casework; and
- enlist the qualities required of a casework interviewer.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Interviewing is an art which is practiced in many situations with varying degrees of satisfaction to the interviewer and interviewee. Many people representing many different professions conduct interviews. Some people because of the nature of their work spend a substantial part of their time in interviewing such as lawyers, counselors, doctors, journalists etc. However, social caseworkers, according to Garret are interviewers par excellence. For social workers, interviewing is a pre-eminently important activity. They spend more time in interviewing than in any other single activity. It is the most important, most

consistently and frequently employed social work skill. For them interviewing is an art as well as a science and in order to be successful practitioners they have to be adept at this art and understand the science behind it.

Social casework employs a variety of approaches in attempting to help the client. All casework interviewers have to make the interviewee feel at ease, all have to help the interviewee talk about the difficulties, all have to guide the interview so that its purposes are achieved, all have to start and end the interview in a way which maximizes helping. This unit describes the general art of interviewing as adapted and enacted by the social caseworkers.

4.2 CONCEPT AND PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW

What is an Interview ?

The most obvious feature of an interview is that it involves communication between two individuals. But can all interactions between two people be termed as interview? When two friends are talking to each other is it an interview? When a father and son are conversing with each other is it an interview? No, it is not. You have to distinguish between mere conversation and an interview. Not all the talks that take place between two people can be termed as an interview. Interview is not a mere conversation but a purposeful, directed conversation. One person, i.e., the interviewer takes the responsibility for the development of the conversation. He/she sees to it that the conversation moves towards the desired goal.

The professional interview is different from an informal interview for varied reasons, the predominant feature being that it is conducted within the framework of a specialized knowledge and skill. In a professional interview the interviewer operates within the confines of a well defined setting and is backed by organised experience and recognized competence, working towards known and established purposes.

Interviewing is an integral and important activity in every profession. Both experienced practitioners and relatively inexperienced social workers struggling on the job with all the recurrent problems of interviewing, and seeking some specific guidelines and answers, may benefit from an explicit examination of the interview in this unit.

Interview –A Purposeful Conversation

The simplest definition of an interview is that it is a conversation with a deliberate purpose, a purpose mutually accepted by the participants. It is usually a face-to-face interaction which involves both verbal and non-verbal communication between people during which ideas, attitudes and feelings are exchanged.

Distinguishing Interview from Conversation

The crucial characteristic which distinguishes an interview from a conversation is that interview interaction is designed to achieve a conscious purpose. If the interaction has no purpose, it may be conversation but it may not be termed as an interview.

The point of differences between an interview and conversation are listed below:

- 1) Since the interview has a definite purpose, its content is chosen to facilitate achievement of the purpose. The orientation of the conversation is associational, and there is no central theme.
- 2) If the purpose is to be achieved, one person has to take responsibility for directing the interaction (designated as interviewer) so that it moves towards the goal. There

are no comparable terms to indicate status, positions and role behaviour in a conversation as its participants have mutual responsibility for its course.

- 3) In an interview between a professional and a client, one person asks questions and another answers them partly because someone has to take the leadership. Here, two people are working on the problem of one.
- 4) The actions of the interviewer must be planned, deliberate and consciously selected to further the purpose of interview whereas the behaviour of all the parties to a conversation may be spontaneous and unplanned.
- 5) An interview requires exclusive attention to the interaction. A conversation, however, can be peripheral to other activities.
- 6) Because it has a purpose, the interview is usually a formally arranged meeting. A definite time, place and duration are established for the interview.
- 7) Because an interview has a purpose other than amusement, unpleasant facts and feelings are not avoided. In a conversation, the usual tacit agreement is to avoid the unpleasant.

What is a Social Casework Interview?

The casework interview refers to the meeting of the social worker and the client in a face-to-face conversation. It is not a casual conversation but a professional activity on the part of the social worker, because the conversation is geared to a specific or general purposes which may be obtaining or imparting information, giving help or studying and assessing the client's situation.

Purpose of Social Casework Interview

Interviewing is the base on which the theory and the practice of social casework has been built over the years. It is the main medium of help without which the social casework process will never be possible.

Interviewing is one of the important casework technique which functions as a conveyor for the transmission of help to the client. The purposes it serves may be one or more of the following:

1) Obtaining and imparting information

Interviewing is a two way process. Just as information is received by the social worker, so also information is imparted to the client regarding official procedures and other matters about himself/herself, his/her role as a social worker, and about the function of the agency.

Generally the client is a perfect stranger to the agency on his/her first visit. He/she may or may not bring a note of referral from a third person indicating the reason for referral. The social worker has to gather data regarding the problem. When a client is not able to furnish the required information, members of his/her family are interviewed for the purpose.

2) Study and assessment of the client's situation/problems

Data gathered from and about the client are sorted out and analysed, from which relevant aspects are linked to form a verbal picture of the problem situation with clear indications of cause-effect relationships. In this process, the social worker applies the knowledge of social sciences for understanding the behaviour of the

clients and others in a problem situation. Ordinarily a few interviews are necessary before an assessment of the situation can be made.

3) Interview as a direct tool for giving help

The information that the social worker elicits and the social assessment that she evolves serves as a blue print based on which she decides suitable mode of help. During the interview many other casework skills and techniques are also used. Casework interview is operative as long as the individual is a client of the agency. The interview is a channel of direct help even at the first contact between the social worker and the client.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define interviewing. How is it different from conversation?

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2) List the purposes of interviewing in social casework.

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4.3 TYPES OF INTERVIEW

The various types of interview patterns are discussed as below:

On the basis of the manner in which they are conducted, interviews are generally of the following types:

1) Structured Interview

It is also known as controlled, guided or directive interview. Under this a predetermined questionnaire is used. The interviewer is asked to get the answers to those questions only. He/she generally does not add anything from his own side. The language too is not changed. He/she can only interpret the statement wherever necessary.

2) Unstructured Interview

It is also known as uncontrolled or non-directive interview. No direct or predetermined questions are used in this type of interview. The interviewers may develop questions as

the interview proceeds. It is generally held in the form of free discussions. The basic objective of this method is to get the client express himself/herself freely.

3) **Mixed or Depth Interview**

It is a combination of structured and unstructured types of interviews. Under this method the client is free to express himself/herself but at the same time structured questions provide a base of information to the interviewers to compare the clients. The method of conducting an interview will be influential to a considerable extent by the purpose of the interview.

On the basis of the purposes they serve, interviews are of following types, some are primarily directed towards obtaining information, some primarily towards giving help. Most, however involve a combination of the two.

1) **Information gathering or social study interview**

Its purpose is to obtain a focused account of the individual in terms of social functioning. The information enables the worker to understand the client in relation to the social problem situation. Knowledge about the client and his situation is a necessary prerequisite to an understanding of the client in his situation. And understanding is a necessary prerequisite for effectively intervening to bring about change.

2) **Diagnostic / Decision-making Interviews**

This type of interview is geared towards the appraisal and determination of :

- a) what the problem or the trouble is.
- b) what factors seem to be contributing to it.
- c) what can be changed and modified.

As the caseworker listens to each interview he/she constantly tries to answer the above three questions and what he/she does in the immediate interview will be, to a large extent, dependant on this understanding. For example, in the case of a delinquent juvenile, the caseworker has to direct the interview in answering the following questions:

- how the client sees himself/herself as a delinquent.
- what role his/her parents, peers, neighbourhood have played in contributing to the problem.
- The teacher's attitude, school curriculum and environment.
- Other contributing factors such as current provocations, historical factors, personality makeup etc.
- The anxiety, anger and other such feelings experienced by the clients.
- What needs to be changed in the client and/or his/her environment.

Diagnostic interview is multifaceted and is an orderly attempt to understand the client-situation configuration.

3) **Therapeutic Interview**

The purpose of this interview is to effect change in the client, in his/her social situation, or in both. The goal is more effective social functioning on the part of the client as a consequence of the therapeutic changes. Such interviews involve the use of special

remedial measure to effect changes in the feelings, attitudes and behaviour on the part of the client in response to the social situation.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the various types of interviews?

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4.4 INTERVIEWING SKILLS

The interviewing process comprises a series of interviews which deal with the basic steps in the problem-solving process—Study, Diagnosis and Treatment.

These three phases of social work are nothing but the process of data collection, data assessment and intervention pertaining to the client in his problem-solving process. The interviewing process in Social Casework, thus, follows a consciously dynamic movement through these various stages to accomplish the purpose of casework. Each single interview is only a part of the sequence of the whole process. We can divide the whole interviewing process into three important/basic phases which we can term as:

- Initial/Introductory phase
- Developmental phase
- Final/Concluding phase

Though in actual practice, it may not be possible to keep the phases in watertight compartments, but for our conceptual understanding we need to demarcate and separate the various steps in the process and dwell on each one of them separately. Thus, the interviewing process is viewed here as a unit of series of steps embodying a process of three successive phases. As these phases have already been discussed in detail in the previous unit only the generic skills and the specific skills relevant to each phase will be analysed in this unit.

Interviewing in social casework is not a routine procedure of asking certain set questions and recording their answers. It is an art, a skilled technique which the social caseworker can improve and gradually perfect through practice. The requisite skills however have to be tempered with adequate scientific knowledge. Knowledge of the theory underlying interviewing gives you the required framework within which one can critically examine the skills used and the ways to improve.

In this section you will be acquainted with the skills which a casework interviewer has to acquire to become an effective interviewer. We will be discussing them at two levels :

- Phase-specific skills
- Generic interactional skills

Caseworkers are constantly struggling to hear, see, feel and understand what the others are trying to express or hide and are well aware of the complexities of this task.

Phase Specific Skills

The Introductory Phase

While every phase of the interview contributes significantly to the whole process the initial phase is of particular importance for it has a special purpose which is to establish the setting, mood and pace most conducive to a productive conversation between the client and the caseworker so that the interview can get off to a good start. The following skills are most useful in the Introductory/Initial phase.

1) Preparatory Reviewing

Preparatory reviewing is a skill used to examine and consider information available to you and your agency prior to an initial contact with another person. For example, if a prospective client has received service at the agency before, you would look over relevant records the agency has on file. Preparatory reviewing helps you grasp significant factual information which reduces the possibility that the applicant, client or other persons will have to repeat information they have previously provided.

2) Preparatory Arranging

The skill of preparatory arranging is the logistic preparation for a first meeting. It includes scheduling an appointment for the interview, ensuring that there is adequate time and privacy and organising the physical environment. It may include securing an interview room, locating an interpreter, or rearranging furniture. It includes considering the appropriateness of the interviewer's appearance and perhaps even hygiene. In agency settings, it includes considering the potential effects of the physical environment. To sum up, preparatory arranging should facilitate communication and diminish, to the extent possible, interference and distraction.

3) Preliminary Planning

The interviewer should engage in the skill of preliminary planning before the interviews with the clients. Many first meetings have as their primary purpose, gathering of information. In such cases you might formulate a general but flexible plan concerning what data to seek and from whom. Preliminary planning enables you to begin the interview in a coherent fashion and helps you formulate a tentative purpose to share with the client.

4) Introducing Yourself

At the beginning, you should identify yourself by name and profession and by agency or departmental affiliation. You might also want to provide formal identification. In most circumstances, a friendly facial expression and a warm, firm handshake or a 'namaste' are helpful in making contact. A few informal comments may also help the clients feel more at ease with you, but do not overdo it.

5) Seeking Introduction

Early in a first meeting, the interviewer should encourage each new client to say his or her name, and then pronounce it correctly. After knowing the client's name ask

how the person prefers to be addressed and thereafter throughout the interview, refer to your client by name.

6) **Clarifying Purpose**

The initial phase of the interview should clarify the purpose that will engage the participants during the course of interview. The purpose needs to be of manageable proportions. Frequently the stated purpose of an interview is either far too ambitious or too ambiguously stated. Both participants should make every effort to formulate the purpose in operational terms.

7) **Probing/Questioning**

When the interviewer and client substantially agree about the purpose of the meeting, one may then proceed to seek information about the concerns that led to this encounter. 'Probes' are used to elicit facts, ideas and feelings concerning the person, the problem, the situation and potential means for resolving the identified difficulties. The process of probing yields information necessary for mutual understanding, assessments, contract formulation, movement towards problems resolution and goal attainment, evaluation and ending. Generally probes are phrased as questions. A good general rule regarding questioning is that it should be for the twin purposes of—

- a) Obtaining specific information
- b) Directing the conversation from irrelevant to relevant areas so as to make the interview more fruitful and meaningful.

Questions are generally of two types :

- a) **Close ended questions:** They are asked to elicit short responses usually a 'yes' or 'no' or one line answers. Example: "Do you like going to the movies?" "Who is your best friend?" Such questions are especially useful in crisis situations where vital information must be gathered quickly. However, too many such questions should not be asked in a casework interview, else the client may feel he is under some investigation and is being interrogated than being interviewed. Some closed-ended questions are known as 'leading questions' in legal terms. A leading question is phrased in such a way as to encourage a specific answer—one that the questioner wishes to hear. Example : "Did your parents not have a fight on the night you ran away from home?" Such leading questions should generally be avoided.
- b) **Open ended question:** Such questions are phrased in a manner that encourages people to express themselves more extensively. They are designed to further exploration on a deeper level or in a broader way. Most of the time, they tend to check a factual answer. These are 'what' and 'how' questions that enables the client to react and respond in a number of ways. Example : 'What happened after that?' "How did you feel at that moment?"

8) **Reflecting Feelings**

In order to use competently the skill of reflecting feelings, the interviewer needs a sophisticated vocabulary of feeling words without which it is extremely difficult to paraphrase the feelings, emotions and sensations experienced and expressed by clients. Example : Under the 'happiness' category you might include the word 'satisfied', under the 'anxiety and fear' category, you might list 'stress' as an associated term. Thus 'reflecting feelings' mirrors client's emotions and the facts or thoughts associated with them.

The Developmental Phase

1) Organising Descriptive Information

It is the first step for assessment process to organise the information gained through exploration into a form that allows for efficient retrieval and examination. Typically, this involves arranging data according to certain categories that the interviewer and the agency professionals consider to be significant. Descriptive organisation allows you to present coherently information that you read, directly observe or hear.

2) Analyzing

Analyzing entails examining in detail the various pieces of information about the client in his/her problem situation. The attempt here is to pinpoint the critical elements or themes from among this information. Finding out truth with probing at a right point is a skill which may be developed with experience and sensitivity .

3) Synthesis

Synthesis builds on what is gained from analysis. It involves assembling significant pieces of information into a coherent whole by relating them to one another and to elements of your theory , knowledge and experience base.

4) Reflecting a Problem

The interviewer demonstrates to the client that he/she understand his/her view of an identified problem. Clients, especially adults who voluntarily seek social services are usually quite ready to share their views about the problems of concern, but some clients may need support guidance and encouragement to do so. Reflecting a problem is an important form of active emphatic listening.

5) Developing an Approach

In developing an approach, the interviewer and the client must identify who will meet with them in what context or what will be the target of change. Together they must also determine who will be involved in the change efforts and how these efforts might affect others. Both of the participants consider a number of factors and develop a scheme or problem to guide their work together.

6) Attending Behaviours and Minimal Encouragements

Attending behaviours are those observable actions of the interviewer, which indicates that he/she is interested and paying attention. An important component of attending behaviour is non-verbal, manifested in eye contact and body posture.

Minimal encouragements are short utterances with little content which have the effect of encouraging the interviewee and reinforcing his desire to continue – “uh- huh ,” “go on” , “so” , “I see” , “ sure” – they include non-verbal nodding.

7) Summarizing or Recapitulation

Partial or detailed summaries and recapitulations help to extend the range of communication. The interviewer briefly reviews what has been discussed and gives the interview its direction. A summary tends to pull together a section of the interview, make explicit what has not been covered. Summarizing requires a sifting out of less relevant, less significant material. It also indicates to the interviewee that the interviewer has been listening attentively and knows what has been going on.

8) **Making Transitions**

At times during the interview, the interviewer may decide that a change should be made in the material being discussed. The content under discussion may have been exhausted. Transitions help extend the range of interview without disturbing the relationship.

9) **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing is a selective restatement of the main ideas in the phrasing, which resembles, but is not the same as, that used by the client. 'Para' means 'alongside', and a paraphrase parallels what the client said. A paraphrase helps the interviewer check his/her understanding of what the client is saying. It also helps the interviewee to see more clearly what he/she has said, since it holds a mirror up to his/her communication.

10) **Interpreting**

An important task that confronts the caseworker is to interpret what has been said and heard. The interpretation that worker gives to words and body language will be a function of theoretical grounding/orientation. The interviewer must discover factors by going beneath the surface of his/her client's remarks and understand them more than is superficially significant. For example, the casework interviewer must look for the underlying anxiety and fear that may be symptomatically indicated by hostility and dependency.

11) **Advising**

Making a suggestion or recommendation can be a perfectly appropriate action by a caseworker. In using the skills of advising, the interviewer must always convey that the client may freely accept or reject his/her advice. In general, resist the temptations to offer advice based on your own personal feelings, attitudes and preferences. Of course there are many occasions when you clearly should offer direct and specific advice but avoid communicating advice as commands or directives.

12) **Confronting**

In confronting, the interviewer points out to the clients – directly and without disapproval – inconsistencies, or contradictions in their words, feelings and actions. Confrontation can have a powerful effect on clients. It has the potential to cause severe disequilibrium in people who are highly stressed or have fragile coping skills. Therefore, be certain that the person has the psychological and social resources to endure the impact. Avoid judgmental or evaluative speculation or conclusions. Finally, it is wise to "precede and follow confrontations with empathic" responses.

13) **Reframing**

Reframing refers to the words you say and the actions you take when introducing clients to a new way of looking at some aspect of themselves, the problem or the situation. Usually, it involves sharing a different perspective from that which clients have previously adopted. Reframing is applicable when the fixed attitude constitutes a fundamental part of the problem for work. It liberates the clients from a dogmatic perspective. As a result, clients may reconsider strongly held beliefs which in turn affects their feelings and behaviour as well.

The Final / Concluding Phase

1) **Reviewing the Process**

It is the skill of tracing what has occurred between the interviewer and the client over the time they have worked together. It is a cooperative process where both share in the

retrospection. You might probe for additional thoughts and feelings and then share some of your own significant recollections.

2) Evaluating

In addition to reviewing the process, you also engage the client in a final evaluation of progress towards problem resolution and goal attainment. For this discussion, the interviewer may draw on the results of measurement instruments such as before-and-after test scores, graphs and various ratings. You may also share your own subjective impressions of progress. Whatever you do in the form of a final evaluation, be sure to seek feedback from the client about it. As a part of the process, you express your pleasure concerning the positive changes that have occurred.

3) Sharing ending Feelings and Saying Goodbye

Both the client and the caseworker may experience a wide range of emotions and feelings when the time comes to say a final goodbye. The caseworker should in the last interview give ample opportunity to the client to express his/her feelings related to the ending of the relationship. The intensity of the feelings may vary according to the personality of the client, the duration and intensity of the relationship, the role and the function of the caseworker and the final outcome. The client may be encouraged to share some of his/her feelings (sadness, anger, fear, dependency, gratitude, affection) in the last meeting or else the feelings may lie suppressed forever.

4) Recording and Note-taking

Following your final meeting with a client, you condense what occurred into a written closing summary. Include in the final recording the following information :

- Date of final contact.
- The names of the interviewer and the interviewee.
- Beginning date of service.
- The reason why contact between you and the client was initiated.
- The approach taken, the nature of the services provided, the activities you and the client undertook.
- A summary evaluation of progress and an identification of problems and goal that remain unresolved and unaccomplished.
- A brief assessment of the person-problem situation as it now exists.
- The reason for closing the case.

Generic Interactional Skills

Talking (Voice, Speech and Language)

Talking as a skill implies using voice, speech, language and body language effectively so that interviewing can be a smooth affair. The words you choose, the quality of your pronunciation, the sound and pitch of your voice, and the rate and delivery of your speech communicate a great deal to the clients and others with whom you interact. A caseworker has to be very careful with the selection of the words and should use words and phrases that are readily understood by most people. Try to use words that

are descriptive and observational rather than inferential. Through your voice, speech and language convey that you are truly interested in what the client has to say. When you speak or write, active voice is preferable to passive voice and each unit of speech should not be so long or complex as to impede understanding.

A caseworker should try to cultivate a talking style which is moderate in vocal tone, volume and speed of delivery. It should be, however, varied to match the pace of the client.

Listening

1) *Hearing and Observing*

‘Hearing’ refers to the process of listening that involves attending to the voice, speech and language of other people. Effective hearing involves removing the barriers and focusing completely on the words and sounds of the client. One should not hear selectively which happens due to judging, comparing, criticizing or evaluating what is being said by the other person.

‘Observing’ refers to listening through your eyes. It occurs when you pay attention to the client’s physical characteristics, gestures and other non-verbal behaviour. The purpose of observing is to understand the ways in which the client views and experiences his words. There is hardly any situation in casework where hearing and observing do not go hand in hand.

Among the specific aspects to observe are

- facial expressions
- eye contact
- body language, position and movement

Observation makes it possible to record the behaviour of the client as it occurs. You should not only listen to what the client says but also note closely what he does not say, the vital blanks left in his/her story. Non-verbal signals may supplement or contradict what the client is saying. As you master the art of interviewing it will become apparent to you that people do not always say what they mean or act as they feel.

2) *Encouraging and Remembering*

‘Encouraging’ is an element of listening that very closely approaches talking. You can encourage other people to continue expressing themselves by making very brief responses in the form of single words, short phrases or sounds and gestures. Example: “Please go on”, “Uh-huh”, “Please continue”.

‘Remembering’ is the final dimension of listening. It is the process of temporarily storing information in order that it may later be used, for example to communicate understanding, make thematic connections between messages expressed at different times, prepare a written record, or develop an assessment.

Body Language (Non-Verbal Communication)

Though we may not be aware of it, for most of us, our body language speaks more than our verbal speech. A lot of communication is non-verbal and our body is the main channel of this form of communication. Factors such as posture, facial expression, eye contact and body positioning are powerful forms of communication. The body language

should be congruent with your verbal language. You cannot say ‘thank you’ but actually look ‘sorry’. You can convey through your smile that you are friendly, caring and attentive to the client. It should communicate attention and interest in other person, as well as care, concern, respect and authenticity. You should typically adopt an open or accessible body position when beginning interviews. Tightly clasped hands, looking at a watch tend to communicate nervousness or impatience and slouching in chair may suggest fatigue or disinterest. The frequency and intensity of eye contact should depend on the purpose of interview.

Active Listening

According to Barry Cournoyer active listening combines the talking and listening skills in such a way that clients feel understood and encouraged towards further self-expression. It represents a clear and tangible demonstration that you have understood, or at least are trying to understand what the client has expressed. It indicates that you want to comprehend fully and accurately what the client has expressed and that you are interested in the client’s views, feelings and experiences. It constitutes a major element of the vital feedback loop between you and your client. Your sincere attempt to understand by active listening almost always elicits further expression from the client. Because it conveys empathy and understanding, there is simply no substitute for active listening. If you only talk or only listen but do not actively listen, you will probably discourage clients from free and full expression.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) List the skills specific to different phases of the interviewing process.

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- 2) Outline the generic interactional skills.

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4.5 ESSENTIAL/REQUISITE QUALITIES OF THE CASEWORK INTERVIEWER

A discussion on skills would be incomplete if we do not touch upon the qualities required on the part of the caseworker to be an effective practitioner. However, the task to list all

the qualities is a complex one as definite conclusions may never be reached. Further the qualities may also vary according to the purpose of the interview. For example : The warm accepting qualities necessary for an interviewer whose main objective is therapeutic, may not be required for an interview where primary purpose is assessment. However, the demonstration of these qualities alone will not enable the caseworker to reach the goals unless they are accompanied by specialized knowledge and skills. According to Cournoyer, the following qualities are desirable on the part of an effective worker:

- 1) Empathy
- 2) Respect
- 3) Authenticity
- 4) Self-understanding
- 5) Self-control
- 6) Understanding of social work values and ethics
- 7) Professional social work knowledge
- 8) Responsible assertiveness.

“Empathy” is a process of feeling with another person rather than feeling for or feeling towards as in sympathy. Baker (1991) defines empathy as “The act of perceiving, understanding, experiencing and responding to the emotional state and ideas of another person”. Empathy helps the caseworker to gain an appreciation for and sensitivity to the client and helps in developing a rapport and maintaining sound working relationships.

“Respect” according to Rogers (1957), is the demonstration of unconditional positive regard. The caseworker should maintain a respect for all clients irrespective of their class, caste and economic status. The caseworker should also recognize and respect the fundamental right of the client to make his own decisions.

Authenticity : Hamund, Hapuer and Smith (1977) state that, “Authenticity refers to a sharing of self by behaving in a natural, sincere, spontaneous, real, open and non defensive manner. An authentic person relates to others personally, so that expressions do not seem rehearsed or contrived. However, it does not give an absolute liberty to the caseworker to say or do whatever he/she thinks/feels at any given moment.

Self-understanding: It is a quality which a caseworker must possess if he/she is to use himself/herself effectively in helping others. The caseworker has to go through the process of “self exploration and self discovery” in order to “know thyself”.

Self-control: Self-discipline and Self-control have to follow self-understanding. Situation may be painful, upsetting, disturbing or provocative wherein the caseworker may be overwhelmed by his/her own emotions and feelings. But an enormous self-control has to be exercised. The worker has to direct her words and action in such a manner that they do not go against the values and ethics of the profession.

Understanding of Social Work Values and Ethic: The caseworker must pay consistent attention to professional ethics and obligations as they are applicable to almost all aspects of one’s professional life. For this, he/she must have a thorough grasp of social work values and ethics as well as their legal obligations.

Professional Knowledge: A caseworker without professional knowledge is like a painter without a brush. Knowledge related to theory and research of human behaviour,

social problems, use of social work theory and principles etc. and other wide range of areas is essential to be effective. The caseworker must keep himself/herself abreast with the latest development of the field to be updated and informed.

Responsible Assertiveness: It includes the capacity to express knowledge, opinions, and feelings in a manner that respects both your own and others rights and preferences as unique and valuable human beings. It includes the ability and the manner in which you express your knowledge and opinions, your authority and responsibility, your personal and professional power without showing disrespect to your own dignity and that of the client.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the essential qualities of a caseworker interviewer?

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4.6 BASIC RULES OF INTERVIEWING

One wishes that there was a blueprint of an 'ideal' or 'perfect' interview available to the caseworker which could serve as ready reference before embarking on the interviewing process. It is impossible to have a comprehensive list of 'infallible rules' for conducting a casework interview. However an attempt has been made here to list the rules of interviewing which if followed/kept in mind by the caseworker, will ensure a smooth flow of interaction between the client and the caseworker.

- Effective interviewing is possible only when it is grounded in a basic understanding of human nature, behaviour and motivation.
- The setting of interview is of vital significance. It should ensure some degree of privacy, provide for an atmosphere which is relaxed and physically comfortable, should be free of distracting noise and interruptions. Provide a setting with which the interview can get off to a good start.
- The length of the interview should be determined according to the purpose of the interview. It should be neither too long nor too short.
- The client should be put at ease, stimulated to talk freely about his/her problems, helped to organise his/her own confused thoughts and feelings about his/her difficulties. Help the client to relax, which is not possible, if you are not relaxed.
- The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is of utmost importance in casework. The interviewer must never forget the impact that her own personality, appearance and manner may be having on the client.

- Talk in a language understood by the client, begin where the client is and proceed at the pace of the client. The interview must always be adapted to the emotional and intellectual needs of the client.
- Be a warm, receptive and patient listener. Competent listening on the part of the caseworker requires minimal attention to one's own thoughts and feelings and maximum concentration on what the client is experiencing and expressing. A good interviewer is always a good listener and a keen observer.
- Listen to silence for it can be more evocative than words. You should know how to respond and manage pauses and silence. Do not be in a hurry to fill the gap created by silence because an unwarranted or hasty intervention may leave a vital part of the story forever unsaid. A decent respect be shown to silence.
- Master the fine art of questioning. The type of question asked should be in accordance with the purpose of interview. The wording is important but equally important is the tone of voice in which they are put. Framed in simple words, the questions should be neither very few nor too many. A reassuring tone is better than an accusing and suspicious one.
- To understand what is said, understand what is not said, non-verbal behaviour cannot be ignored. Often it can be a more effective message conveyor than the spoken words.
- People do not always say what they mean or act as they feel. Look for 'bodily tensions' because these non-verbal signals may supplement or contradict what the client is saying and thereby help you to read between the lines.
- Have a high level of awareness of your own feelings and emotions, biases and prejudices should be kept outside the purview of the interview as they have no place in a professional interview.
- The interviewing in casework should be a reciprocal process. The intended meaning of the communication should be received and understood by both parties. The client should be included as an active participant in the interviewing process.
- Acknowledge the client's right to self-determination. Direct your activities in the interviewing process towards promoting self-determination and participation.

Check Your Progress V

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Describe any four rules of interviewing in casework.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied the process of interviewing and its relevance in Social casework. Interviewing is the most important, frequently employed social work skill. It is a purposeful conversation between the caseworker and the client – an interaction designed to achieve a conscious purpose. We have studied various types of interviews on the basis of the manner in which they are conducted and on the purposes they serve. In ‘information-gathering’ interviews, you encourage people to discuss their views and feelings about themselves, their preferences and strengths, goals and problems and the situation (you gather data that may help you and your client reach a better understanding of the circumstances). In ‘information-giving’ interviews, you share needful or useful knowledge. In ‘assessment-forming’ interviews, your overall purpose is to arrive at an assessment, diagnosis, evaluation or conclusion, often which is followed by the preparation of a recommendation. In ‘change-making’ interviews you effect or help to effect movement or change somewhere within a targeted system.

The process of interview begins with the introductory phase that involves getting acquainted and initiating the interview process. The next step involves a sequence of actions guided towards the desired goal. It includes attending minimal encouragement, paraphrasing, reflecting, summarizing, transitions etc. One of the principal difficulties encountered during this main body of the interview is to stimulate the interviewee to discuss freely all the relevant aspects of the problem for which he wants service. In appraising what needs to be covered, the interviewer again needs an expert knowledge of the particular social problem involved. When the purpose is accomplished, the adhoc social system of interviews is dissolved. Having conducted and completed the interview, the interviewer is faced with the responsibility of recording it. As a consequence of recording, the interviewer has to selectively decide which aspects of the interview were most significant. Throughout the interview, the competent interviewer uses some procedures and skills for helping the client to achieve the objectives of the interview. An interviewer must never forget the impact his own personality and appearance may be having on the client, even in small ways and quite possibly in ways in which the interviewer cannot possibly foresee.

4.8 KEY WORDS

- Attending behaviours :** Those observable actions of the interviewer which indicate that she is interested and paying attention.
- Empathizing :** Empathizing involves the imaginative viewing of the situation as the client sees it and understand his feelings and transferring to oneself these particular feelings.
- Interpretation :** Explanation of the client’s behaviour in terms of its meaning.
- Evaluation :** The activity of ascertaining whether casework service has achieved the desired result in a case.
- Skills :** Ability to use one’s knowledge effectively in doing something. Skill refers to the social worker’s capacity to use a method in order to further a process directed towards the accomplishment of a social work purpose as that purpose finds expression in a specific programme or service.
- Therapeutic :** That having treatment and healing elements.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Cournoyer Barry (1996), *The Social Work Skills Workbook* (2nd ed.), California, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Garret Annette, *Interviewing: Its Principles and Methods* (3rd ed., New York, Family Service Association of India.

Kadushin, A. (1990), *The Social Work Interview* (3rd ed.), New York, Columbia University Press.

Matthew, Grace (1991), *An introduction to Social Casework*, New Delhi.

4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Interviewing is a purposeful conversation, a purpose which is mutually accepted by the participants. It is different from conversation in the fact that it is designed to achieve a deliberate conscious purpose.
- 2) The purposes of Interviewing in Social Casework are:
 - i) Obtaining and imparting information.
 - ii) Study and assessment of the client's situation or problem.
 - iii) Giving help.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The interview pattern is classified on the following two basis:
 - i) On the basis of the manner on which they are conducted:
 - Structured Interviews
 - Unstructured Interviews
 - Mixed or Depth Interviews
 - ii) On the basis of the purposes they serve:
 - Social Study Interview
 - Diagnostic Interview
 - Therapeutic Interview

Check Your Progress III

- 1) The phase-specific skills of the interviewing process.
 - a) **The Initial/Introductory Phase**
 - Preparatory Reviewing
 - Preparatory Arranging
 - Preparatory Planning
 - Introducing Yourself