9. Giving Time and Space and Listening vs. Preaching

Introduction

Again, we come to fundamental principles of facilitating the transformative process of the client. We see the caregiver as a facilitator, that is, someone who creates a safe space for the client in which the client can work out his or her own issues and move forward. This means that the caregiver may need to change the way he or she thinks about his or her role, that is, not as an advice giver but as someone who listens and supports and encourages. This is quite difficult for some people and yet it is essential if the transformative process for the client is to succeed.

As always, we urge you to complete all of the activities given. We also, as always, remind you not to give any information in which a person could be identified. This can be damaging and is unethical.

Giving Time and Space

The transformative process for the client can be a difficult one. Many things need to change. These frequently include ideas and patterns of behavior that have been built up over the client’s entire life. That involves digging and modification. That can take a great deal of time and energy. It also requires opening up emotional space that the client, in most cases, will not have had and which the client may not now have in his or her home environment. Thus, one of the central roles of the caregiver is to allow the process to occur and not to worry about the time that it takes. The client also probably will feel confused by many of the things that are happening emotionally and by his or her fundamental ways of thinking and his or her approach to events in life. Thus, as we have said before, it is the role of the caregiver to provide a safe space that gives support and encouragement to the client to explore and change.

Activities

Describe a situation in which the client had the time and the emotional space to explore his or her issues. How did it go? How did the client feel? How did you feel?

Describe a situation in which the client did not have the time and space to explore his or her issues. How did it go? How did the client feel? How did you feel?

Are there situations in which the client should not have the time and space?

Listening vs. Preaching

The psychologist Carl Rogers said that the client is the best expert on himself or herself. Thus, who are we as caregivers to differ? This points out the role of the caregiver as a listener rather than as someone who gives advice or preaches. We have seen that kind of behavior in too many caregivers. This is a point that we have repeated and will continue to repeat. In the course on communication, we will describe techniques of active listening that facilitate clients exploring their issues.

Activities

Give a situation in which you listened and the client moved forward.

Give a situation in which you gave too much advice and the client didn’t move.

Are there situations in which it is all right to preach?

Final Remarks

Creating a space for the client is a fundamental and essential role of caregiving. This involves taking time, giving space, and listening.