12. Preparation, Flexibility, and Adaptation – Page Version

Introduction

Preparation, flexibility, and adaptation to changing situations are important for working with clients. They not only include the situation of the client but also that of the caregiver and of the environment, particularly in regions in which people taking this course may be working. Thus, we can see that working with people is something of an art as well as a science. This also is partially dependent on the personality of the caregiver and on his or her experience. Also, the way in which the caregiver reacts is partially dependent on his or her degree of freedom within the organization.

As always, we ask you to complete the activities described and not to reveal any details that could identify another person or that you wouldn’t want to be public. This is unethical.

Preparation

The caregiver needs to prepare for the interaction with the client and to take the time to do that. At very least, this involves looking through the client’s notes. It may involve other things, such as consultation with colleagues, research on the Internet and in the community about the issues that the client is dealing with or finding available resources, or other work. It also involves emotional preparation by the caregiver, that is, taking a few breaths and taking other personal measures, even if this lasts only a minute or two. This kind of intellectual and emotional preparation is a part of the professionalism of the caregiver.

Activities

Describe a situation in which you did not prepare for a session with a client. What happened?

Describe a situation in which you did prepare for a session with a client. What happened then?

Are there situations in which you should not or cannot prepare for a session?

Flexibility and Adaptation

Even with the best preparation, the client can come with issues that the caregiver is not expecting or which, at the moment of the session, are more important than those which the caregiver was expecting to work with. Thus, the caregiver must be flexible enough to deal with these.

Furthermore, during the session, things can change very rapidly. The client’s mood may change. Memories and emotions may arise, and these also can lead to other issues coming up.

Also, the session with the client may trigger memories and emotions within the caregiver.

Also, the physical or political or legal situation within the region may change.

Our point here is that the caregiver frequently needs to flexible and to adapt to all of these changing situations and emotions. This is not always easy even for the most experienced caregivers. This also can cause caregivers distress. Again, this is a point for supervision. We will go into these issues for caregivers in more detail in the part of this course on self-care.

Activities

Describe a situation in which you have had to adapt to the changing situation of a client within a session.

Describe a situation in which you have had to adapt to circumstances in the client’s environment.

Describe a situation in which you have had to adapt to a situation in your own life and how that affected your relationship with one or more clients.

Are there situations in which flexibility and adaptation are not necessary or desirable?

Final Remarks

Preparation, flexibility, and adaptation are part of the essence of being a good caregiver. Some people have these qualities naturally. For everyone, it is a process of learning.