

Meet the Panelists

Angela Birnie is an experienced RD with longstanding involvement in nutrition counselling

- After obtaining her RD designation Angela went back to school to obtain a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology, and is now a Registered Clinical Counsellor
- She mainly works in her private practice as a Dietitian and a Registered Clinical Counsellor
- She also work at an eating disorder treatment residence as a counsellor and not a Dietitian

Gelina Syfchuk is an RD at Copeman Clinic in a counselling intensive role

- She has provided workshops for FNH 480 students in past years focusing on counselling in a clinic setting

Kara Vogt is a UBC Dietetics Education and Project Coordinator (2013-14)

- She is an RD with varied clinical experience, most recently in eating disorder counselling

Part 1 Motivational Interviewing (MI)- class comments on what we already know

When developing discrepancy: find out the clients goals and relate these to their actual experiences/behaviours, discuss the difference between goals and current actions

Asking permission when discussing topics that may be sensitive: for example, ask for the client's permission to take their weight if necessary during the session

Acknowledging biases: be aware of the personal opinions/beliefs that you bring into the counselling session and attempt to minimize their expression during a session

Part 2 Expert Panel Discussion and/ Q/A

Can you comment on the significance of personal biases as nutrition counsellors and share some strategies as to how you deal with these biases?

Angela- Its about being able to catch yourself before you express bias; this is a skill that takes practice to develop

Gelina- In practicing awareness one can often feel biases coming up; in counselling one

should attempt to neutralize reactions while staying engaged with the client

- Being aware of these biases is a skill that develops over time
- It can be beneficial to use curiosity regarding the clients opinion on the topic, hear them out, and make the conversation about them
- Avoid taking a positive or negative stance on the topic

Kara- Though they generally come with a negative connotation, biases aren't necessarily a bad thing to have (can be positive or negative)

- Reflect on your own beliefs and be aware of how you express your opinions in one-to-one interactions

Can you provide us with tips for structuring a counselling session so that it runs smoothly?

Angela- At the beginning of a counselling session ask client how they expect the session to unfold/ what they are expecting to come away with at the end of the session

- Be aware of the total time that you have for the session (eg. 30 min or 1 hour) and let client know (either at the beginning and/or near the end of the session)

Gelina- Taking time to build rapport when first meeting a client is important

- Book-end issues discussed with an introduction and wrap-up on the specific topics discussed
- Try not to keep the conversation focussed on one single point (which tends to happen with students that are new to counselling) as session time may run out before other important topics are covered
- Try taking about half the session for what the client feels that they need to say and the rest to cover topics that are on your session agenda
- Mapping out the session timing and session agenda/getting the client involved lets them feel in control of the session

Kara- At the beginning of a counselling session map out the session with the client; this clarifies with the client some expectations and gives them an opportunity to express what they hope to get out of the session; this also helps develop transparency and trust with the client

- Try break down session time in relation to topics that you need to cover, and also allocate time for what the client wants to discuss

What does an intern who performs well in counselling generally do?

Angela- They come in with a willingness to learn, are open to feedback, and show passion and enthusiasm for the task at hand

- They recognize that counselling is a skill that continually develop and that they must have 'bad' sessions to learn (and aren't so hard on themselves throughout development)
- They make an effort to avoid rigidity/ practicing by the book and let the conversation flow naturally and are flexible
- They are respectful but not supportive/condoning of a clients questionable behaviour (eg. they are very transparent/clear about meeting in the middle of what you want and what the client feels that they can achieve)

- Gelina** - They ask the client what they hope to achieve from the counselling session
- They know where appropriate resources can be found and know what skills can be tapped into (eg. MI concepts)
 - They self-reflect on the sessions strengths and weaknesses and identify the skills that they need to work on most (eg. I couldn't have done this instead and a different outcome may have been achieved)
 - They focus on listening/guiding/learning about the client for a good part of the session (eg. maintain client focus) and don't over-educate (the client may not be interested in or absorb all of the information that you are sharing)
 - They ask permission before educating (and recognize the power of their position/ their choice of words when educating- avoid harsh words)
 - They recognize skills that they need to improve and seek out opportunities to work on improving those skills (eg. in conversations with peers or family)
 - They are realistic about clients readiness to change (eg. assign small manageable tasks with a reasonable timeframe/ something that the client can actually achieve)
 - Aside: Videotaping yourself is one of the most useful tools (go back and review your session- what can I improve on/ what are my strengths?)

- Kara** - They outline their expectations with their preceptor in their placements initial goal setting discussion (eg. they let the preceptor know what they already know/what is a highpoint of their counselling skills so far)
- They recognize that counselling skill development is an ongoing process
 - They fully embrace the clients readiness to change (especially in an eating disorder context- no matter what the consequence is, if the client is not ready to change they will not)

Part 3 In Class Role Play

Observations of MI principles that student counsellors did well during role play activity:

Summarizing (what I'm hearing from you is...), paraphrasing, active listening (eye contact, affirmative head nods), open body language, asking for permission, outlining session

expectations (clarifying what the client hopes to get from the counselling session), using the confidence ruler

Debrief with Expert Panel

How do you deal with clients who are resistant to change?

Angela- Respect where the client is at and sometimes you have to go with it (eg. roll with resistance)

- Get them to recognize the pros and cons of their behaviour
- Do a bit of education if appropriate
- Keep in mind that the client gets to decide what they want their quality of life to be like and ultimately they make their own final decisions

Gelina- Ask the client what information they want and lay it out on the table

- Try to have a conversation; coming along side the client can help build rapport and minimize resistance
- Don't fight resistance and use curiosity to find out more (eg. what makes you say that/tell me about that?)
- They may begin by addressing the issue at hand and another related or underlying issue may come up naturally

Kara- Ensure that the client fully understands their diagnosis and ask if they want to know details of the disease or condition rather than launching right into our session agenda

- Don't assume that the doctor has explained the condition or disease details/ complications to the client

How do you build rapport with a client when you have limited time together?

Angela- Honesty and transparency go a long way

- Agree at the beginning of the session that it won't be a smile and nod discussion (eg. clarify with the client that if what we are talking about is not of interest to them then they should speak up)

Can you give us advice on how to move a counselling session along when we get stuck on how to respond to a client's question ,or if we are dealing with a lot of resistance from the client?

Angela- Don't be afraid to name the emotion that the client is expressing (eg. anger/

- frustration) and ask for more information/ open it up for discussion
- Silence is okay sometimes; it gives the client the opportunity to jump in and steer the conversation

- Gelina-** Try taking time to gather your thoughts by looking down at your assessment paper and regaining focus on the intention that you had for the counselling session (this may help you stop having wandering/worried thoughts of where to go next)
- Confidence in your abilities comes with experience; *through walking around the room [during the counselling role-play activity] I could see that this class really knows what they are doing*
 - Your own nervousness is often what gets in the way; explore ways to center yourself when you feel anxious

- Kara-** As a student new to counselling, having a assessment guide to reference may be useful, consider going through it fairly systematically at first as you build your counselling skill confidence

What do you tell your clients when ask you a bunch of question that you do not know the answer to?

- Angela-** Say that you want to give the client the best information possible, so you will go off and research the topic

- Gelina-** Be honest; acknowledge that you don't know the answer and are happy to explore the question

- Kara-** Acknowledge that you have never heard of the topic due to the rapid growth of nutrition and health related information available
- Open up the conversation to get information on what the client already knows about the topic and learn where their knowledge is coming from
 - Share with the client where you would go to find a valid source of info

How do you identify when something is out of your scope of practice, and how do you deal with these issues when they arise?

- Angela-** Supervision is great to promote reflective practice (getting guidance and feedback from colleagues- formal or intermittent, in counselling everyone does supervision; it is a great way to ensure that you are staying within your scope and appropriately addressing issue)
- Don't underestimate peer support and networking

Gelina- Brainstorm ahead of time things that you think the client may bring up

- Have access to books/self help books/ and resources to refer client to; be prepared- it helps

Kara- Using MI techniques may make client open up with non-nutrition issues

- Using honesty is an effective and safe way to address these issues
- Acknowledge that it is important and that you are not qualified to help them with this issue