

Counseling Critique

In creating a counseling video, I learned about my strengths and weaknesses in nutrition counseling. I also noticed my different nervous ticks, and the different non-verbal cues I present. I practiced executing the ten steps of counseling, using the principles and skills of motivational interviewing, and the different counseling characteristics. In viewing this video, I feel as though I did very well; however, I have plenty of room for improvement.

My client was a 45 year old female who had breast cancer, underwent chemotherapy and radiation, and lost a significant amount of weight. She experiences anorexia, nausea, fatigue, and diarrhea. She is in remission and is interested in gaining weight, strength and energy.

In starting the counseling appointment, I introduced myself and built rapport by asking the client how she was and how her weekend went. I then established the reason for her visit by asking her, "What brings you here today?" Afterwards, I informed her of my plan by asking her for permission to gather some health history information, then addressing any concerns she has and possible changes she would be interested in making that would best fit her lifestyle. Within the nutrition assessment, we established her main concerns of gaining strength, energy, and weight but not too much weight. We also established that these are things that are very important to her. She needs help improving her confidence, but she is ready to make some lifestyle changes.

After completing the assessment, I asked her what she already knew about cancer treatment, the side effects, and how it relates to weight loss. With her permission, I educated her

on what cancer treatment does to the body, the different side effects, and assured her that the symptoms she is experiencing are very common. I also explained to her that there is an increased need for calories and protein when the body undergoes so much stress, and when these needs are not met, weight loss and fatigue result. We established specific topics she wanted to address including: eating more frequently throughout the day and incorporating snacks into her diet. I asked her what she has tried to do to help her reach her goals, any barriers she ran into, and how it made her feel.

We went on to explore the topics she wanted to address, how ready and confident she was. She mentioned that she was 100% ready but a little hesitant. We explored why she was hesitant further. She explained that she didn't really know how to incorporate these changes, and what foods to choose. I asked her if she wanted to explore different ways to incorporate the changes, and the kind of snacks that would be helpful in her situation. When she agreed, we spoke more about pros and cons about eating more frequent, smaller meals versus eating three, large meals in a day. I made snack suggestions according to what other clients have tried, explained the benefits of these snack, and asked her if any of these suggestions sounded good to her. I also mentioned that consuming a high calorie beverage may be helpful such as ensure, or a fruit smoothie. I explained to her that sometimes consuming a beverage might be easier than getting down a snack when not having an appetite. When I finished with informing her of what other clients have tried, I asked her if any of the option she was interested in trying.

With the client being interested in trying to incorporate these ideas into her lifestyle, I suggested that we set up an experiment. I asked her how she would go about setting up the experiment, she came up with ideas, and then we addressed any barriers that she would expect to run into. After assessing these barriers, I checked in on how confident she was in completing the

experiment, and lastly we set up a follow-up appointment. She seemed to be motivated and excited to try incorporating these changes into her lifestyle.

In reviewing the video, I did well on executing the 10 steps of an initial appointment using motivational interviewing. I expressed empathy frequently, telling the client that it is understandable to feel discouraged and frustrated when it came time to eat and not feeling well enough to. I was non-judgmental towards the client throughout the appointment, keeping a neutral standing. I asked open-ended questions and scaling questions to help unpack more on where the client stood and why making these lifestyle changes were important to her. For example, “How does it make you feel when you see the alarm and you know you have a schedule to eat because you want to feel better but you just don’t feel well enough to eat?” This question helped to unpack her relationship with food while she is in remission. Moving on in the appointment, I would ask permission from the client before providing any information, provide the information, and then check in with the client. For instance, “Would you be interested in possibly exploring ways you can go about doing this and possibly exploring the kind of snacks that would be helpful in your situation? What of the three things I talked about interests you the most?” I provided summaries frequently to make sure I understood her stand point such as: “Just to recap on what we went over so far, your doctor referred you because he wanted you to gain weight and you are interested as well, but not too much and too quickly. You also want to improve your health, your strength, and it seems really important to you.” I also provided many affirmations and reflections to let the client know that I was listening. I made great eye contact, smiled, and nod my head to let the client know I was listening. Using this method of counseling, I helped my client come up with her own goals she feels are realistic and achievable.

Although I did well in these areas, I need to improve my non-verbal cues and body language, and being a bit more realistic. I was a little too cheerful, played with my hands and hair too much, and said um too much. I also caught myself saying; “stuff like that,” two times in the appointment where I was not sure on what to say. I could use a little bit more reflections as well.