
L'ENVOI—

It's been a long journey, from the beginning of the book to the end of the book and from the beginning of the course to the end of the course. We have attempted much—and hope we have achieved it. We started by distinguishing an interview from a conversation and the social work interview from other types of interviews. Because the interview is a particular kind of communication, we included a discussion of some essential elements of the communication process.

And because people establish a relationship whenever they communicate in whatever context for whatever reason, we discussed the characteristics of a good relationship. We reviewed attitudes identified as associated with a positive, facilitative, helping relationship—acceptance, empathetic understanding, self-determination, authenticity, and confidentiality.

We then returned to the social work interview, our principal concern, to introduce the participants: the social work interviewer and the social work interviewee. We tried to delineate what each of the participants brings to the interview, the tasks each is required to perform, and the problems they encounter.

The largest segment of the book is concerned with the interview process: the series of steps that interviewer and interviewee jointly engage in to move the interview toward achievement of its purpose. We discussed the beginning of the process, the routes interviewees take in coming to the agency, their reception and introduction to the interviewer, and the beginning of the interaction. We explained the activities the worker performs in extending the range and depth of the interview—attending, reflecting, paraphrasing, making transitions, summarizing, questioning, and probing. We followed interviewers as they engage the interviewee in clarifying, confronting, and interpreting, in

the efforts to help interviewees solve the problems that brought them to the agency. Once they accomplish the purpose of the interview, as it is hoped, their interaction moves toward termination of the interview. We discussed the procedure for termination and noted the postinterview obligations for evaluation.

Some significant aspects of the interaction did not fit neatly into the discussion of the interview process. We reviewed these in chapters devoted to problems of feedback, self-disclosure, immediacy, and such activities as listening, silence, and humor.

We recognize that all general discussions of the interview do an injustice to the individuality of the interviewee. The great variety of interviewees from different cultures and different backgrounds demands that social workers pay some attention to the heterogeneity of interviewees. We used as examples the material about the adaptation required of the interviewer in contact with racial/ethnic minority clients and LGB individuals.

And because people communicate nonverbally as well as verbally, and sometimes more nonverbally than verbally, we included a chapter on nonverbal communication—proxemics, kinesics, paralinguistics, artifactual communication, touch, and smell. We discussed general problems in interviewing encountered by the interviewer and the particular problems associated with interviewing the involuntary client and the child suspected of having been sexually abused.

We warned the reader at the start of our association that, ultimately, interviewing can only be learned experientially. We still think this is true. But we are equally confident that social workers can learn much from a book that systematically presents information about interviewing. It was—and is—our feeling that such learning, such content, helps add competence to commitment. Only the reader knows whether this is purely a matter of faith and hope or whether this has some basis in the reality of the reader's experience.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW AND CRITIQUE

Throughout the book we used excerpts to illustrate various aspects of interviewing. Aware that this gives a disjointed picture, we are presenting in this appendix a full interview. This presents the sweep of the interview process from beginning to termination and includes interview techniques in context.*

INTERVIEW AND CRITIQUE

Record and critique of a tape-recorded discharge planning interview at _____ Hospital, Chicago, November 1994. The client consented to the taping. The interviewer is a White, 32-year-old social worker with a master's degree. The interviewee is a White, widowed, 72-year-old female homemaker who is retired from her part-time job as a cashier at Kmart.

PREINTERVIEW PREPARATION AND PRELIMINARIES

I was asked by Dr. _____ to see Mrs. R., who he said would be medically ready for discharge later in the week. She had been in the hospital for ten days, having suffered a stroke.

Before arranging to see Mrs. R., I read her chart and face sheet and spoke to the attending nurse. The stroke had left her [Mrs. R.] with some residual

*While this interview follows the process characteristic of social work interviews generally, the particular context of this interview is the hospital social work discharge planning interview (Kadushin and Kulys 1993).