

GUIDELINES FOR ONGOING CONTACT

The overall goals for ongoing engagement are:

1. Validate and identify clients' strengths
2. Express empathy
3. Encourage shared decision-making
4. Build hope and foster resilience
5. Continue to problem-solve around concrete and perceptual barriers

VALIDATE & IDENTIFY STRENGTHS

- All people need to be treated with respect
- Validating clients and identifying strengths should happen throughout treatment
- Acknowledge small gains
- Clients need to feel listened to and supported
- Find out about other interests – who is this client outside of their challenges?

Some talking points:

- "What's working well in your life?"
- "Tell me about times in the past when this was not bothering you as much? What was different about those times?"

EXPRESS EMPATHY

- Empathy is critical to practice and can impact individuals, groups, and communities
- Express empathy for clients in a culturally competent way by acknowledging that everyone has a specific way of approaching challenges based on their unique culture

ENCOURAGE SHARED DECISION-MAKING

- Promote equality in the therapeutic relationship
- Explore what information clients need
- Be flexible and continuously attend to clients' felt needs
- Remind clients that they are capable of making good decisions

One sure way to improve show rates is telephone contact in between appointments to remind, validate, empathize, and problem solve!

BUILD HOPE & FOSTER RESILIENCE

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."- Helen Keller

- Hope comes from within and from the supports around us- help to identify the 'silver lining'
- Engage clients' family members and other supports if wanted
- Cultivate and foster clients' self-determination and sense of resilience
- Encourage and maximize clients' sense of possibility
- Look to the future with your clients
- Co-create realistic, attainable, and meaningful goals with clients
- Maintain and nurture your own sense of hope as a clinician
- Be respectful and accepting of your clients

PROBLEM-SOLVE!

- Support clients to take concrete actions to meet goals
- Identify concrete barriers such as transportation and childcare and collaborate to problem-solve
- Continue to address perceptual barriers such as stigma
- Cultural competence is key!
- Help to elicit alternatives
- Identify/consider natural consequences

GET CLIENT FEEDBACK

- Get feedback from clients on their experience in therapy
- Focus on the overall relationship with your client -- "How do you feel about the work we're doing?"
- Use feedback to inform ongoing work

Some talking points:

- "Would you like to set up another appointment?"
- "Is this helpful?"
- "Is there anything you need that we haven't touched on?"

GUIDELINES FOR TERMINATION

The overall goals for termination are:

1. Identify the progress the client has made
2. Identify areas for future work
3. Resolve the client-therapist relationship
4. Identify new support systems
5. Create an opportunity for a healthy goodbye

IDENTIFY PROGRESS

- Help clients recognize improvements and growth
- Highlight progress to help clients cope with potential anxieties associated with termination
- Provide observations and feedback about client's progress. This is important to help client recognize small gains or articulate the progress they have made
- Attribute progress to clients' efforts
- Acknowledge that temporary setbacks are normal part of the change process

Some talking points:

- "I've really seen you grow so much in our time working together."
- "It's been wonderful to see you make different choices in your life that work better for you!"

IDENTIFY AREAS FOR FUTURE WORK

- Identify unresolved issues and areas for future work so that progress continues after termination
- Assure clients they can reach out for help again in the future
- People can continue the work, even if they don't attend therapy every week
- If there has been a lack of progress, work with the client to identify some of the obstacles and reasons behind them

Some talking points:

- "What do you think you would still like to work on in your life or with another therapist?"

REFLECT ON CLIENT-THERAPIST RELATIONSHIP

- Termination can engender upsetting feelings about previous losses that intensifies feelings associated with ending the therapeutic relationship
- Anticipate clients' various reactions to termination
- Attend to feelings of abandonment, rejection, and powerlessness
- If clients act out in response to termination be prepared to explore and make connections between termination and the behavior
- Accept and empathize with the client's feelings will help them feel understood

Some talking points:

- "I've really valued and enjoyed the time we've spent together."
- "Good-byes are difficult to say and do. What has been your experience?"

IDENTIFY NEW SUPPORTS

- If a client's situation has not improved because of external circumstances, the clinician should be prepared to assist in identifying and coordinating services
- Identify barriers to accessing other supports
- Engage clients' family or other support systems to help ease the pain of termination
- Create a list of supports that clients can access in times of need
- Utilize peers as a bridge between you/the agency and the client

CREATE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEALTHY GOODBYE

- Start discussing termination in advance
- Explore the client's feelings about termination openly
- Express your own feelings about termination