

## How to agree objectives for a new helping relationship

In order to agree objectives for a new helping relationship, at the start aims are agreed between the counsellor and the client. Then the counsellor sets about outlining the contract where they cover confidentiality, what to expect from counselling, what type of counselling they will receive, the way the counsellor works, the number of sessions and duration of each session, cancellation policy and negotiate the contract. The counsellor will also go through with the client housekeeping, fire exits and toilets. The counsellor will ask if the client has had counselling before and ask what they want out of counselling. The counsellor will ask the client if they have any questions. During the time of agreeing the contract the counselling will also state the ethical framework.

If the counsellor works using the Person Centred Approach the goal will focus on personal growth, if the counsellor works using the Psychodynamic Approach the goal will focus on personal understanding and if the counsellor works using the Cognitive Behavioural Approach the goal agreed will focus on personal change.

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## Setting objectives

An objective is a clear description of actions that an individual is expected to achieve.

### Identifying and agreeing objectives:

- gives clarity and direction to the counselling that will be given
- helps assess progress and performance
- helps identify areas of strength and weakness

Objectives can be derived from the assessment of the first session or other sessions, and any targets that a client may want to achieve during the agreed sessions.

The aim is not to have a set of perfectly constructed objectives which sit in a file and are rarely revisited. Once agreed, objectives should be reviewed regularly to monitor progress and to ensure that they remain relevant and attainable in light of changing situations or priorities.

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## Boundaries that will need to be considered when starting a new helping relationship

Boundaries are an important aspect of an effective client to counsellor relationship. Having boundaries sets the structure for the relationship and provides a consistent framework for the counselling process. Having an appreciation for the counselling encounter in which difficult thoughts, emotions and feelings can be expressed and processed safely. Some of the benefits of setting out clear boundaries at start help to manage clients' expectations of what to expect and help them to decide if this is the right helping relationship for them. It is useful from the beginning of a helping relationship to set out how many sessions are offered and the frequency of the sessions. To make the client aware of when the ending is coming and what it looks like. For example, inform the client a few weeks in advance that the helping relationship will soon end. This gives the counsellor time to carry out preview and

evaluation a couple weeks before the anticipated ending of helping relationship signalling to the client time to adjust. Doing an evaluation also serves purpose to determine if extended period or more sessions is needed.

There are a number of boundaries taken into account at the start of a new helping relationship, these may include, the setting of time limits, working within a structure, physical boundaries, reduces the risk of client exploitation, reduces client anxiety as rules and roles are clear, increase well-being of counsellor.

Having a clear beginning, a middle and an end within the helping relationship setting and helps to set the structure for each session and is an effective way of sticking to boundaries. It is the duty of the counsellor to act in best interest of the client and counsellor is responsible for managing boundaries. It is important that the counsellor manages boundaries well as the client may not be aware of the need for boundaries or may not be able to defend themselves against boundary violations. By giving the client an indicator of when time is coming to its end this gives the client the opportunity to include an pressing issues before session close. Recognising boundaries provides time for the counsellor to summarise session demonstrates to the client that their voice has been heard.

Working within a time boundary creates a time and space where the client is provided with undivided attention, if there were no time boundaries there would be risk of issues discussed in therapy spilling over onto the counsellor and interfere with work conducted with other clients. Time boundaries are agreed between client and counsellor jointly which also means being respectful of each other.

The counsellor must be clear about the length and duration of each session at the onset of the helping relationship. Make contract regarding any fees and also about late arrival to avoid client arriving late to session. Setting out clear objectives about timekeeping makes the client aware of any constraints.

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