

Career Counselling: The case for integrating a range of counselling approaches to enhance career guidance outcomes for clients

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This presentation will...

- **Ask** what career counselling means in times of uncertainty and economic challenge
- **Ask** how far career counsellors should engage with clients' issues outside of 'career'
- Focus on research undertaken with personal, not career counsellors
- **Ask** if career counsellors can learn any lessons from their counselling colleagues
- More questions than answers!!!

Career Counselling in Times of Uncertainty

- What might be the implications for the work of career counsellors in times of economic difficulty and high unemployment?
- Career counsellors may find themselves engaging in conversations with young people where 'career' means 'life', not simply 'education, training, work'
- Issues such as housing, relationships, finances, sexual health, gangs, drug and alcohol abuse and others can be barriers that stand in the way of young people thinking about/achieving career-related goals.
- This can pose a dilemma for career counsellors.....

Career Counselling/Personal Counselling: the dilemma

- To what extent should career counsellors respond to clients' personal issues?
- If career counsellors do not acknowledge personal 'stuff' how do they help young people overcome barriers relating to education, training and work?
- If **career counsellors** **do** engage with clients' personal issues, what, if anything can be learned from the work of **personal counsellors** who engage with young people?

Research Project: 'What works when counselling young people?'

- Research with 5 experienced/qualified counsellors working with young people in schools/community settings
- 1 hour 'conversation' with each counsellor focusing on:

What works – what makes counselling young people effective?

Themes

- All participants identified the importance of:
 1. a 'safe space' for counselling to be effective
 2. the relationship – grounded in person-centred 'core conditions' empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard
 3. adopting an 'integrative' approach. Being flexible and responsive – drawing on a range of concepts (even if trained in a 'single' counselling orientation)
 4. the use of creative approaches with young people

Counsellors say: the space should be safe

- A room with no outside distractions (noise etc)
- A comfortable place, relaxed with no 'barriers'
- A clear, boundaried, 'safe' relationship, adhering to confidentiality
- At a time when career services are being cut, do career counsellors have access to 'safe space'?
- "I'm just offering a space. Just a place where they can 'be'. Just to be."
- "Maybe, just maybe, after 52 sessions, I provided a 'safe space' for my client to feel that she could talk about herself, and she knew that someone would listen."

Counsellors say: the relationship with the client is all

- Rogers' core conditions are seen as central to building a relationship of trust, based on openness and honesty
 1. Empathy
 2. Congruence
 3. Unconditional positive regard
- Relationship building takes time. Do career counsellors have time?
- “Unless you can develop a relationship with a young person then they're not going to share their innermost thoughts and feelings”
- “Being heard is the most important key. Being with an adult who sits with them and listens...well.. It blows a lot of them away.”

Counsellors say: integrate a range of theoretical perspectives

- Most career counsellors, like personal counsellors are introduced to a range of theoretical perspectives in training. These include person-centred, constructivist, solution-focused, narrative and others
- How much does counselling theory continue to impact on career counsellors in practice?
- How effectively and flexibly do career counsellors integrate different approaches where appropriate?
- “I’m person-centred trained but the reality is that I bring all my life-skills into the room when I sit here with a client”
- “Yes, I was trained in a person centred approach, but I don’t shy away from using CBT either. It’s something I integrate into my work when appropriate.”

Counsellors say: integrate a range of more creative methods

- Creative methods are not generally taught in initial career counselling training
- Career counsellors do not normally use drawing, sculpting, visualisation, story telling, role play and other creative methods in their practice
- **How much would/should career counsellors see creative work as relevant to their practice?**
- “slowly, slowly the sessions turned and she’d say “what can I draw? I need to draw something to get my thoughts clear?” So she does and seeing things helps the work.”
- “I sometimes ask, “would you prefer to use the pens or the sand or the clay” and their eyes will light up and they’ll pick on something and off we go.”

The challenge

- Career counsellors are not trained as personal counsellors... Should they engage with a broad range of issues impacting on their clients' lives?
- Career counselling policy is, in many places 'target driven', with the need for 'results' (engagement in education, training or work)
- Time with clients is often constrained to one or two interactions
- Cuts in funding mean that resources may be constrained
- Ironic... In this climate, a greater need for career counselling for young people... But...less resources available
- But..... If career counsellors are to make a real impact with clients whose lives are complex, then perhaps there are lessons to be learned from their counsellor colleagues

What can career counsellors learn from their counselling colleagues?

- If young people's lives, and not only their career choices are to be explored, career services/counsellors have valuable lessons to learn from their counselling colleagues. They need:
 - **Time** to establish a meaningful relationship of trust with clients
 - **A safe space** which is uninterrupted and confidential
 - **Knowledge** of a range of counselling approaches and how to integrate these into the work in a meaningful way
 - **Developing ways** of integrating creative approaches in career counselling practice

A helpful resource for career counsellors working with young people

