

Principles of Working with People

A distinct set of values guides the relationship when we work with clients

Summarised from: DuBois, B. & Miley, K.K. (1992) Social Work: An Empowering Profession, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 135 - 141



Acceptance

Acceptance is a fundamental social work principle that implies a sincere understanding of clients. Acceptance is conveyed in the professional relationship through the expression of genuine concern, receptive listening, intentional responses that acknowledge the other person's point of view, and the creation of a climate of mutual respect.

Affirming Individuality



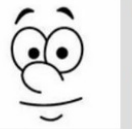
To affirm a client's individuality is to recognise and appreciate the unique qualities of that client. It means to "begin where the client is". Clients expect personalised understanding and undivided attention from professionals. Individualisation requires freedom from bias and prejudices, an avoidance of labelling and stereotyping, a recognition and appreciation of diversity, and knowledge of human behaviour



Purposeful Expression of Feelings

Clients need to have opportunities to express their feelings freely to the case worker. As case workers, we must go beyond "just the facts" to uncover the underlying feelings.

Being Non-Judgmental



Communicating that we are non-judgmental is essential to developing a relationship with any client. It does not imply that workers do not make decisions; rather it implies a non-blaming attitude and behaviour. We do not judge others as good or bad nor as worthy or unworthy.



Being Objective

Closely related to being non-judgmental, being objective is the principle of examining situations without bias. To be objective in their observations and understanding, workers must avoid injecting personal feelings and prejudices in relationships with clients.

Controlled Emotional Involvement



3 components are important: 1) Being sensitive to expressed or unexpressed feelings, 2) an understanding based on knowledge of human behaviour, and 3) a response guided by knowledge and purpose. Workers should not respond in a way that comes across as being cold or lacking in interest while at the same time not over identifying with the client.



Self-Determination

Based on the recognition of the right and need of clients to freedom in making their own choices and decisions. Workers have a responsibility to create a working relationship in which choice can be exercised.

Access to Resources



Workers should aim to assure that everyone has the necessary resources, services, and opportunities; to pay attention to expanding choices, and opportunities for the oppressed and disadvantaged; to advocate for policy and legislative changes that improve social conditions and promote social justice.



Confidentiality

Confidentiality or the right to privacy implies that clients must give expressed consent before information such as their identity, the content of discussions held with them, one's professional opinion about them, or their record is disclosed.