

# **Training counsellors to work with young people**

**Liz Ballinger**  
**The University of**  
**Manchester**

***Or* How my experiences as teacher and counsellor of young people have informed my approach to training**



# My experience as teacher

Teaching young people 16-18 yrs

- International Affairs
- The World Economy and the Third World
- British Economic and Social History
- Nazi Germany

Focus: power, inequality, conflict & oppression

# My experience as a counsellor

- Counselling in and managing a large inner-city college counselling service
- Seeing clients from range of social, cultural, economic backgrounds.
- Seeing clients with varying life chances
- Working with a range of presenting issues

# Presenting Issues

Family relationships

Relationships with peers

Eating disorders

Intimate relationships,

Anxiety/stress

Abuse (physical, sexual)

Depression

Self-harm

# Usefulness of counselling

## Client feedback

- Counselling helpful for significant majority of clients
- Valued being listened to, respected, understood.

## My emerging philosophy:

Counselling means different things to different people. Often, it's about 'listening to the unlistened to'

# GB Schools: Helpful factors

1. Talking to someone and being listened to.
2. Getting things off one's chest
3. Help with problem-solving
4. Providing guidance
5. Confidentiality of the process
6. Independence of the therapist
7. Feeling understood
8. Feeling accepted
9. Gaining of insight

Cooper et al, 2009

# GB schools: major presenting issues

1. Family
2. Anger
3. School
4. 'Behaviour'
5. Relationships (gen.)
6. Self/self-esteem
7. Depression
8. Bereavement
9. Anxiety
10. Bullying
11. Stress
12. Relationships (par.)
13. Abuse
14. Self-harm

Cooper et al 2009

## GB schools: level of effectiveness

‘In each of the studies, counselling was associated with significant reductions in levels of psychological distress ...

In terms of how much change took place, the mean ‘effect size’ was 1.00 .....

Within the social sciences, this is generally considered a ‘large’ effect’.

Cooper et al, 2009

# My experience as a trainer

- Course Director for the MA in Counselling
- An integrative programme with relationship at core
- Focus: personal development
- My tutoring approach: informed by a person-centred/existential approach: passionate engagement rather than critical detachment.

# Relational issues in counselling

- How should we view a young person – as part of a ‘specific’ group or as an individual at a particular point in their life course?
- How important is the age of the client and counsellor - to the client, the counsellor , the counselling process, the relationship?
- How can the core conditions best be communicated?

# View of the person

As part of a group:

- Dangers of labelling and stereotyping and missing individual experience.
- May miss the individual.

As an individual:

- Danger of missing significant contextual factors, e.g. developmental issues, legal parameters, social power and status issues, transitional factors, etc.

# Impact on the relationship & process

## Inequality

- Client may view older counsellor as an authority figure or a caring figure
- Counsellor may see self as an authority figure or a caring figure

## Estrangement

- Client may view older counsellor as unable to empathise, 'out of touch'.
- Counsellor may be unable to empathise with younger client's concerns.

# The communication of the core conditions

- Use of Language – verbal and non-verbal
- Use of technology
- Use of creative methods
- Play therapy
- Length of sessions
- Setting of sessions
- Boundaries

# Similarities and differences?

- Young people world-wide have hugely different life experiences and life chances
- My experiences as External Examiner in Ireland brought this home to me
- You have experienced problems on a scale and intensity that I have not experienced in my personal or professional lifetime, e.g. HIV/AIDS, PEV

# Kenya P.E.V. Client issues

Loss of family members, friends, environment, home  
Danger and abuse before and while fleeing  
Low self-esteem and self-criticism  
Fear for self and others  
Uncertain future

Christabel Muhomah Muhomah 2008

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of a purple square with a white rounded corner, and a yellow horizontal bar with rounded ends extending from the purple shape.

**I have a lot to learn from you.**

**Thankyou**