

THIRD EDITION

Developing Helping Skills

A Step-by-Step Approach
to Competency



VALERIE CHANG
CAROL DECKER
SHERYN SCOTT

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DEVELOPING HELPING SKILLS

A Step-by-Step Approach to Competency

Third Edition

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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we have learned so much from each of you.”*



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Cases in the Instructor's Manual

Bill: Are you saying she's going to die?	Susan Charlesworth
John: Where do I fit in?	Phyllis Shea
Buddy comes home.	Sabrina Williamson
The 10th Street community comes together.	Carolyn Gentle-Genitty
Tony: I want to live at home.	Sabrina Williamson



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PREFACE

Considerable information is available regarding techniques for working with specific systems, such as individuals, organizations, families, or groups. Few texts explore the overarching skills, knowledge, and processes that are essential to working with any of these systems. This text is designed to fill that gap by focusing on skills that are used in working with systems of all sizes. Our premise is that beginning practitioners need to develop self-understanding, knowledge of ethical principles and professional relationships, and mastery of foundational practice information. Competency in the use of self and basic professional tasks and skills is essential before moving to advanced approaches or system-specific knowledge and skills. This book focuses on the practice behaviors and competencies that have been identified as important in the major helping professions.

The book is organized into five sections: 1. Foundation; 2. Building Professional Relationships; 3. Exploring and Assessing with Clients; 4. Defining the Focus; and 5. Doing, Evaluating, and Ending the Work. Each section includes several chapters. Each chapter is an essential building block in the development of competent beginning level practice.

- The Foundation section includes chapters covering the information and tasks that must be mastered before beginning to see clients. These building blocks include the importance of self-understanding, major ways of perceiving self and others, values, ethics and legal obligations, and professional relationships and roles.
- The chapters in Sections 2–5 describe skills and qualities used by practitioners and strengths and resources contributed by clients. Each of these chapters provides ample opportunities for students to use practice skills.
 - Section 2, Building Professional Relationships, includes chapters on developing relationships, basic interpersonal skills, beginning and closing a meeting, and demonstrating active listening. Section 3, Exploring and Assessing with Clients, includes chapters on using questions, exploring and discovering, and thinking about readiness and motivation.
 - Section 4, Defining the Focus, includes chapters on identifying challenges and establishing goals.
 - Section 5, Doing, Evaluating, and Ending the Work, includes chapters on taking action and on evaluating progress, and ending.

NEW IN THIS EDITION

- *Expanded and updated technology sections in the ethics, legal, and professional behavior areas* This is particularly helpful since today’s students need to understand the ethical issues related to any use of technology.
- *Expanded discussion of diversity issues* We live in a very diverse society. Students need to be prepared to work with clients from many backgrounds and understand the need for and the value of learning about work with diverse client groups throughout their professional career.
- *Updated information on topics covered in the book*
- *Information related to recent professional competencies* Each of the helping professions are interested in competency-based education and being able to demonstrate that students have mastered competencies. In addition to covering a broad range of competencies, this book includes a variety of ways to measure mastery of competencies.
- *Learning objectives included in each chapter related to competencies* An Apply and Demonstrate practice exercise allows students to show mastery of the chapter competencies. The summary identifies the major topics in the chapter and is followed by a review that invites students to explain their understanding of the chapter objectives.
- *More focus on active listening* Students need to understand the importance of active listening, being empathic, and expressing empathic understanding. These skills are often challenging for students and need emphasis.
- *Availability of MindTap* Using the many resources available in MindTap makes the work of instructors much easier and assures higher levels of students learning.

COMPETENCIES IN THE TEXTBOOK

Major Competencies Covered in the Book	Competency # Social Work	Competency # Professional Psychology Beginning Practicum Level	Competency # Marriage & Family	Competency # Human Services	Location in Book by Chapters
		Competency # Counseling			
Advance human rights, social & economic justice	3	Professional orientation & ethical practice			1–4
Appropriate use of supervision & consultation	1		2.5.1, 5.5.2		4
Apply critical thinking	7, 8, 9	Implicit in applying theory & interventions		4. Problem analysis & decision analysis	7–15

Major Competencies Covered in the Book	Competency # Social Work	Competency # Professional Psychology Beginning Practicum Level	Competency # Counseling	Competency # Marriage & Family	Competency # Human Services	Location in Book by Chapters
Understand and apply human behavior & social environment knowledge	6, 7, 8, 9	Human growth & development	Human growth & development	1.1.1, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.8	1. Understanding human systems of all sizes 2. Models of causation	2 & 6–15
Assessment	7	Interviewing & relationships; Interpersonal communication	Counseling, prevention and intervention	1.3.1, 2.2.1, 2.3.2, 3.3.6	4. Problem analysis	11–15
Conditions that promote or inhibit human growth		Importance of relational skills in clinical relationships			2. Understanding conditions that promote or limit optimal functioning	1 & 2
Develop & implement mutually agreed-on goals	7, 8			2.4.4, 3.3.1		13
Diversity-understanding & ability to work effectively with diverse clients	2	Diversity & cultural adaptability	Social and cultural diversity	4.3.2		Throughout the book
Engagement	6			1.3.6		5–14
Ethics-understands values & ethic of profession and legal obligations and limitations	1	Ethics	Ethical practice	1.5.1, 5.1.15.1.2, 5.2.1–5.3.1	5. Understanding of human service ethics	3
Ethical use of technology	1					3
Ethical decision making	1			5.4.1		3

Major Competencies Covered in the Book	Competency # Social Work	Competency # Professional Psychology Beginning Practicum Level	Competency # Counseling	Competency # Marriage & Family	Competency # Human Services	Location in Book by Chapters
Evaluation	8 & 9	Interventions planning & developing relationships	Counseling, intervention, and evaluation	3.4.1 4.3.10 4.4.2–4.4.6	4. Intervention evaluation	13 & 15
Helping relationships	6	Assumed in interventions & relationships	Helping relationships			4–15
Information management and communication with clients				1.3.4, 1.3.5 3.3.9, 3.5.3 5.3.3		7 & 15
Interprofessional roles & collaboration	1, 8			1.3.8, 3.3.7		5
Interventions—competent use of skills with individuals, families, groups, & organizations	7 & 8	Intervention implementation	Counseling, prevention, and intervention	1.4.1 4.4.1–4.4.5	3. Identifying and selecting interventions 4. Planning and implementing interventions	6–15
Professional behavior & roles	1	Professional demeanor & professional relationships	Professional orientation	1.5.3	6. Profession role conduct	4
Research informed practice	4	Knowledge of the sources & utility of scientific literature		5.3.8		13–15
Self-development				5.3.10		4
Self-awareness and self-regulation	1, 2, 6, 7, 9	Knowledge of self-boundaries & affect in developing relationships		3.4.5, 5.4.2	5. Awareness of values of self and organization	1–4

Major Competencies Covered in the Book	Competency # Social Work	Competency # Professional Psychology Beginning Practicum Level	Competency # Counseling	Competency # Marriage & Family	Competency # Human Services	Location in Book by Chapters
Understand and advocate to eliminate oppressive & promote equality	3				3. Advocacy	4
Use empathy, reflection & other interpersonal skills competently	6					5–15

MINDTAP

MindTap is an extensive online learning system that includes the ebook, assignments that bring course concepts to life, supplemental readings, video and discussions questions, and practice and apply exercises. This cloud-based platform integrates learning applications (“apps”) into an easy-to-use and easy-to-access tool that supports a personalized learning experience. MindTap combines student learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides students through the course.

SUPPLEMENTS

Online Instructor’s Manual

The Instructor’s Manual (IM) contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

Online Test Bank

For assessment support the updated test bank includes true/false, multiple-choice, matching, short answer, and essay questions for each chapter.

Online PowerPoint

Vibrant Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for each chapter assists instructors with their lectures with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT LANGUAGE

Although we believe that there are no right ways to deal with the challenges of language, we value clarity. Therefore, we will explain the language decisions that we have made. We have chosen to use the word *practitioner* to refer to helping professionals from all backgrounds (e.g., counseling, psychology, social work, pastoral care, nursing, marriage and family therapy, etc.). We use gender-specific pronouns when appropriate, but otherwise use *he or she* or *his or her*. When referring to clients who may be individuals, families, groups, or organizations, we specify a particular system size if that designation is needed; otherwise we use the word *client* to refer to the many system sizes. We use the word *group* to refer to a task group (people working on a project), a support group (people whose goal is to support and encourage each other), and a counseling group (people who are helping each other to make life changes). We use the word *meeting* to refer to any engagement between a practitioner and client, including individual, family, couple sessions, group meetings, and meetings with organizations. Finally, we have chosen to use the word *counseling* when referring to the many activities engaged in by practitioners when working to facilitate change with individuals, families, and groups.

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INTRODUCTION: THE TEACHING-LEARNING SYSTEM

This book is written with four main goals in mind. *The first goal* is to provide fundamental knowledge necessary for students preparing for careers in the fields of social work, psychology, educational counseling, counseling, marriage and family therapy, pastoral counseling, human services, and related helping professions. *The second goal* is to explain and give multiple examples of how basic practice skills are used when working with individuals, families, different types of groups, and organizations. *The third goal* is to give students enough opportunities to reflect on and apply the knowledge so the new information can be integrated and used in many situations throughout their career. *The fourth goal* is to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their competency in the use of the basic practice skills necessary to work effectively with clients. In order to achieve these goals, the following teaching-learning system is recommended.

Becoming a competent practitioner requires learning how to apply practice knowledge, how to think about clients in the ways used by experienced practitioners, and how to appropriately and effectively use the skills and tasks necessary to work effectively with clients. This book's learning system provides information and practice exercises that will help you become a competent, self-reflective professional, so that you are able to evaluate your practice and identify your strengths and areas for growth.

This learning system can be used in a variety of ways. Instructors may select the parts of the learning system that best suit their course objectives, teaching philosophy, and style. Detailed suggestions and additional information related to each aspect of the teaching-learning system are provided in the *Instructor's Manual* available on the Cengage website.

Achieving competency requires multiple methods of learning. Although each person learns in his or her own unique way, active learning methods are proven effective and popular with undergraduate and graduate students. This teaching-learning system involves the following learning methods:

- Reading about information related to professional practice and the skills and tasks needed to work effectively with clients
- Thinking and writing about ideas related to the concepts that are discussed
- Watching and discussing a video demonstration of use of the skills (available to students using MindTap)
- Applying knowledge and skills to a specific client situation
- Working in task groups on cases
- Practicing skills in a simulated interview
- Evaluating the use of the skills immediately after practicing them

READING

Each chapter begins with questions for students to consider as they are reading the chapter and a list of learning objectives related to the chapter and to important competencies. As each new concept, skill, or task is introduced, students read about how the knowledge or skill is applied with different system sizes, including individuals, families, groups, and larger systems. The chapter ends a summary of key concepts in the chapter.

THINKING AND WRITING

Homework exercises are provided following the introduction of new concepts. The purpose of the homework exercises is to enhance learning by inviting students to think about the concepts and skills and to write about and actively use the concepts. In many homework exercises, students are encouraged to reflect on how the concept is related to their own life experiences. Instructors using Just-in-Time teaching may have students turn in assigned homework online before class. This assures that students begin active learning before coming to class and gives instructors time to assess the students' level of understanding and learning before class. In class, further active learning can be stimulated by asking students to discuss specific homework exercises with a partner or in small groups.

WATCHING AND DISCUSSING

Those students using MindTap will use a video that demonstrates the use of the skills discussed in the book. Following the introduction of a group of new skills, students can see how an experienced practitioner uses these skills. Seeing skills used with clients helps students understand how to apply these skills.

There are various ways to use the video to enhance learning and evaluate competency. For example, many instructors give students basic information about the client and ask the students to answer questions before seeing the video. Such questions include:

- How would you prepare for a meeting with this client?
- What do you need to learn about before meeting with this client?
- What are your hunches about what the client might be thinking, feeling, and expecting?
- What are your concerns about working with this client?
- What, if any, personal issues would working with this client bring up for you?

Exercises for each section of the video include asking students to name the skills being used, to identify other skills that might be used, to evaluate the practitioner's use of the skills, and to discuss the quality of the relationship between the practitioner and the client.

WORKING WITH CASES

For many students, information and skills learned in class do not transfer to real-world practice (Koerin, Harrigan, & Reeves, 1990; Lombardi, 2007; Vayda & Bogo, 1991). One way to help students transfer knowledge and skills is by providing opportunities for them to work on real-life cases and to learn how professionals

think about case information (Middendorf & Pace, 2005). Using the case provided in the text and the 5 additional cases in the *Instructor's Manual*, students can apply knowledge and skills to real world situations and begin thinking like professionals who must take into account facts, impressions, knowledge, values, ethics, and laws as they decide on appropriate action and use their practice skills (Brooks, Harris, & Clayton, 2010; Lynn, 1999).

Thinking through the complexity of working with cases based on actual practice situations helps students learn to think like professionals (Lynn, 1999; Wolfer & Scales, 2005). Students learn that there is no “right” answer to problems, and that appropriate responses are relative and situation specific. Working with cases fosters an understanding of and a respect for the uniqueness of each client’s situation, needs, and resources. By using cases, students learn both subject matter and skills such as critical thinking, communication, group collaboration, and self-assessment. Cases also provide an opportunity for students to develop the problem-solving, diagnostic, and clinical reasoning skills that are vital to the counseling process.

Case-based learning involves interactive, student-centered exploration of realistic and specific situations. The specific type of case-based learning used in the book is problem-based learning (PBL), a learning system that replicates practice by giving students one section of a case at a time. Research shows that PBL makes learning more exciting and interesting to students (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Searight & Searight, 2009; Vasconez, Donnelly, Mayo, & Schwartz, 1993; Vernon & Blake, 1993). By using this interactive, student-driven approach to learning, retention and reinforcement of information is enhanced (Bennett-Levy, 2006; Bernstein, Tipping, Bercovitz, & Skinner, 1995). Problem-based learning involves engaging in active learning, setting learning goals, discovering gaps in knowledge, and sharing responsibility for completing assignments. Using problem-based learning, your instructor serves as an advisor or guide, not the expert.

One case is included in the book. Starting in Chapter 7, sections of a case are presented; each new section adds information. In our modified problem-based learning (MPBL), general questions for students to consider and discuss are added at the end of each case section. The questions have been developed to help students learn the basic ways that practitioners approach thinking about case situations. The questions require students to differentiate between impressions and facts, and to identify and seek out needed information. Students report that using the MPBL method required them to think about how to apply theory to practice, prepared them to work with clients, and helped them to feel confident about their readiness to work with clients (Chang & Sullenberger, 2009). The *Instructor's Manual* includes additional information about using the modified problem-based learning method and suggests other ways to use the cases to enhance student learning.

The book case can be used in class to demonstrate how to work with cases. To maximize student participation and learning, we suggest having students form groups to work on the cases. Students answer all the questions individually prior to coming together with their group to discuss the answers. The final step is for the group to present and/or write their answers to each question.

WORKING IN TASK GROUPS

Current research on teaching identifies that learning is enhanced when students work together in groups. Working in a group gives students the opportunity to learn about the viewpoints and experiences of other people, and to move from passive

learner to active, self-directed learner. By discussing cases in a small group, each group member has the opportunity to share experiences, thoughts, and perspectives. Just as practitioners discuss case-related dilemmas with their team or colleagues, each member of your group will serve as a resource. Group members can share in leading the discussion and recording the group's progress. Group work is more effective when groups establish ground rules, such as the way members will report their information and what should happen when a member is absent or doesn't complete the assignment. For students planning to enter the helping professions, learning to work effectively in a group is essential as they will often be working on teams.

As they work in groups, students develop skills in assessment, planning, and evaluating, as well as gain an appreciation for the benefits of collaboration. As a group, students identify their learning goals and determine the resources needed to accomplish their goals. Using this book, groups can be used to discuss homework assignments and either the book case or the cases in the *Instructor's Manual*. Group collaboration is very helpful when dealing with the complexity of each case. The *Instructor's Manual* includes tips and assignments that can be used to help students work effectively in groups.

PRACTICING

The Apply and Demonstrate Practice exercises give students opportunities to apply their practice skills and demonstrate their competency. Starting in Chapter 6, Apply and Demonstrate Practice exercises invite students to demonstrate their level of competency. In the practice exercises, students work in a group of three people and take turns playing the roles of practitioner, client, and peer supervisor. Each practice exercise includes specific directions for these three roles. Students who have used this system reported learning a great deal in each role.

Using this learning system, students focus on one group of skills at a time. After mastering one group of skills, students move on to the next discrete group of skills. With each practice session, students repeat the previously practiced skills and add new skills. As students improve their ability to use skills, they receive positive feedback and experience increasing confidence in their ability to use the practiced skills. The Apply and Demonstrate Practice exercises simulate work with an individual client because this is easiest for students. As students gain confidence using the skills with individuals, they can move on to using the skills with families, groups, communities, and organizations.

After developing an adequate repertoire of basic skills, students can learn more advanced skills and ways to use skills effectively with a wide variety of clients in many different situations. As their mastery of these skills improves, their ability to be empathic, warm, respectful, and genuine will increase as will their ability to be attuned with their clients. Over time most practitioners develop a personal style or ways to more fully include their unique ways of relating in the helping process. Using this book and education system, students gain competency in the use of the basic knowledge and skills necessary to effectively facilitate the change process.

EVALUATING

As students practice new skills, it is important for them to evaluate their competency (Bennett-Levy & Beedie, 2007). This book includes an evaluation system that has

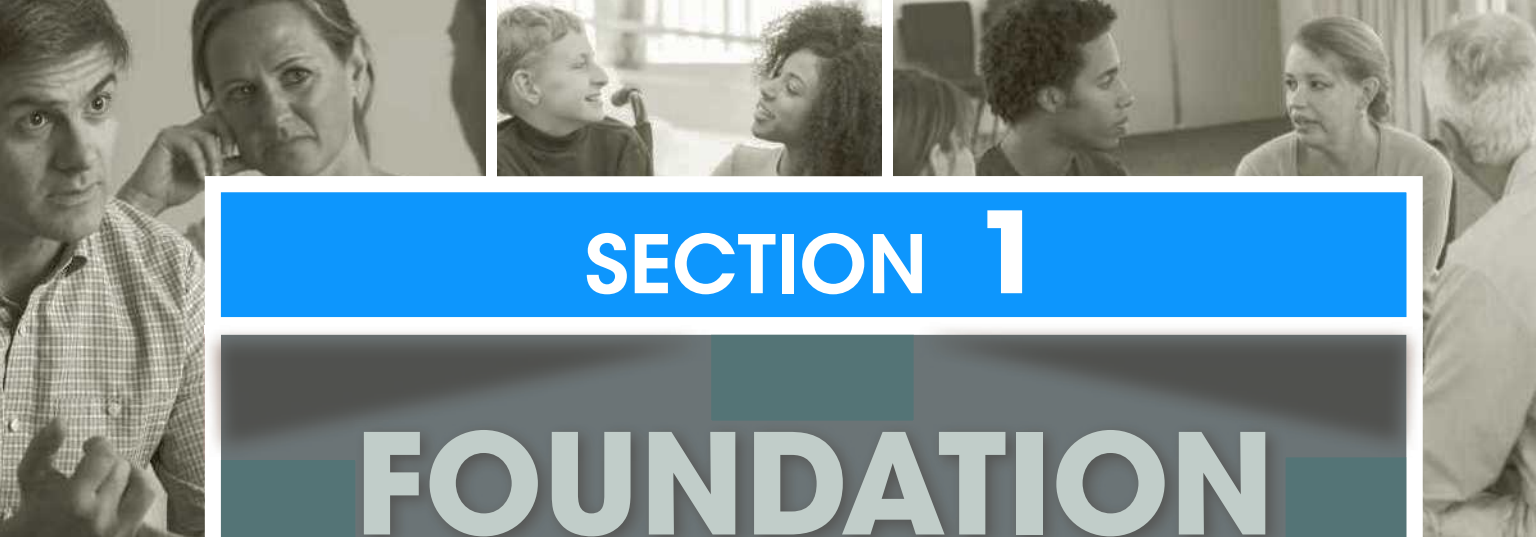
been tested and shown to be valid (Pike, Bennett, & Chang, 2004). Undergraduate and graduate students, as well as agency supervisors, have been able to quickly learn and use this system. After teaching the students about the importance of immediate, honest feedback, instructors can demonstrate how to use this simple system.

The evaluation system provides students with immediate feedback about their use of skills and their demonstration of the core interpersonal qualities (warmth, empathy, respect, and genuineness). Immediate feedback is a central part of this learning system. After each practice session, the student's work is evaluated: the person in the client role gives feedback about whether or not he or she felt understood and thought there was a respectful connection with the practitioner, the practitioner identifies his or her perceived strengths and weaknesses, and the peer supervisor gives the practitioner feedback on the use of skills. In the role of peer supervisor, students learn to constructively evaluate both the use of skills and the demonstration of core interpersonal qualities. Guidelines for making these judgments are provided so that beginning practitioners can learn to accurately evaluate skills and recognize strengths and limitations. Having clear, behavioral descriptors helps beginning practitioners become aware of their strengths and their mistakes (Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Tsai, Callaghan, Kohlenberg, Follette, & Darrow, 2009). Additional directions related to doing the practice exercises and evaluating each exercise are included before the first Apply and Demonstrate Practice exercise in Chapter 6.

In class, instructors often rotate among student groups and offer feedback to the students in the role of peer supervisor and practitioner. Online instructors may have students do the Apply and Demonstrate Practice exercises in groups of three people who meet together in person or use a recording method, such as Zoom. Some online instructors have students record some of their Apply and Demonstrate exercises and upload the video for the instructor to view.

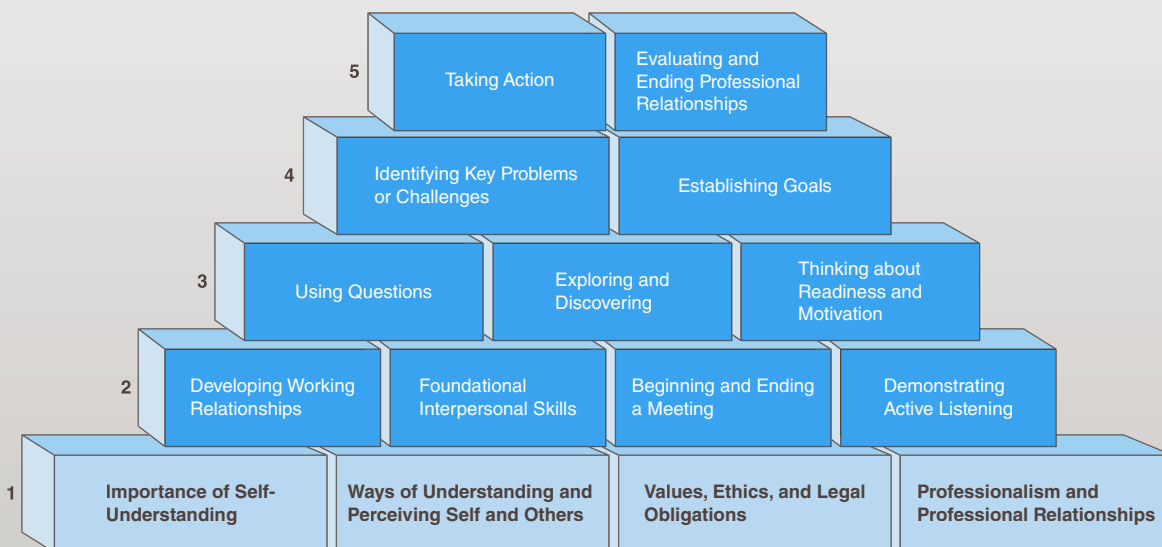
Some instructors ask students to do a beginning video interview. As students gain skills, they can evaluate this beginning interview. Later in the course, instructors may require students to do a final video interview demonstrating their use of all of the skills and evaluated by the student and instructor using this evaluation system. Additional information on using the evaluation system is available in the *Instructor's Manual*.

When the students move on to practicum or internship placements, they can assess the quality of their work with clients using this evaluation system. If their supervisors have been trained to use this evaluation system, students and their supervisors can use this system to move from beginning evaluations of practice skills to setting specific goals for improvement. Using this evaluation system in class and/or in field settings is an excellent way to measure and demonstrate skill competency. Ultimately, our goal is that each student becomes an effective, reflective practitioner who uses self-evaluation, learns from mistakes and successes, and is continuously improving.



SECTION 1

FOUNDATION



As is true in any profession, becoming a skilled practitioner takes energy, perseverance, dedication, and time. Your efforts to enhance your ability to work effectively and collaboratively with clients will bring many rewards. There is satisfaction in seeing individuals develop self-esteem, families work together, communities find a renewed sense of purpose, and organizations build a culture of acceptance and encouragement.

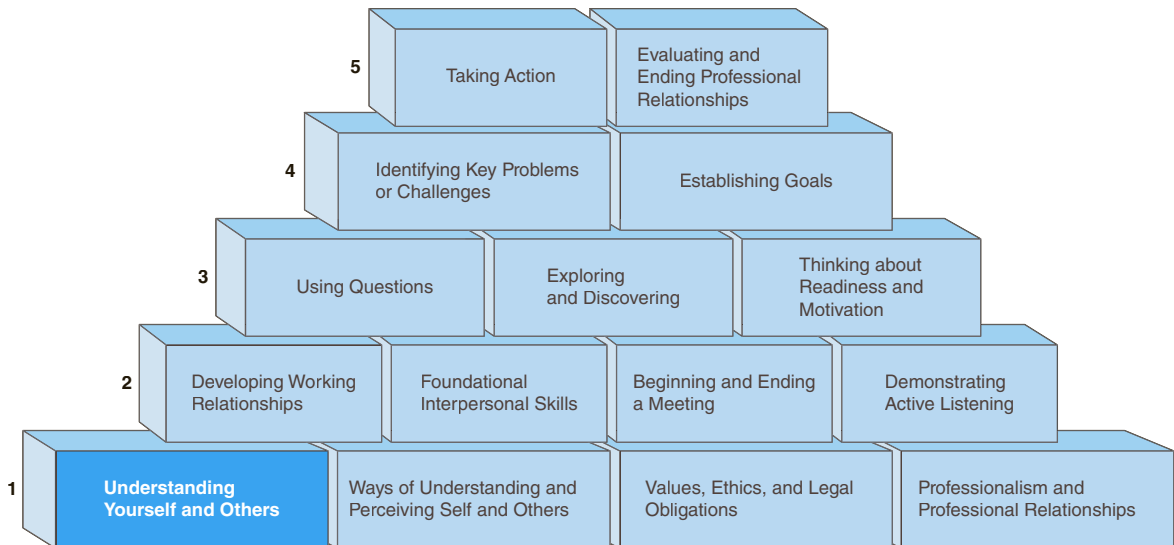
To become a competent and effective practitioner, you'll need to acquire an array of new skills and knowledge. Developing this knowledge base can be compared to building a wall. Beginning with the foundational information covered in Chapters 1–4, each chapter is an essential building block that adds to your development as a practitioner. Chapter 1, *Understanding Yourself and Others*, provides information and exercises that will help you understand influences of personal development; culture, race, and ethnicity; gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spirituality and religion; life stages; family of origin; disability and ability; and stress and demands on you and your clients. Because all practitioners use themselves to help others, self-understanding is vital. Chapter 2, *Ways of Understanding and Perceiving Self and Others*, includes discussion of the following perspectives constructivist: family systems, ecological, strengths, resilience, empowerment, and dual perspective. Each of these perspectives influences our perceptions of and actions toward ourselves and others. Chapter 3, *Values, Ethics, and Legal Obligations*, gives an overview of ethical, legal, and professional standards that apply to practice behavior with clients and provides a decision-making model to use when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Chapter 4, *Professionalism and Professional Relationships*, deals with developing a professional identity, maintaining professional relationships, using supervision and consultation effectively, engaging in career long learning, advocating for change and understanding the unique nature of practitioner relationships with clients.



CHAPTER

1

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AND OTHERS



Questions to consider as you read this chapter

- What influences on my personal development are important to consider as I begin to learn to work with clients as a helping professional?
- Why is it important to learn more about myself as I develop as a helping professional?

Learning Objectives

Students will understand and be able to explain:

- How differences in culture, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spirituality, religion, life stage, family of origin, disability and ability, and life stresses and demands influence the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity
- How to gain sufficient self-understanding to recognize and manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups of people
- How socioeconomic class enhances privilege and power and access to resources
- How the values and structure in a culture (economic, political, and cultural exclusions) can result in oppression and discrimination
- How their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values understanding

INFLUENCES ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal experiences, capacities, physical abilities, privileges, and limitations influence development. As we grow and develop our self-concept, we absorb and are influenced by culture, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, life stage, ability and disability, family, and spiritual beliefs and norms. A task of practitioners is to understand that their personal beliefs and views of “truth” are only one way of looking at a situation. Some viewpoints may be ingrained so deeply that other perspectives can seem not only different, but wrong. For example, in one therapeutic group, a client who experienced a difficult childhood believed that the world was a dangerous place. She often felt scared that something frightening might happen in her neighborhood. Other members of her group told her they experienced her neighborhood as a very safe place to live, but she wasn’t able to see it that way herself. Our perception of what is true depends on the beliefs we hold.

As a practitioner, understanding and accepting yourself is an essential step toward understanding others (Hill & Lent, 2006). Developing self-understanding and an awareness of personal biases is a particularly important process in the journey to becoming a competent practitioner (Sue & Sue, 2016; Vargas & Wilson, 2011). Self-understanding can be gained by reading and taking classes, receiving competent

supervision, being in personal therapy, and setting aside time for self-reflection. When working with a client, your life experiences can influence how you perceive your client. In this chapter, basic information related to understanding yourself and others will be covered. Pay particular attention to areas you may not have considered before.

The way you see the world has been influenced by the family you grew up in, the culture you inhabit, and the way you interpreted the events of your life. Your beliefs affect how you think about yourself, others, and the world. For example, a woman who was teased a lot during childhood learned to perceive herself as inadequate. As an adult, she believed she was only capable of obtaining a low-level job despite her college degree. She believed others would not take her seriously and would see her as inadequate.

Before doing this first Homework Exercise, remember from the Introduction that the purpose of each Homework Exercise is to augment your learning and understanding of concepts by giving you an opportunity to reflect on and use the material. Since the material in this book is essential to your work as a professional, you need to learn it in a deep, meaningful way so the concepts will be available for you to use in your career.

HOMWORK EXERCISE 1.1

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PERSONAL BELIEF SYSTEM

It is important to recognize the beliefs that have established your views of yourself, others, and the world. A cultural belief that was once common was “A penny saved is a penny earned.” What truisms about money did you learn in your family? Perhaps you received messages about how to behave, such as: “If you don’t go to church, you’ll go to hell,” “Cleanliness is next to Godliness,” “The early bird catches the worm,” and “We don’t associate with those kind of people.” Recall other adages you learned as a child?

You may have absorbed beliefs about human nature such as “Being beholden to others is wrong,” “You can’t trust men, they just want one thing,” “Working hard is the way to succeed,” “Poor people are just lazy,” “Beggars can’t be choosers,” or “It is best to be cautious around others because you can’t count on them.” Write one belief related to each of the following: success, money, and relationships. These beliefs will influence your values, your reactions to life experiences, your culture, and other factors.

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Written by Khadija Khaja

The minority and immigrant populations in the United States have increased over the past 30 years and are projected to continue to grow over the next 40 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). In 2013, it was reported that approximately 41.3 million immigrants lived in the United States, making up about 13% of the population, with one-quarter being either first or second generation (Zong & Batalova, 2015). From 2012 to 2013, the foreign born population increased by about 523,000 (Zond & Batalova, 2015). In addition, wars and civil conflicts due to political strife, ethnic or religious discord are increasing the global refugee crises. As a result, practitioners are likely to see an increasing number of clients from various ethnicities, races, and

cultures (Refugee Council of Australia, 2015). The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) reported that in 2013 more than 50 million people were forcibly displaced, with more than 50% coming from Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia alone.

Research suggests that multicultural competence seems to be a significant predictor of satisfaction in counseling for both practitioners and clients. In fact, Fuertes et al. (2006) found that cultural awareness affected the practitioner's satisfaction with his or her own work and increased the client's perception of the practitioner's empathy and the client's satisfaction with treatment. Conversely, difficulties in counseling arise from unacknowledged differences in the perceptions between the practitioner and the client. Therefore, it is critical for practitioners to understand their own cultural beliefs and to be aware of the ways in which these beliefs influence their behavior and expectations of others (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008; Sue & Sue, 2016).

Although the terms *race*, *culture*, and *ethnicity* are often used interchangeably, they are defined differently. **Race** refers to a group of people with specific physical characteristics that differentiate them from other groups of people (Tseng, 2001). **Ethnicity** refers to a group of people distinguished by a shared history, culture, beliefs, values, and behaviors (Tseng, 2001). In contrast, **culture** is defined as the customary beliefs, social forms, and behavior patterns of a racial, religious, or social group. In this section, we will be discussing how culture affects our beliefs and values.

Culture's Influence on the Practitioner

As practitioners, our culture, race, and ethnicity shape our identity and our worldview. They offer us unique life experiences that teach us our language, behaviors, rules, and ways of understanding others. Culture provides us with a framework of assumptions or premises for understanding the world and communicating that understanding to others. For many people it gives meaning to their very own existence, provides a foundation of strength, and inspiration for coping with various stressors. Furthermore, culture affects the way that people think, act, or behave and interpret the world around them (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015). Such ways of thinking or behaving are often passed from one generation to another, and are constantly evolving. Examples of things that can be passed on are language, religious beliefs, ways of thinking, creative expressions, norms of behavior, arrays of personal and societal relations, traditions, gender roles, and ritual practices, and so on. Practitioners need to be able to work across many diverse cultures, and respect the multiple identities of any client. Understanding what is common between a practitioner and a client can help to bridge these differences. However, learning about the culture of a person that a practitioner is interviewing will be important as it can provide insight on different factors that can impede building respect and trust between a practitioner and a client. Being interested in learning about different cultures can counter any stereotypical assumptions that a practitioner may have about a client. For example, people can have different “cultural norms about intimacy, making eye contact, shaking hands, disclosing emotion, parental discipline, and what children are or are not exposed to” (Miller & Garra, 2008, p. 230). Discussing cultural differences with those from another culture may be difficult due to factors such as unfamiliarity with the correct language, unease about creating further distance or misunderstanding, or apprehension about talking about cultural differences that may be present (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015).

Cultural humility refers to one's ability to maintain an attitude of openness to the aspects of another's cultural identity that are most important to that person (Hook, 2013). Cultural humility ensures that practitioners will solicit help and advice to increase their own awareness of cultural nuances that are important to clients. Enhanced awareness helps in building a trusting relationship between both practitioner and client.

Our culture, race, ethnicity, and worldview influence our values and beliefs about what behaviors are considered normal, appropriate, or healthy (Fuentes, 2006; Parsons & Zhang, 2014). In Western culture, a common assumption is that healthy individuals are constantly striving to achieve success and upward social mobility (Liu et al., 2007). This is known as the *upward mobility bias*. This bias affects how we judge others. For example, how would you view a man with a PhD, who has chosen to be a full-time parent to his children, ages 8 and 10 years?

Because of the invisible influence culture has on our perceptions, it is critical for practitioners to examine their beliefs, assumptions, and biases. As a practitioner, you should be on a journey of self-discovery. Accepting that how you see the world is only one way out of many equally valid ways of viewing the world will allow you to accept and appreciate the worldviews of others (Jernigan, Green, Helms, Perez-Gualdrón, & Henze, 2010). According to Saltzburg (2008), during our self-reflection we should ask ourselves:

- What is our own cultural identity, family heritage, beliefs, and values surrounding this identity?
- What are the origins of our beliefs and assumptions?
- How does the notion of privilege influence our formation of personal biases?
- How can we have more interaction with diverse individuals, families, and groups?
- What are some of the positive or negative interactions we have had with diverse cultures? How has this influenced us and/or shaped our own assumptions?

HOMEWORK EXERCISE 1.2

CULTURE, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND VALUES

1. How do you identify yourself culturally, racially, and/or ethnically?
2. List three values you learned growing up.
3. How does your culture describe a successful adult?

As you become aware of your belief system, you begin to see similarities and differences among diverse cultures and recognize how these beliefs can influence your reaction to the behavior of others. Increased awareness of your culture and other cultures is vital to your development as a practitioner. How does a practitioner develop an understanding and appreciation for culture, race, and ethnicity issues in counseling? Multicultural knowledge can be partially achieved through the following tasks:

1. reading about other races, cultures, and ethnic groups;
2. recognizing strengths and weaknesses of dominant and minority racial groups;

3. developing meaningful relationships with people from various racial and cultural groups;
4. developing relationships with colleagues and mentors who are open to discussions on cultural or racial issues;
5. watching films about other cultures and races;
6. participating in cultural activities or visiting other countries (Jernigan et al., 2010);
7. conducting research studies on diverse groups;
8. attending workshop presentations on how to work with diverse clients;
9. taking part in intergroup dialogues, and eventually facilitating such discussions;
10. volunteering at a refugee center; and
11. accessing information on the web, including webinars, podcasts, and videos.

HOMEWORK EXERCISE 1.3

YOUR CULTURAL BELIEFS

- When did you first realize that your family belonged to a certain group of people (e.g., African American, Caucasian American, Mexican American, Asian American, Irish American, Euro-American, etc.)?
- What were you taught in your family about people from other ethnic or racial groups? How were differences dealt within your family?

Culture's Influence on Clients

Although it is important to understand your cultural belief system, it is equally important to develop an understanding of the cultures of your clients (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008; Daniel, Fuchs, Lee, Roemer, & Orsillo, 2013). We need to become familiar with the culture and political history of clients who differ from ourselves. Cultural influences occur at many levels including areas such as ways of coping with stress and adversity (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2010; Tseng, 2001). For example, when coping with illness, pain, and other life challenges, what does your culture think is appropriate: crying, complaining, gritting your teeth, being strong, sharing with supportive others, or seeking immediate help?

Culture has a strong influence on the roles that are seen as appropriate. These may be age-related roles, such as beliefs about the proper behavior of children toward parents, teachers, and society. As you watch children and parents interact, how do your beliefs about the role of children affect your opinion of the behavior you see? Practitioners need to become particularly aware of cultural differences in attitudes regarding independence and autonomy, patterns of communication (verbal and nonverbal), family boundaries and responsibilities, and the expression of emotions (Capuzzi, 2011; Kim, Ng, & Ahn, 2005). When thinking about the cultural background of a family, you need to consider the ways that culture has influenced values about work, education, health care, religion, and family structure and responsibilities (Congress, 2002). For example, in many Asian societies, adult children are expected to provide shelter and care for their elderly parents. In some cultures, parents and other family members expect to be involved in decisions made by adult children, such as choice of marriage partner and how money is spent.

The level of acculturation of immigrants and their ability to communicate in the local language is also important. People who are the first generation in a new country tend to be greatly influenced by their culture of origin. Children of these first-generation immigrants have grown up in the new country and often feel torn between the culture of their parents and the culture of their friends. Some clients have come to your community as refugees, or perhaps their parents were refugees. Many minority individuals are expected to present themselves as representative of all members of that culture (Tummala-Narra, 2010). Practitioners must recognize both the shared cultural experiences and the unique differences in cultural groups.

Chang and Berk (2009) found that clients working with practitioners who were of a different race or culture had different expectations of the practitioner and used different standards for evaluating expertise, credibility, and competence. They also found that Asian participants, while valuing insight and personal growth, tended to prefer expert guidance, advice, explicit instruction, and structured, problem-focused suggestions. Practitioners who were more directive were rated more favorably and were seen as being more helpful. Chang and Berk's study suggests that effective practitioners need to demonstrate culture-specific knowledge.

Communication patterns include the appropriateness and timing of eye contact, the amount of directness in coming to the point of a discussion, personal space wishes, and even facial expressions. For example, in Western society, direct eye contact is considered polite and appropriate. In some cultural groups, direct eye contact is considered rude. In some societies, business is discussed only after a period of social exchanges unrelated to the purpose of the meeting. Smiling may represent feelings of discomfort, distress, sadness, or anger, rather than happiness (Ansfield, 2007; Jandt, 2016). These communication patterns come into play in counseling and may create problems if the practitioner and the client are using different communication rules and patterns.

There will be times when you work with clients who have problems or backgrounds that are similar to yours. You may have a greater intuitive understanding about what their life has been like or the pressures they may be experiencing. You may make assumptions that their life is just like yours, and that they feel and think as you do. These assumptions may be incorrect and can lead to misunderstandings.

Cultural knowledge helps us understand an individual in the context of his or her cultural, racial, or ethnic values and beliefs. Although becoming a culturally competent practitioner is a lifetime task, you should become knowledgeable about the cultures of your clients. As practitioners, we need to become aware of the “beauty, depth, and complexity of cultures and ways of being in the world other than [our] own” (Blitz, 2006, p. 246).

Influences of the Dominant Culture

Members of the dominant culture may have difficulty identifying the influence of their own culture because it is accepted as the norm. People who are members of the dominant culture often benefit from privilege. They may be unaware of their privileges while accepting and using them as a natural right (Liu et al., 2007; Todd, Spanierman, & Aber, 2010). Privilege may be awarded based on race, gender, class, physical ability, sexual orientation, or age. **White privilege** is an institutionalized set of benefits granted to those who resemble the people in power in a culture's institutions (Kendall, 2001; Rothenberg, 2008) where the majority of the population is Caucasian. For example, you may have heard of the term the “old boys' club.”