

Characteristics of an effective counselor

Effective counselors, who are considered to be the most influential, are thought to have the following qualities:

1. Self-awareness
 - a. Aware of own beliefs, allowing them to be honest and caring
2. Solid knowledge
 - a. Knowledgeable in a vast array of biological and social sciences , and can apply principles to the culinary arts
 - b. Must be willing to keep up with the ever changing field of nutrition
3. Ethical integrity
 - a. Value the dignity and worth of all people
 - b. Respect, value and care for others
4. Congruence
 - a. Counselor is unified
 - b. No contractions between what the counselor says and who they are
 - c. Consistency in verbal and non verbal cues
5. Communicate clearly
6. Gender and cultural awareness
7. Sense of humor
8. Honest and genuine
9. Flexible
10. Optimistic and hopeful
11. Empathetic

The counseling relationship

The relationship is divided into two phases:

- 1) Building a relationship – learn about the problem, explore strengths and promote self exploration
 - a. Develop rapport
 - b. Show empathy
 - c. Trust
- 2) Facilitating positive action- help the client identify and alter specific behaviors
 - a. Clients must be open and honest about what they are willing and not willing to do
 - b. Counselors must provide non-judgmental feedback

Novice counselor issues

New counselors have concerns about competency. Feelings of inadequacy can result in reluctance to handle controversial nutrition topics and issues. New counselors are also reluctant to take a stand point and often only give partial answers- be clear and confident in your answers.

- Counselors should aim to present reliable and substantiated information and interpret controversial information without personal bias, recognizing legitimate differences of opinion do exist.

Novice councilors must also learn to be able to assume the role of both the expert and the empathizer.

- Combining both roles can lead to effective interventions