

Counseling Diverse Older Adults

Student's Name

Institution

### Counseling Diverse Older Adults

The process of counseling older adults poses many challenges to the target group and the caregivers. Some of the changes include the use of audiologists and speech-language pathologists. This paper will analyze the process of offering to counsel to older adults from diverse cultures and regions. Apart from considering the age of the older adults being counseled, the people involved in the process are required to consider the social and economic influences, the effects of cognitive and physical aging, clinician experience, behaviors, and biases (Costa, & McCrae, 2011). Dealing with older people is somehow difficult but with a proper understanding of the people's needs, the process becomes easier to handle.

In any process that involves more than one party, an effective communication system must be in place to ensure that the passage of information from one person to another is effective. The counseling process can be hindered by factors such as financial restrictions, a smaller or reduced social network with the society members, sensory deficits, and some of the older people may have chronic health problems. When the challenges are experienced to an older adult, the communication skill reduces, and the counseling interactions with the specialists and professional counselors do not run smoothly. The older adult might fail to understand or pay attention to the speech of the counselor hence the services end up being paid but the achievements not yet met. The process of counseling diverse older adults entails some rules. The rules include communication style adjustment, evolving needs and concerns, accommodation of the learning styles, the creation of a therapeutic partnership with the older adults, provision of enough time, development and maintenance of trust, and learning about the individuals involved in the counseling process.

The counselors can engage in activities such as attending to the gym and having walks together with the older adults so that they can feel recognized. When the counseling sessions are set for the older adults to attend, they should not take it as punishment but a way of being an encouragement. The mental health counselors are supposed to create a sense in the mind of the older adults that they too have the chance to engage in activities that are being performed by other energetic people. The level of participation can differ, but at least they will have a share in the activities.

### **Counseling Rules of Diverse Older Adults**

#### **Adjustment of Communication Styles**

Counseling is an exchange of information between a specialist and the diverse older adults. To better communication between the two parties, both verbal and nonverbal communication is essential. The use of a complex language to an older person creates more understanding problems as the memory of the individuals no longer accommodates strong vocabularies and the speed of talking as well. The speaker must go a low pace to ensure that the older individual has grasped every word and understood the essence of the conversation (Edelstein, Martin, & Gerolimatos, 2012). The modification of the language should not be altered too much to make the older people of not understanding things at that age. Language modification should not be extended to a point where the group can feel like they are given their language because of old age.

#### **Adaptation of Evolving Needs and Concerns**

The process of counseling must be timed well to capture the minds of the individuals. The available and coping strategies of the individual being counseled must be well known to the pathologist because they must fit an effective information exchange environment with the older

person. The loss of personal and family attitudes can make an individual develop communication problems. Among the models of the loss of grief and loss associated with the communication is cited by Tanner and Gerstenberger (1988). The loss of a person or perceived response of an individual can lead to a lack of skills. In the case of evolving needs and concerns, the older people experience denial and frustration.

### **Adaptation of the Learning Styles**

Therapy and counseling involve learning experiences that should be undergone to achieve the objective of the counseling process. The learning process for the older people must not take any set procedure; they should be treated according to the best way each can understand well. The easiest way to make the older people learn is to use the information that directly relate to the situations being handled in their lives. Topics related to the experiences the older people undergo to make them pay attention because they too are in the process of overcoming such situations from their lives. To make sure that the older people do not forget the things they are taught, repetition of the ideas and breaking the sessions into short and frequent can help to instill the information to the mind. The information presented must be given in short sessions that are frequent, and the amount of information given to the older people for processing must be limited to the level of understanding, as they cannot accommodate much during the stage. Brief information becomes easier to remember and implement in the day-to-day life activities.

### **Development and Maintenance of Trust by the Counselor**

Trust development creates an environment that is conducive for counseling. The older people must be assured of the privacy and confidentiality of the information they share with the pathologists. The devaluation of the language used in the counseling process should not be devalued. Being a professional does not guarantee the creation of trust from the customers who

are the elders. Much of the information shared by the older people is mainly personal and family related. In many occasions, the elders who come from the high class of socioeconomic status have a trust in professionals unlike the older people of, the lower class. To gain trust in someone, the same people must have a shared life experience, and it must be equal. However, the evidence is created that the professionals are trusted because they understand the issues in the area of their specialization. The knowledge known by the professionals makes the older people to gain trust in them. The signs of trust are created by the empathy demonstrated by the pathologist. Any individual who tries to sympathize with the situation never gains neither confidence nor trust among the older people they are counseling.

### **Shortcomings and Strengths in the Literature in Counseling Diverse Older Adults**

The information contained in the literature review and scholarly material has strengths and shortcomings. The information published does not capture all the cultures in the world. The diverse older adults are so much attached to the cultural beliefs. A proper research must be conducted in the entire world to arrive at a conclusive process of doing counseling to the diverse older adults. For example, the culture of the Chinese older people cannot be treated the same way an older adult can be treated in the United States of America.

Another shortcoming of the pathologists is the use of communication skills. The verbal and nonverbal language skills do not apply the same to all the people from various cultures. During the learning process of the pathologist course, the mode of the language used must be taught and the way people communicate in the world as a whole. Some of the sign languages, for example, might not mean the same information to an Arab and a Latin American individual.

The major strength of the literature review is that they give general guidelines about the counseling procedure that helps the pathologists from various cultures to engage well with the

older adults in their region of work. Since the experts have the knowledge from a wide range of resource materials, applying the knowledge to the local, individual older adults become an easy task.

### **Required Goals to Improve Cultural Competence**

In several ways, it is essential for the healthcare facilitators who offer the guiding and counseling to the adults to focus on the diversified issues especially when the counselor is serving the multicultural community. Despite the differences in the adults aging condition, other elements characterize diverse adults. Aspects that distinguish the aging adults include the variance in the race, language, ethnicity, gender, physiological ability, socio-economy status, education, sexual orientation, religion, and location of residence. Thus, the diverse aging population has been challenging the health care providers clinically, in management and during the research; hence it requires high skills and capabilities for offering services competently.

It is recommended for the practitioners to be competent as far as the adult's diversity are considered. The counselor should understand the cultural differences among the clients thus; it makes the counselor acknowledge cultural assumptions and biases. The competence gives the healthcare provider ability to make some changes in the thinking and behavior to avoid the biases during counseling. A competent counselor develops a program that demonstrates empathy and understanding of the cultural differences in the design of counseling, implementation, and the evaluation.

Culturally adult counseling is characterized by counselor sensitivity to the adult's first language. Based on the reason that many adults had good communication skills throughout their lives but during their illness, they develop communication challenges. Therefore, it is the duty of the counselors to make sure adult communication ability is to understand the adults'

communication skills (Knight, & Losada, 2011). Thus, it is advisable for a counselor to strategize on the best way for testing the communication skills of adults. Some of the diseases that affect the communication skills of the adults include; the Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA), Traumatic Brain Injury, Progressive Neurological Diseases, and the Assistive Communication.

The counselor can be termed as more competent when the staff understands the cultural nuances of the client population. In the big nation such as the United States in made up of several cultures. For example, the African-American, Irish Americana, and the Native Americans thus it is required for a counselor to have tipped regarding the cultures. Understand of cultures assist in guiding and counselor due to the reason that a counselor cannot act against the culture of the client. Conducting counseling in respect of the client's culture makes the diagnosis easier because the client will not feel ease during counseling. Appreciating the clients' cultural background extends the treatment opportunities. Considering the origin of the adults, it necessary to know there are some of the certain values that are to be considered during counseling. The values that are supposed to be considered include the family, spiritual or religious.

The practitioner should be capable of making policies and decisions regarding the diverse counseling of adults in the society (Morthland, & Scogin, 2011). The competent counselor should capable of planning, organizing, directing, and coordinating issues about the guiding and counseling of the diverse adults in the society to avoid the misconception. Policies are the tools used to make the activities smooth in the healthcare delivery. Designing and implementing policies is a factor that shows the competency of the counselors' ability to make decisions in the healthcare facility. Policymaking reduces the errors during the counseling session, therefore, if

the counselor cannot be able to create and adhere to the policies, it will lead to inconsistency in service delivery.

The counselors are supposed to be well informed about their features. Therefore, it is advisable for the medical practitioners to test their attitudes towards the diverse adults' population (Holtzer, Zweig, & Siegel, 2012). Learning about the transitions that are experienced by the people while aging and evaluate the approaches used to support the older people as they make aging transitions. Medicare, nursing homes, social security mental health programs, social services programs, recreations programs are some of the systems that are supposed to be reached by the counselors to ensure the diverse adults are served in the society. Older people are supposed to be recognized in the society. Thus they require close attention during the counseling session.

The counselors are supposed to learn about the caregivers who work with adults. Understanding the caregivers gives the room for coordination to ensure the adults are taken care as per the standards recommended by the health care officer (Edelstein, Drozdick, & Ciliberti, 2010). Moreover, the stress and other issues affecting the older people can be given by the caregivers as they are close to them and can interpret the issues through facial expressions of the people. More information can be gathered to facilitate the counseling session that the older adults are advised not to bother much about the wealth and family issues as they have retired from getting concerned. The counselor is supposed to show the caregivers the essence of dignity versus the dehumanization and the opinion regarding the people they serve.

### **Appropriate Goals for Working with Diverse Older Adults**

The main goal that is required to be reached by the counselor is solving the issues of the clients permanently. Achieving the client's satisfaction is the primary goal for every



practitioner. During the counseling of the diverse adults in the society, it is challenging to solve the related mental issues considering that environment matters. Despite the environmental conditions, it is the duty for the counselor to make sure the adults are assisted to a satisfactory point.

Serving the society is termed as corporate social responsibility, thus serving the adults with great care and value is a sign of being responsible to the society (Edelstein, Drozdick, & Ciliberti, 2010). It is healthy to keep a society more productive. Reducing the medical bills makes the saving ratio rise, thus, the savings can be used to launch alternative ways of dealing with an illness such as by use of mobile clinics.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the process of counseling is supposed to be an ongoing process. The discharge from therapy or the medical care should not be the end of facilitating knowledge to the older people. The process of continuous counseling brings the sense of self-worth and a contribution to a better and understanding a society where the elderly people are appreciated and given their position in the society. Keeping the older people alert and at par with the current issues enables them to be in a position to give proper advice regarding the challenges and problems encountered because of the long experience of such issues they have encountered.

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