Assessment

Assessment is part of counseling: avoid temporarily neglecting good counseling practice during assessment.

The purpose of assessment is to identify problems and to identify possible solutions, which may be multiple.

Diagnosis matches the client’s signs and symptoms against known clusters of signs and symptoms to discover if a match can be found.

Severity and duration are important. The known clusters are given in classification manuals.

Be aware of the problems of labeling and stigmatization.
The biopsychosocial formulation views the individual holistically and is particularly sensitive to the individual differences of each person. It recognizes that individuals are part of multiple systems and therefore function at many different levels. Individuals also have many different parts operating within them. Interventions can therefore be focused at many different points.
Assessment (1st session)

It is helpful to let the potential client know the following during the first session, as well as the reasons, where appropriate:

- Whether or not you will be able to offer her counseling
- Whether or not your organization will be able to offer her counseling
- Whether or not you or your organization will be able to refer her to another agency for help.
Modality Assessment
Lazarus believes that the entire range of human personality can be included within seven modalities. Biological organisms (neurophysiological / biochemical entities) who behave (act and react), emote (experience affective responses), sense (respond to olfactory, tactile, gustatory, visual and auditory stimuli), imagine (conjure up sights, sounds and other events in the mind’s eye), think (hold belief, opinions, attitudes and values), and interact with one another (tolerate, enjoy or endure various interpersonal relationships). 7 discrete but interactive dimensions/modalities as behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal and drugs / biology-----the useful acronym BASIC ID
Behaviors

- This refers mainly to overt behaviors such as acts, gestures, habits, responses and reactions that can be observed. Write down which behaviors you would like to increase and which ones you would like to decrease. What would you like to stop doing? What would you like to start doing?
Feelings

This refers to emotions, moods and strong feelings. What emotions do you experience most often? Write down your unwanted emotions (e.g. anxiety, anger, depression, embarrassment, shame, guilt, hurt). Note under “Behaviors’ what you tend to do when you feel a certain way (e.g. avoid friends when depressed).
Physical sensations

- Seeing hearing, tasting, touching and smelling are our five basic senses. Make a list of any negative sensations that apply to you (e.g. butterflies in the stomach, blushing, dizziness, tension, pain, sweating). If any of these sensations cause you to act or feel in certain ways, ensure you note them down under “behaviors’ or feelings”
Images

- Write down any recurring dreams and any vivid memories that may be bothering you. Include any negative features about the way you see yourself (your self-image). We are looking for “pictures” or vivid scenes from your past, present or future, that may be troubling you. If you images arouses any significant actions, feelings, or sensations, ensure that these items are added to “behaviors”, ”feelings”, and “Physical sensations”.
Thoughts

- What sorts of ideas, opinions, values and attitudes get in the way of your happiness? Make a list of unhelpful things you tell yourself (e.g. “I must be perfect at all times”, “I’m worthless and useless”, “I can’t stand it”, “what’s the point of living?”). What are some of your most irrational ideas? We are also interested in auditory memories that you keep on hearing and that constitute a problem (e.g. sad music). Note down how these thoughts and ideas influence your “Behaviors”, “Physical sensations” and “Images”.
Interpersonal relationships

- Write down any problems with other people (e.g. relatives, friends, work colleagues, neighbor, lovers, acquaintance) that bother you. Any concerns you have about the way other people treat you or how you treat you or how you treat them can appear here. Check through the items under “Behaviors”, “Feelings”, “Physical sensations”, “Images” and “thoughts”, and try to determine how they influence, and are influenced by, your “Interpersonal relationship”.
Biological factors

- Make a list of all drugs, whether prescribed by a doctor or not, that you are taking. Include any health and medical concerns, and major illness you have or have had. Write down whether you want to improve your diet, lose or gain weight, or take more exercise.
Behavior

Problem

- Eats / walks fast, always in a rush, hostile, competitive: indicative of type A behavior.
- Avoidance of giving presentations
- Accident proneness

Proposed program / treatment:

- Discuss advantages of slowing down; disadvantages of rushing and being hostile; teach relaxation exercise; dispute self-defeating beliefs.
- Exposure program/program; teach necessary skills; dispute self-defeating beliefs
- Discuss advantages of slowing down
Affect

- Problem:
  - Anxious when giving presentations
  - Guilt when work targets not achieved
  - Frequent angry outbursts at work

- Proposed program / treatment:
  - Anxiety management
  - Dispute self-defeating thinking
  - Anger management; dispute irrational beliefs
Sensation

Problem:
- Tension in shoulders
- Palpitations
- Frequent headaches
- Sleeping difficulties

Proposed program / treatment:
- Self-message; muscle relaxation exercise
- Anxiety management e.g. breathing relaxation technique, dispute catastrophic thinking
- Relaxation exercise and biofeedback
- Relaxation or self-hypnosis tape for bedtime use; behavioral retraining; possibly reduce caffeine intake
Imagery

Problem:
- Negative images of not performing well
- Images of losing control
- Poor self-image

Proposed program / treatment:
- Coping imagery focusing on giving adequate presentations
- Coping imagery of dealing with difficult work situations and with presentations; ”step-up” imagery
- Positive imagery
Cognition

Problem:
- I must perform well otherwise it will be awful and I couldn’t stand it
- I must be in control
- Significant others should recognize my work
- If I fail then I am a total failure

Proposed program / treatment:
- Dispute self-defeating and irrational beliefs;
coping statements; cognitive restructuring;
ABCDE paradigm; bibliotherapy; coping imagery
Interpersonal

- Problem:
  - Passive/aggressive in relationships
  - Manipulative tendencies at work
  - Always puts self first
  - Few supportive friends

- Proposed program / treatment:
  - Assertiveness training
  - Discuss pros and cons of behavior
  - Discuss pros and cons of behavior
  - Friendship training
Drugs/biology

- Problem:
  - Feeling inexplicably tried
  - Taking aspirins for headaches
  - Consumes 10 cups of coffee a day
  - Poor nutrition and little exercises

- Proposed program / treatment:
  - Improve sleeping and reassess; refer to GP
  - Refer to GP; relaxation exercises
  - Discuss benefit of reducing caffeine intake
  - Nutrition and exercise program