

Case Work Tools

Paper-202 Work with Individual and Families

SOS LIFE LONG EDUCATION EXTENSION AND SOCIAL WORK

JIWAJI UNIVERSITY

- PROF. VIVEK BAPAT

A tool is anything that serves as a means of operation in the practice of a trade, occupation or a profession. The tools of an occupation like carpentry, being concrete, tangible and determinate lend themselves to sensory perception. Casework tools, on the other hand, are abstract concepts, and not concrete instruments or things that can be handled by one's limbs. The tools used in casework are: listening, observation, interview, relationship and home visit. The word "tool", which immediately produces the mental image of concrete things, cannot be easily explained when it is used as an intangible, non-material entity.

Two common meanings of the word "tool" may be adapted to explain the term "casework tools".

(1) A means of contact with something or a means of access to something. Casework tools are means of contact with clients. They are also means of access to information about the client, his family and his problem. This meaning is applicable to all the five casework tools. Observation and listening may be considered as tools within tools as they are components of interview, relationship and home visit.

(2) A means for transmitting energy or force towards something. Here the word "tool" refers to a channel, medium or venue for the transmission of energy or force. This meaning is applicable only to three of the casework tools, interview, relationship and home visit, which serve as channels for the transmission of information, knowledge and help.

LISTENING

Listening is a basic casework tool. Active, attentive listening is purposeful. The purpose is to understand the speaker's words and feelings as accurately as possible, for which mental concentration is necessary. The listener has to pay attention to what is said, what is not said, and what is suggested. Listening, therefore, becomes a consciously performed activity for the social worker. It is also an aspect for the practice of the principle of acceptance.

There are some common obstacles to active listening, knowledge of which, is necessary for one who wants to train himself/herself as an effective listener.

OBSERVATION

Observation is the practice of noticing features about people, things or situations, and in the context of casework, the purpose is to use the observed data for understanding the client and his situation. The caseworker has to take cognizance of the following with reference to the client:

1. The general outward appearance
2. Facial expression, posture, gestures, etc.
3. The characteristics, particularly the emotional nuances of interactions that take place between clients and others, including their family members.

INTERVIEW

The casework interview refers to the meeting of the social worker and the client in a face to-face conversation. It is not a casual conversation but a professional activity on the part of the social worker, because the conversation is geared to specific or general purposes. The purposes may be one or more of the following:

- (1) to obtain information from, or impart information to, the client
- (2) For studying and assessing the client's problem and related situation
- (3) To give help.

HOME VISIT

Conducting the interviews in the office of the agency has certain advantages. It provides for privacy and prevents distractions.. It invests a certain degree of formality and professionalism in the conversation, to the extent that the clients are encouraged to view the interviews seriously. But to some clients, the formality of the office may be threatening, provoking them to put on masks that hide their real selves and feelings. For such people, having one or two interviews at home will be a welcome relief.

There are also some other considerations which make home visits an important and necessary casework tool. First of all, there is the likelihood that the client perceives the social worker's visit to his/her home as an indication of the social worker's interest in his/her welfare. A recognition by the client of the social worker's interest and concern is desirable as far as the progress of the casework process is concerned. Furthermore, there are clients whose fatalistic attitude to life's problems and the resultant resignation to problems prevents them from doing anything. Social workers have to go to them rather than wait for them at the agency. One or two home visits may not bear any fruit; more visits will be necessary. Repeated home visits by social workers are recorded in some of the SOCR cases, the social worker's persistence paying off in the end.

RELATIONSHIP

The worker-client relationship is another casework tool that needs to be delineated. Relationship between any two people is the condition of their being connected in a significant way. We experience various kinds of relationships in our lives. First of all, there are the relationships derived from being members of one's family and kinship groups. Parent-child, sibling-sibling, uncle-niece relationships are examples. These are permanent and unalterable, lasting as long as one lives. On the other hand, relationships between two friends, neighbours or classmates are temporary. The doctor-patient, teacher-student, supervisor supervisee, lawyer-client are examples of professional relationships. One can broadly classify relationships according to quality also. A relationship between two people, characterised by hatred is a negative relationship; nevertheless, it is a relationship. Likewise, a relationship marked by affection is a positive one.

Thank you

All the best