

## **1st Stage: Initial Disclosure - Relationship Building**

The first step involves building a relationship and focuses on engaging clients to explore issues that directly affect them. The first interview is important because the client is reading the verbal and nonverbal messages and making inferences about the counsellor and the counselling situation. Is the counsellor able to empathise with the client? Does the client view the counsellor as genuine?

## **2nd stage: In-depth Exploration - Problem Assessment**

While the counsellor and the client are in the process of establishing a relationship, a second process is taking place, i.e. problem assessment. This step involves the collection and classification of information about the client's life situation and reasons for seeking counselling.

## **3rd stage: Commitment to action - Goal Setting**

Setting goals is very important to the success of counselling. It involves making a commitment to a set of conditions, to a course of action or an outcome.

## **Step 4: Counselling Intervention**

There are different points of view concerning what a good counsellor should do with clients depending on the theoretical positions that the counsellor subscribes to. For example, the person-centred approach suggests that the counsellor gets involved rather than intervenes by placing emphasis on the relationship. The behavioural approach attempts to initiate activities that help clients alter their behaviour.

## **Step 5: Evaluation, Termination or Referral**

For the beginning counsellor, it is difficult to think of terminating the counselling process, as they are more concerned with beginning the counselling process. However, all counselling aims towards successful termination. Terminating the counselling process will have to be conducted with sensitivity with the client knowing that it will have to end.

Note that each of these steps continues even though the counsellor and the client moves to the next step. For example, after building a relationship, the counsellor moves to Step 2 which involves assessing the problem encountered by the client. In the meantime, the counsellor continues to strengthen the relationship that has been built. In other words, Step 1 or the building of a relationship does not stop but is ongoing until Step 5 which involves termination or perhaps the client is referred to for further action.