



Four Processes to Make the Gospel Relevant in Counseling

The whole counseling process is transformed and completed in the gospel. When the gospel is infused in the counseling process, it offers an opportunity for both the counselor and the client to experience the grace of Christ, his presence and the power of the cross.

This checklist, though it is not exhaustive, will help you reflect on making the gospel relevant in the counseling process

Building Alliance

Building and maintaining alliance with a client is priority in every counseling approach. For in the safety of the counseling relationship, we are able to see the vulnerabilities of our clients. When the gospel comes to bear, the purpose is more than a strong therapeutic context. It becomes a context for clients to experience the relational love of God, who enters their lives with acceptance and hope. In essence, we are showing them the gospel.

- Am I listening attentively to my client?
- Am I reflecting back what I am hearing?
- Do I understand what is being shared?
- Can I identify with what is being shared without feeling judgmental?
- Can I feel empathy and compassion?
- Do I want to know more?
- Do I want my client to feel understood and accepted?

Relieving Symptoms

Relieving the immediate distress or pain of our clients is not the end goal of the counseling process, but a way of meeting them where they are. Just as Christ in His mercy attended the immediate pain and suffering of the blind, the sick, and the hungry, we seek to relieve the felt need that is most distressing for the client in order to continue toward the deeper work of heart transformation.

- Are there issues of safety that I should be concerned about for the client?
- Are there potential risk factors to consider?
- Are the symptoms affecting the client's functioning?
- How long have the symptoms persisted?
- Does the client report that the symptoms are being managed?
- Do I need help to alleviate the client's symptoms/distress?
- Do I take the concerns that are identified by the client seriously?

Grieving and Accepting

Grieving and accepting the experiences of pain and suffering is a process in which the most vulnerable parts of the client are revealed. More than making sense of their pain and connecting the impact of their history to the present, we want these vulnerable parts to encounter Christ. This helps clients accept what has happened and experience his comfort and presence in the midst of their pain, moving them closer to God.

- Do I understand the impact of my client's experience of suffering?
- Can I sit with my client in his pain with empathy and without judgment?
- Can my client identify his hurts and connect to his story?
- Does my client deny or minimize his pain and suffering?
- Can my client honestly wrestle with the pain or express it to God?
- Can my client make sense of God in his experiences of pain?
- Is God's relevance in the client's story a comfort to him?

Facilitating Heart Change

The essence of facilitating heart change is to strengthen the bond in the client's relationship with God. The experience of grace from the beginning of the whole process enables clients toward deeper change targeting beliefs operating in their subconscious, particularly in the way the clients view themselves and God. As clients experience more of God's acceptance, they can recognize and grieve their deepest brokenness of placing their most ardent affection and deepest trust in something or someone else to save them and make everything okay. At the same time, they can rejoice in the amazing love of Christ who gives new identity and purpose in life.

- Have I noticed a change in the way my client talks about God?
- Have I noticed an expression of deeper fondness and admiration for God?
- Does my client show remorse for hurting God?
- Does my client recognize and articulate her tendency toward self-reliance?
- Does my client express a greater acceptance for herself, while grieving her tendency for self-reliance?
- Does my client express desire to turn away from her self-redemptive strategies?
- Does my client express new meaning and purpose in life?