

Guiding Circles Counsellor Tips:

Active Engagement: The activities in Guiding Circles are intended to be used following the principles of *Active Engagement* by Norm Amundson. Such an approach encourages a client-centred approach which engages the client where he/she is engaged in life. It is a creative approach which encourages flexibility and innovation. It is a holistic approach which encourages involving the client at all levels.

Working Relationship: Try to establish a good working relationship with the client or clients. Find some common ground. The “Favorite Things” exercise might be a helpful way to build the relationship. Set forth clear goals and objectives so that the client knows where the counseling process is going. Emphasize that this will be a collaborative process.

Flexibility and Creativity: Be flexible and creative in the use of Guiding Circles. Be client focused not book focused. Try using the workbook in different contexts: individual or group, single session or multiple sessions, in the office or in a less-threatening environment, the client alone or with family and community present, etc. Use only those parts which are helpful for the person at hand. Be flexible in the order you use the activities. Draw in other resources or tools that you are familiar with. For example, you may have an activity which helps him/her clarify his/her interests or skills. Try new ways to use the material. For example, in the section on values you may wish to put the different values on cards and have the client do a card sort with them. Or they could be done with post-it notes on a wall chart.

Reflection and Action: Sometimes clients don't think they have the time for reflection. They just want to have a job. Emphasize the importance of the journey. Remind them that sometimes good reflection is needed in order to know the right actions to take. In order to know where they should go, it is important to know where they are and where they've been. Ask them if what they have been doing is working. If not, ask if they would be willing to take some time to try a proven approach.

Boundaries: When people are telling their stories, sometimes they find themselves in the place of talking about awkward areas of their lives which have deep emotion. Make every effort to create a climate of emotional safety for clients. Encourage the client to share only as far as he/she feels comfortable. Give people permission to stop if they feel uncomfortable with what they are sharing.

Career Circle: When you overview the parts of the circle, stress the importance of taking the time to explore each of these areas. Crafting a career is a process that is more effective if it is started well. As clients learn more about themselves, they will gain a better understanding of their own self-worth and will be better able to establish career goals. Knowing who they are points to what they can do. Try to get perspectives not just from the client but also from community. For many reasons (e.g. lack of self awareness, humility, false self-image, etc.), some people find it difficult to state positive things about themselves; others can do this for them. As you complete different activities with the

client, be sure to come back to the career circle and add any new information. Keep a balanced perspective; not everything in the career circle will necessarily be fulfilled through any particular job. The question is whether or not it is being fulfilled in some area of the person's life.

Connections: Encourage the client to focus on what he/she has and not what is missing. For example, a person's support system may involve friends or the social group rather than some family members.

Telling Your Story: Remind the client that one of the goals of Guiding Circles is to help him/her understand who he/she is. A person is more than their work life. By looking at all areas of life, a fuller picture can be seen. This will be a good activity for seeing where a client is engaged in life and for finding starting places for further exploration.

Patterns: The key is to be specific; help the client choose an activity(usually best to start with a non-work activity such as a hobby or leisure activity; something they choose to do when they have the choice) and then 2 specific incidences (one positive; one negative).Being specific and concrete helps the client be reflective; general thoughts lend themselves to generalized answers. Facilitate don't direct. Let the client do the talking. Use questions to help them tell their story. Link questions to things they have already said so they feel as if you are interacting with their story rather than following your agenda. Keep in mind what you are assisting them to discover; have the sections of the career circle clearly in the back of your mind. As the client gives details, write them all down briefly. If you don't write them down, they are easily forgotten. Once they are written down, you can point the client to them to jog his/her memory.

Values: Remember that it is normal to have a blend of corporate and individual values. If a client is not sure of his/he values, ask them to think of specific past life roles, activities, and accomplishments and then to think of what was important for them at the time.

Favourite Things: This activity might be a good one to start with if the client is not very self-reflective. It can be a non-threatening way to start thinking of one's life. As with the activity on Telling Your Story, this can help find those starting points where a person is engaged in life. This can also help with several of the other activities in the book: it may suggest an activity to use for Patterns; it may point to Values; it may suggest some of the Connections in a person's life; it may help the person to concretely start thinking of their own life Balance.

Balance: This activity focuses on one of the eight sections of the Career Circle. It emphasizes the importance of a holistic life and of a holistic counseling approach. Remember that this looks at all of life, not just work.

Expanding the Circle: Encourage a wide range of involvement. Link this to the activity on Connections. If possible, let the community be aware of the need for their support and input. Remind people that sometimes they can share positive things about a person that

they would be too humble to state for themselves. Give people a specific time period in which to fill the questionnaires in.

10 Things I Want: Typically once someone has completed their Career Circle, they have found out many things about themselves. This activity helps the client to review all they have found and to select those things which are most important to him/her in a work context. Remember that not all they desire in their life will necessarily be fulfilled in a work context. From a career perspective, it is important to understand that who a person is points to the possible things they may do.

Stepping Stones: This is a preliminary stage to action planning. In order to do a good action plan, one needs first to have an idea of where they want to go (vision), the decisions they need to make (decision) and the potential actions which may need to be completed (action). There may be some overlap here or an action may have to be performed before a decision may be made (e.g., someone may need to explore possible training opportunities before deciding upon the best route for training).

The Journey Continues: Rather than a purely linear action plan, this cyclical format emphasizes the continuing nature of the career journey. Emphasize that people don't need to know everything before they can start taking steps. They can act on what they know at the time. As they act, they will learn new things which will help clarify goals and vision. As goals and vision are clarified, they can decide on new actions. The cycle continues. The career journey is a walk that is taken one step at a time. Each new step helps focus the next steps.