

# Facilitating Characteristics of Helping Relationships

(The Seven Core Conditions)

COUN 200 - Seminar in Counseling Techniques  
H. Dan Smith, EdD, MFT

The Basic Skills, with Empathy being the "cornerstone"

1. **Empathy:** The counselor responds with accuracy to the client's deeper as well as surface feelings--is "tuned in" on the client's wavelength. The counselor has a full awareness of who the other person is and with a comprehensive and accurate understanding of that individual's deepest feelings. *For empathy to exist as a Core Condition, this understanding must be communicated to and be understood by the client.*
2. **Respect:** The counselor cares deeply for the human potential of the client and communicates a commitment to enabling the client to actualize his/her potential. In doing so, the counselor fully accepts the client's gestures toward growth even though they may not be in a direction wholly consistent with the counselor's values.
3. **Concreteness:** The counselor involves the client in discussion of specific feelings, situations, and events regarding their emotional content; the counselor facilitates a direct expression of all personally relevant feelings and experiences in concrete and specific terms.
4. **Genuineness:** The counselor is completely spontaneous with his/her interaction and open to experiences of all types, both pleasant and hurtful; and in the event of hurtful material, the counselor's comments are employed constructively to open further areas of exploration. The counselor is being him/herself and employing genuine responses constructively.
5. **Self-Disclosure:** The counselor gives the impression of holding nothing back and of disclosing feelings and ideas fully and completely to the client. This is to draw the counselor closer to the client via some similar circumstance, but it is NOT intended as an opportunity for the counselor to process his/her own issues. *To prevent the discussion from focusing on the counselor, it is wise to disclose feelings and not facts surrounding the content.*

The Higher-Order skills

6. **Confrontation:** The counselor highlights the client's discrepancies in a sensitive and perceptive manner whenever they appear. Discrepancies occur at both the verbal and nonverbal level, and are a signal of conflicting emotions. Confrontation brings the conflict to a conscious level within the client.
7. **Immediacy:** The most difficult of the facilitative Core Conditions to operationalize, yet it can best be described as the counselor's direct and explicit manner of relating the client's expressions of himself in the "here-and-now." This is illustrated in two ways: a) a client discussing a past event is obviously living it in the present. An "immediate" counselor understands this and addresses the current aspects of the past issues, and b) the counselor takes every opportunity to refer to the counselor-client relationship as a model of the client's manner of establishing and maintaining relationships.