



## **An Experiential Approach to Teaching Counseling Skills: Instructional Modules for Undergraduate and Graduate Students in Psychology**

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## **Introduction**

The development of counseling skills is an important component of education and training among students in applied psychology fields. Counseling skills cut across a number of different domains and are applicable for both undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology, given their relevance to future careers in psychology and mental health care. Moreover, the teaching of counseling skills is different from the study of other academic material. Students may learn the definitions and be able to provide examples of various counseling techniques, but actually applying and implementing those skills in the moment requires a different level of mastery and familiarity. We believe that experiential, hands-on learning represents the best way for students to develop counseling skills so that they are prepared to apply those skills broadly as future professionals.

In this teaching resource, we have described our experiential approach to teaching counseling skills, presented in various modules. The material is presented in modules that can either stand-alone or be followed sequentially, depending upon the instructor's needs. This teaching resource in its entirety was developed for graduate students; however, with modifications, the material may be appropriate for use in undergraduate counseling psychology courses. We have included discussion of possible modifications for undergraduates within each module throughout the teaching resource.

## **Textbook**

We used the following textbook when teaching this course and developing the rubrics. However, we believe that this course can be taught with a different textbook and/or outside readings, depending upon instructor preference.

Ivey, A.E., Ivey, M.B., & Zalaquett, C.P. (2016). *Intentional interviewing and counseling: facilitating client development in a multicultural society*. (9<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

## **Technology and Video Recording Considerations**

This teaching resource involves student use of technology to video record mock sessions and make them available electronically to the instructor and peers. Technology capabilities across colleges and universities will vary, requiring the instructor to determine what is feasible given their context. We have had success with students using their own devices for recording (e.g., laptops, cell phones) and then uploading and storing the recordings on their university-provided Google Drive. Using the university-provided Google Drive permits a secure space to store large files and allows the sharing of video recordings via Google Drive links to others within our email system. We have had students post Google Drive links to the LMS so that we and the other students can view the videos for grading, feedback, and peer assessment. We have explored other options, as well, including a private YouTube channel or storage on a university SharePoint site or hard drive. We imagine that other cloud-based sharing options may be possible as well (e.g., DropBox).

Another technology consideration involves potential confidentiality and FERPA issues with using other students or volunteers, particularly given that sessions will be recorded. Uploading and storing recordings on a university-provided server and requiring students to remove the recording from their personal devices would address this problem.



Lastly, this teaching resource involves the transcription of mock sessions. We have encouraged students to watch their sessions and manually type out the transcription themselves as a reflective learning activity. However, we have permitted the use of transcription services should students prefer, though we have not endorsed a specific service. Our students have had success with oTranscribe, which at the time of the writing of this resource, is a free transcription service available at [otranscribe.com](http://otranscribe.com).

### **Physical Space Considerations**

This teaching resource discusses different ways to utilize space for in-class role plays. Specifically, it is suggested that different rooms on campus will be utilized for breakout role play sessions during class time. We recognize this may not be possible at all times, and we do believe it will work to have small groups of students split up and work together in the same classroom if additional space is not available during the class time.

### **Empirically-Supported Teaching Strategies in this Resource**

This resource utilizes the following empirically-supported best practices in teaching:

#### 1) *Experiential learning*

Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) has been studied and applied in the area of psychology and counseling, particularly regarding the development of competencies in internship and practica experiences (Bailey et al., 2017; Simons et al., 2012). Experiential learning involves engaging learners as active participants, exposing learners to novel experiences which may contain risk, addressing real-world problems, and participating in critical reflection (Morris, 2019). The activities presented in this teaching resource are consistent with these goals of experiential learning; for example, instead of learning about counseling skills and what to say in different counseling scenarios, students are put in the role of counselor to engage as an active participant in a real-world setting where they must make decisions about how to act and what to say in an experiential manner. Moreover, they are encouraged to immerse themselves in these novel experiences, which are then followed up by reflection to facilitate their continued growth and development.

#### 2) *Reflective practice and self-assessment*

Reflection has been demonstrated to support learning outcomes across a variety of disciplines, especially in the context of experience-based learning and self-assessment (Coulson & Harvey, 2013; Harvey et al., 2016). The activities presented in this teaching resource contain reflective practice and self-assessment as students progress through various stages of skill acquisition. Students reflect on and evaluate their performance throughout the course using various self-assessment prompts and rubrics as they review their own videos. It is encouraged that students adopt a framework of self-analysis and open-minded reflection, which has been supported in the literature (Coulson & Harvey, 2013). In addition, students also engage in a reflection practice that includes transcript analysis and reflection papers. This facilitates their ongoing consideration of the progress they have made and how they might continue to improve their counseling skills.

#### 3) *Peer assessment*

Peer assessment has been shown to facilitate learning outcomes through the process of reviewing and discussing the work of others in a formal manner (Topping, 2017). This teaching resource contains various opportunities for peer assessment where students review and provide feedback on each other's performance



either in person or via video recordings. As recommended in the literature, this teaching resource recommends demonstration and modeling of feedback delivery at the outset and the use of provided checklists and rubrics to scaffold the peer review process (Topping, 2017). In addition to the consolidation of content knowledge, peer assessment also enables students the opportunity to learn how to give and accept criticism and further supports their reflective process (Topping, 2017).

- Bailey, S.F., Barber, L.K. & Nelson, V.L. (2017). Undergraduate internship supervision in psychology departments: Use of experiential learning best practices. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 16*(1), 74-83. doi: 10.1177/1475725716671234
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- Topping, K.J. (2017). Peer assessment: learning by judging and discussing the work of other learners. *Interdisciplinary Education and Psychology, 1*(1), 1-17. doi: 10.31532/InterdiscipEducPsychol.1.1.007



**Outline of Modules**

<b>Module</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>In-Class Experiential Activities</b>	<b>Outside of Class Assignments</b>	<b>Relevant Rubric/Assessment</b>
<u>1</u>	Introduction to counseling and developing a counseling identity	Baseline Session  Initial Self-Assessment	Reflection on Baseline Session	<a href="#"><u>Initial Self-Assessment Form</u></a>
<u>2</u>	Attending and Empathy Skills	“No Sound” Session Review  “No Questions” Session	Mock Session 1 with Peer Reviews	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric</u></a>
<u>3</u>	Class Role Plays: Specific Counseling Scenarios	Class Role Plays with Instructor as Clients	Mock Session 2 with Peer Reviews	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Counseling Feedback Sheet</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric</u></a>
<u>4</u>	Class Role Plays: Specific Emotions	Class Role Plays with Instructor as Clients	Mock Session 3 with Peer Reviews	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Counseling Feedback Sheet</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric</u></a>
<u>5</u>	Class Role Plays: Specific Diagnoses and Symptoms	Class Role Plays with Instructor as Clients	Mock Session 4 with Transcript Analysis	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Counseling Feedback Sheet</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric</u></a>



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<u>6</u>	Group Role Plays	Group Role Plays with Students as Clients	Mock Session 5 with Transcript Analysis	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Counseling Feedback Sheet</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric</u></a>
<u>7</u>	Final Mock Counseling Session	Final Mock Counseling Session Final Self-Assessment	Reflection on Final Mock Session	<a href="#"><u>Basic Counseling Skills Rubric</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Final Self-Assessment Form</u></a>



## Module 1

### Introduction to Counseling and Developing a Counseling Identity

#### Description of in-class experiential activities:

This module introduces what it means to be a counselor and facilitates students' consideration of their counseling identity and how the counseling role differs from other roles in their lives.

Class discussion questions for this portion may include:

- What is the purpose of counseling? And how do we facilitate that in a collaborative, compassionate, effective, and evidence-based manner?
- What are the “active ingredients” of counseling?
- How is the counseling relationship different from any other relationship in our lives?
- Who are you as a counselor? Consider personality, interpersonal style, theory, and skills.
- What is important information that should be conveyed prior to entering into a counseling relationship?

This process of learning counseling skills is described to students as experiential and hands-on, with a focus on demonstrations, role plays, and analysis of video recordings of yourself and classmates. It is an introspective and self-reflective process, similar to the work that we ask our clients to do in counseling. It is also uncomfortable and that is okay! In order to truly develop skills and learn how to be in the moment during counseling sessions, the course will require students to manage their own discomfort and anxiety and become comfortable with flexibility and being present in the moment. We expect that students may be anxious, especially regarding the video recordings, and we include this as part of the discussion to normalize and validate those feelings, while also intending to use them as a growth and development opportunity.

Regarding the final discussion question above, we provide students with a brief overview of informed consent prior to their participating in any role plays. We aim to gather students' own ideas about informed consent and generally explain the information that should be conveyed (e.g., confidentiality and limits to confidentiality). This will be discussed in more detail in a later module, but we suggest introducing it here as a brief overview before students get started.

For the in-class portion of this module, students will participate in a **Baseline Session** that is video-recorded followed by the completion of an **Initial Self-Assessment**.

For the **Baseline Session**, students will complete a 15-minute counseling session where they are instructed to get to know their client and determine the presenting problem. Otherwise, they are given no other instructions about how to manage a session so that this session serves as a true “baseline.” They are told to video-record the session as well for review by themselves and the instructor. It is likely that students will be anxious and uncomfortable about being instructed to complete this task without much guidance; however, we have found that this process helps them to become comfortable thinking on their feet, focusing on the basics of connecting with another person, and gives them a good sense of their own progress as the course continues. To complete these sessions, the instructor can either solicit volunteers to serve as mock clients or divide students into pairs to complete a 15-minute session with their partner during class. These sessions should take place in a private location, so it is important to locate various



rooms aside from the classroom in order to hold these simultaneous sessions. Brief feedback from the client may be offered after the session. Following the baseline sessions, the class is brought back together as a whole for debriefing and discussion of what the experience was like.

Class discussion questions for this portion may include:

- What was the experience like?
- Did your comfort level change as the session progressed?
- What went well and what could be improved?
- How did it feel receiving feedback?

As part of this discussion, we describe how learning how to be a counselor is not just about the actual skills, but also involves flexibility, tolerating uncertainty, rolling with the unexpected, receiving feedback, being present, and remaining authentic. In addition, we discuss the process and expectations of peer assessment, emphasizing the balance between positive and negative feedback, the importance of constructive criticism, and the expectation that feedback should be detailed and specific.

After completion of the baseline sessions, students will complete an **Initial Self-Assessment**, using a specific form with two questions that address their perceived strengths and areas for improvement at the outset of the class.

#### Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete a **Reflection on Baseline Session**. They will be instructed to watch the recording of their baseline session and provide a 250-word reflection on their strengths, weaknesses, overall impressions, and questions for future classes.

#### Relevant rubric/assessment:

##### [Initial Self-Assessment Form](#)

#### Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten baseline session to 10-minutes
- Expect that students will have less to contribute to the discussion question about “Who are you as a counselor?”, so you might consider emphasizing other questions more or providing examples or characteristics of counselors to facilitate their understanding of what this means.





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## Module 2

### Attending and Empathy Skills

#### Description of in-class activities:

This module discusses basic attending and empathy skills, underscoring the importance of these skills in connecting with clients and setting the tone for a counseling session. Students will learn about eye contact, body language, and nonverbal attentional skills. They will also learn about empathic statements and reflection of content, such as encouragers, reflective statements, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Students' tendency to ask a lot of questions as beginning counselors is highlighted, and examples are elicited from students' baseline sessions to illustrate this tendency. Students are encouraged to consider how questions vs. reflective statements can feel for the client and they are asked to discuss how they might gather the same information with a statement instead of a question.

Class discussion questions may include:

- What is the difference between a counseling session versus an interview?
- Think about a time when you felt truly “heard” by another person. What did that person do? What did you notice? How did they interact with you?
- How much of our communication occurs verbally vs. non-verbally?

For the in-class portion of this module, students will participate in a **“No Sound” Session Review** and a **“No Questions” Session**.

For the **“No Sound” Session Review** several volunteer students will be solicited to play portions of their baseline session video recording in front of the class with the sound muted. The class will be encouraged to discuss what they notice in terms of non-verbal behaviors and attending skills and describe what they can glean from the session just by looking at the non-verbal interactions. This can be done with several students, time permitting, to demonstrate a range of non-verbal behaviors across different counselors and clients.

For the **“No Questions” Session**, students will be instructed to complete a 15-minute counseling session in which they are not permitted to ask any questions for the entirety of the session. Through this, students will have an opportunity to practice their basic attending and empathy skills through minimal encouragers, reflective listening, summarizing, and paraphrasing. They will have an opportunity to see how they can make connections with clients by using these skills, and they will also learn that they do not need to rely on questions to propel a counseling session forward. To complete these sessions, the instructor can either solicit volunteers to serve as mock clients or divide students into pairs to complete a 15-minute session with their partner during class. These sessions should take place in a private location, so it is important to locate various rooms aside from the classroom in order to hold these simultaneous sessions. Brief feedback from the client may be offered after the session. Following the “No Questions” Sessions, the class is brought back together as a whole for debriefing and discussion of what the experience was like.

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Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete their **Mock Session 1 with Peer Reviews**. They will conduct a 15-minute mock counseling session with a friend, family member, or classmate and video-record the session. They will make the video available to their classmates who will then peer review the video and provide feedback using the **Basic Counseling Skills Rubric**. Students are assigned three classmates to peer review. These assignments are randomly generated through the LMS and rotate throughout the course. The instructor will grade the assignment using the **Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric**.

Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Basic Counseling Skills Rubric](#)  
[Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric](#)

Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten sessions to 10 minutes
- Reduce number of peer reviews to two instead of three



### Module 3

#### Class Role Plays: Specific Counseling Scenarios

##### Description of in-class activities:

For the in-class portion of this module, students will each take a turn role playing a counseling session in front of the class with the instructor or a volunteer role playing the client. The rest of the class will observe the role play. Various counseling scenarios will be portrayed to offer a range of client presenting behaviors, and observers will follow along with the **Counseling Feedback Sheet** to guide them as they view the session. Students who are role playing the counselor will be encouraged to “pause” the role play as needed and ask for feedback from their classmates observing the role play. As such, observers will be frequently asked for their ideas and insight, allowing productive discussion about possible ways to manage the session and what to do next. Instructors should allow the class to discuss and generate ideas before making comments.

The first set of role plays are related to specific counseling scenarios that students may encounter. If you plan to use student volunteers to role play clients, you might consider assigning client roles and providing this information ahead of time so students can prepare how they might accurately convey these situations. Here is a list of scenarios along with information about important areas to highlight in the role play and important instructional comments to make following the role play:

Counseling Scenario	Notes on Client Presentation	Instructional Comments
Discussing the limits of confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present as a new client who has never been in counseling before</li><li>• Question to ask: “Will you tell my partner that I am here if they call you?”</li></ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to familiarize students with the limits of confidentiality and have them practice describing the limits each time</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The limits of confidentiality should be discussed at the outset of every initial session and revisited as necessary</li><li>• Mention kill self/someone else; child/elder abuse; subpoena by court</li><li>• Ask if the client has any questions and make sure they understand</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you do if the client sits down right away and starts talking about their problem?</li><li>• How do you make sure you discuss the limits before the session officially begins?</li></ul>

Rubric continues onto the next four pages



<p>Responding to a suicidal statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present as a client with depressive symptoms</li> <li>• Display flat affect</li> <li>• State “Things would be better off I weren't here”</li> </ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to introduce students to various ways in which they might respond to a suicidal statement.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicidal statements are common in counseling and counselors need to be prepared to discuss this topic. We do not want to convey that this is a topic that clients should not discuss or is off limits or makes us uncomfortable in any way</li> <li>• Displaying empathy both verbally and non-verbally is critical</li> <li>• Conducting a suicide assessment is required, as appropriate             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Depending upon your course, could go into detail about what constitutes a suicide assessment and what are best practices, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel as the counselor hearing a client talk about suicide? What is going through your mind?</li> <li>• How can we empathize with a client who is experiencing this?</li> <li>• How can we conduct a suicide assessment in a respectful, empathic, and effective manner?</li> </ul>
<p>Responding to a homicidal statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present as a client who is angry</li> <li>• Recently found out partner is having an affair</li> <li>• State “Sometimes I just want to kill them when I think about what they did”</li> </ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to introduce students to various ways in which they might respond to a homicidal statement.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homicidal statements may require us to act in breaching confidentiality, depending upon outcome of our assessment</li> <li>• Conducting a homicidal risk assessment is required, as appropriate             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Depending upon your course, could go into detail about what constitutes a homicidal risk assessment and what are best practices, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>(continued on the next page)</p>



<p>Responding to a homicidal statement (continued)</p>		<p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel as the counselor hearing a client talk about harming someone else? What is going through your mind?</li> <li>• How do you feel in the room with someone who is displaying anger and making threatening statements?</li> <li>• How can we empathize with a client who is experiencing this?</li> <li>• How can we conduct a homicidal risk assessment in a respectful, empathic, and effective manner?</li> </ul>
<p>Responding to a statement concerning potential child abuse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present as a client who is experiencing marital stress and frequent disagreements with partner</li> <li>• Client is married, with one child from a previous relationship and one child with partner</li> <li>• Describe one of the challenges being that the partner does not seem to love step-child in same way as biological child and mention that he “beat up” the step-child several days ago</li> </ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to introduce students to various ways in which they might respond to a statement that concerns potential child abuse.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As counselors, we are mandated reporters and must report instances of child abuse</li> <li>• Counselors must report if there is reasonable cause to suspect – we do not need to have evidence or proof</li> <li>• Framing a child abuse report is important; rather than making it punitive, frame it as an opportunity for help</li> <li>• Conducting an assessment is required, as appropriate             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Depending upon your course, could go into detail about what constitutes an assessment of potential child abuse and what are best practices, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel as the counselor hearing a client talk about potential child abuse? What is going through your mind?</li> <li>• How do you believe clients will respond if you tell them you need to make a child abuse report?</li> <li>• How confident do you feel in discussing the need to make a child abuse report and managing the client’s reaction?</li> <li>• How can we empathize with a client who is experiencing this?</li> <li>• How can we conduct an assessment in a respectful, empathic, and effective manner?</li> </ul>



<p>Working with a client who is disengaged and unresponsive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present as a client who is not engaged in therapy</li><li>• Offer one-word answers to questions</li><li>• Appear disinterested and aloof</li><li>• State “I think counseling is useless”</li></ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to introduce students to various ways in which they might respond to a client who is disengaged and unmotivated for counseling.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilize open-ended questions</li><li>• Offer statements rather than questions (e.g., “You really don’t want to be here.”)</li><li>• Display interest and engagement in body language and non-verbals</li><li>• Remember authenticity and making a connection, rather than forcing the counseling session onto a client who is uninterested</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you feel as the counselor when the client appears disengaged? What is going through your mind?</li><li>• How do you feel in the room with someone who is unresponsive?</li><li>• How can we empathize with a client who is experiencing this?</li><li>• What topics can we discuss that might engage the client indirectly?</li></ul>
<p>Working with a client who pushes boundaries/presses for self-disclosure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present as a client who is talkative, asks a lot of personal questions of the counselor</li></ul>	<p>The goal of this role play is to familiarize students with setting boundaries, specifically regarding self-disclosure.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-disclosure has a purpose in counseling when it is done thoughtfully and in the best interest of the client</li><li>• Counselors have different levels of comfort with disclosing information about themselves</li><li>• Utilize redirection to ensure that counseling stays focused on client’s needs</li><li>• Attempt to understand why client is pushing for self-disclosure – Avoidance? Anxiety? Curiosity?</li></ul> <p>(continued on the next page)</p>



<p>Working with a client who pushes boundaries/presses for self-disclosure (continued)</p>		<p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you feel as the counselor when the client asks personal questions?</li><li>• What is your comfort level with self-disclosure? How might it benefit the therapeutic relationship? How might it harm the relationship?</li><li>• What do you do if a client won't respect the boundaries you set?</li></ul>
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Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete their **Mock Session 2 with Peer Reviews**. They will conduct a 15-minute mock counseling session with a friend, family member, or classmate and video-record the session. They will make the video available to their classmates who will then peer review the video and provide feedback using the **Basic Counseling Skills Rubric**. The instructor will grade the assignment using the **Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric**.

Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Basic Counseling Skills Rubric](#)

[Counseling Feedback Sheet](#)

[Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric](#)

Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten sessions to 10 minutes
- Reduce number of peer reviews to two instead of three
- Use instructor for in-class role plays instead of soliciting student volunteers





## Module 4

### Class Role Plays: Specific Emotions

#### Description of in-class activities:

For the in-class portion of this module, students will each take a turn role playing a counseling session in front of the class with the instructor or a volunteer role playing the client. The rest of the class will observe the role play. Various counseling scenarios will be portrayed to offer a range of client presenting behaviors, and observers will follow along with the **Counseling Feedback Sheet** to guide them as they view the session. Students who are role playing the counselor will be encouraged to “pause” the role play as needed and ask for feedback from their classmates observing the role play. As such, observers will be frequently asked for their ideas and insight, allowing productive discussion about possible ways to manage the session and what to do next. Instructors should allow the class to discuss and generate ideas before making comments.

The second set of role plays are related to specific emotions with which clients may present. If you plan to use student volunteers to role play clients, you might consider assigning client roles and providing this information ahead of time so students can prepare how they might accurately convey these emotions. Here is a list of scenarios along with information about important instructional comments to make following the role play:

Specific Emotion	Instructional Comments
Anxiety	<p>The goal of this role play is to provide experience working with a client with anxiety symptoms.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modulating tone and rate of speech as well as using body language to slow client down if they are speaking quickly</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with anxiety?</li></ul>
Grief/Loss	<p>The goal of this role play to provide experience working with a client with grief/loss.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Sitting with” another person’s pain is an important role we play as counselors</li><li>• Do not try to “make it better”</li><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• Utilize silence</li><li>• Convey concern and connection through nonverbals</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with grief/loss?</li><li>• How do you manage your own emotions? Is it okay for a counselor to display these emotions in session?</li></ul>

Rubric continues onto the next page



Anger/Aggression	<p>The goal of this role play to provide experience working with a client with anger/aggression.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• Counselors should sit closest to the door</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with anger and aggressiveness?</li><li>• How do you manage your own safety?</li></ul>
Sadness/Crying	<p>The goal of this role play to provide experience working with a client with sadness and crying.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Sitting with” another person’s pain is an important role we play as counselors</li><li>• Do not try to “make it better”</li><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• Utilize silence</li><li>• Convey concern and connection through nonverbal</li><li>• Offer tissues</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client who is sad and crying?</li><li>• How do you manage your own emotions? Is it okay for a counselor to display these emotions in session?</li></ul>



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Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete their **Mock Session 3 with Peer Reviews**. They will conduct a 15-minute mock counseling session with a friend, family member, or classmate and video-record the session. They will make the video available to their classmates who will then peer review the video and provide feedback using the **Basic Counseling Skills Rubric**. The instructor will grade the assignment using the **Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric**.

Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Basic Counseling Skills Rubric](#)

[Counseling Feedback Sheet](#)

[Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric](#)

Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten sessions to 10 minutes
- Reduce number of peer reviews to two instead of three
- Use instructor for in-class role plays instead of soliciting student volunteers



## Module 5

### Class Role Plays: Specific Diagnoses and Symptoms

#### Description of in-class activities:

For the in-class portion of this module, students will each take a turn role playing a counseling session in front of the class with the instructor or a volunteer role playing the client. The rest of the class will observe the role play. Various counseling scenarios will be portrayed to offer a range of client presenting behaviors, and observers will follow along with the **Counseling Feedback Sheet** to guide them as they view the session. Students who are role playing the counselor will be encouraged to “pause” the role play as needed and ask for feedback from their classmates observing the role play. As such, observers will be frequently asked for their ideas and insight, allowing productive discussion about possible ways to manage the session and what to do next. Instructors should allow the class to discuss and generate ideas before making comments.

The third set of role plays are related to specific diagnoses or symptoms with which clients may present. If you plan to use student volunteers to role play clients, you might consider assigning client roles and providing this information ahead of time so students can prepare how they might accurately convey these symptoms. Here is a list of scenarios along with information about important instructional comments to make following the role play:

Specific Diagnosis/Symptoms	Instructional Comments
Addiction	<p>The goal of this role play is to provide experience working with a client with addiction.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• Understand that there are numerous presentations of addiction and various components of recovery</li><li>• Recognize the stigma associated with addiction and how that impacts a client</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with addiction?</li><li>• What biases do counselors have about addiction and how can we recognize and mitigate those?</li></ul>

Rubric continues onto the next page



Borderline Personality Disorder	<p>The goal of this role play is to provide experience working with a client with borderline personality disorder (BPD).</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• Recognize the stigma associated with BPD and how that impacts a client</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with BPD?</li><li>• What biases do counselors have about BPD and how can we recognize and mitigate those?</li><li>• How do you maintain boundaries and expectations with a client with BPD?</li></ul>
Depression and Anxiety	<p>See information from previous module. A similar role play is conducted with a different client “character” and different presenting problem.</p>
Psychosis	<p>The goal of this role play is to provide experience working with a client with psychosis.</p> <p><i>Points to emphasize:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy is critical</li><li>• The psychotic symptoms are the client’s reality – do not attempt to talk them out of it or tell them their thoughts are not true</li><li>• Understand the stigma associated with psychotic symptoms</li><li>• Understand the need to provide referrals for additional care</li></ul> <p><i>Discussion questions for group following role play:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does it feel in the room working with a client with psychosis?</li><li>• What biases do counselors have about psychosis and how can we recognize and mitigate those?</li><li>• <u>Fact Exercise</u>: To help students understand how it might feel for a counselor to refute psychotic thoughts, have the students pair up and share with their partner facts about themselves. Then, have the partner refute each of those facts. Discuss with the class after the exercise how it felt to have someone refute information that you believe to be true about yourself.</li></ul>



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Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete their **Mock Session 4 with Transcript Analysis**. They will conduct a 20-minute mock counseling session with a friend, family member, or classmate and video-record the session. They will then transcribe the video, using time stamps and indicating salient non-verbal behaviors. Following the transcription, students will reflect upon the session by making comments throughout the transcription identifying various skills and indicating particular areas of strength and weakness. They will use the **Basic Counseling Skills Rubric** as a guide to identify the various counseling skills they should be displaying throughout their session. The instructor will grade the assignment using the **Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric**.

Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Basic Counseling Skills Rubric](#)

[Counseling Feedback Sheet](#)

[Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric](#)

Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten session to 15 minutes
- The role plays in this module may be too advanced for undergraduates. Instead, could repeat role plays from prior modules for more exposure, practice, and review.



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## Module 6

### Group Role Plays

#### Description of in-class activities:

This module provides additional role playing experiences for students and allows them the opportunity to observe and provide feedback for their classmates. For the in-class portion of this module, students will be divided into groups of three. They will be instructed to each complete a 15-minute session with their group during class, and they will rotate through so each student plays the role of Counselor, Client, and Observer. These sessions should take place in a private location, so it is important to locate various rooms aside from the classroom in order to hold these simultaneous sessions. Feedback from the Client and Observer should be offered after the session, using the **Counseling Feedback Sheet** as a guide. Following the role plays, the class is brought back together as a whole for debriefing and discussion of what the experience was like.

#### Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete their **Mock Session 5 with Transcript Analysis**. They will conduct a 20-minute mock counseling session with a friend, family member, or classmate and video-record the session. They will then transcribe the video, using time stamps and indicating salient non-verbal behaviors. Following the transcription, students will reflect upon the session by making comments throughout the transcription identifying various skills and indicating particular areas of strength and weakness. They will use the **Basic Counseling Skills Rubric** as a guide to identify the various counseling skills they should be displaying throughout their session. The instructor will grade the assignment using the **Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric**.

#### Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Basic Counseling Skills Rubric](#)

[Counseling Feedback Sheet](#)

[Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric](#)

#### Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten in-class sessions to 10 minutes
- Shorten Mock Session to 15 minutes



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## Module 7

### Final Mock Counseling Session

#### Description of in-class activities:

This module provides a culminating experience for students where they will conduct a **Final Mock Counseling Session** and complete a **Final Self-Assessment**.

For the **Final Mock Counseling Session**, students will complete a 45-minute counseling session that mimics a real-world initial counseling session. Students will meet their client in a waiting room, escort them back to the counseling office, and conduct a 45-minute session from start to finish. They will be asked to dress professionally and to treat this as a real initial session with a client unknown to them. To complete these sessions, the instructor should solicit volunteers from outside of the class in order to facilitate a rich training experience that is as close to real life as possible. Brief feedback from the client may be offered after the session and given directly to the student, and then the client will submit written feedback to the instructor as well. One primary question asked of clients following this session is “Would you return for a second session with this counselor?”

After completion of the final sessions, students will complete a **Final Self-Assessment**, using a specific form with two questions that address their perceived strengths and areas for improvement at the outset of the class.

#### Description of outside of class assignment:

For the outside of class portion of this module, students will complete a **Reflection on Final Session**. They will be instructed to provide a 250-word reflection on their strengths, weaknesses, overall impressions, and areas for future growth and development.

#### Relevant rubric/assessment:

[Final Self-Assessment Form](#)

#### Potential modifications for undergraduates:

- Shorten Final Mock Counseling Session to 15 minutes





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**Rubrics and Assessments**

1. Initial Self-Assessment Form
2. Final Self-Assessment Form
3. Basic Counseling Skills Rubric
4. Counseling Feedback Sheet
5. Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric
6. Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric



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## Initial Self-Assessment Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

As a counselor....

What do you anticipate will be your biggest strength?

What do you anticipate will be an area for growth and improvement?



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## Final Self-Assessment Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

As a counselor....

How do you feel you have grown and changed over the course of this semester? Consider the areas of empathy, developing rapport, specific counseling skills, etc.

Looking back on your areas of strengths and improvements identified at the beginning of the semester, do you still feel the same about these areas now?



## Basic Counseling Skills Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Counseling Skills	Description	Comments	Points earned
<b>Limits of Confidentiality</b>	Review of limits of confidentiality (SI/II, Elder/Child abuse)		
<b>Attentional Skills (3 V's + B)</b>	Communicating listening and attending to the clients (Visual/Eye Contact, Vocal Qualities, Verbal Tracking, & Body Language/Facial Expression)		
<b>Nonverbal skills</b>	Body language, eye contact, use of silence, etc.		
<b>Encouragers</b>	Verbal/Nonverbal expressions the counselor can use to prompt clients continue talking (repeating key words, short statements) or nonverbal (smiling, head nods)		
<b>Questions</b>	Use of appropriate open and closed ended questions. Effective questions encourage more focused client conversations.		
<b>Paraphrasing (Reflection of content)</b>	Shorten or clarify the essence of what clients has said		

Rubric continues onto the next page



<b>Summarizing</b>	Summarize client comments and integrate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.		
<b>Perception Checks</b>	Periodically check with client for accuracy of client's statements/story.		
<b>Listening (Active and Accurate)</b>	Requires intentional participation, decision making, understanding, and clearer picture of client's story.		
<b>Empathic Statements</b>	Understanding client's key issues and expressing them accurately, without adding own thoughts, feelings, or meanings.		
<b>Therapeutic Environment</b>	Physical, social, and psychological safe space.		
<b>Professional /Ethical Behavior</b>	Professional conduct including courtesy and respect for others. Professional behavior and dress. Professionalism is consistent with the ACA ethical standards of conduct.		

**Additional feedback:**

**Adapted from:**

Ivey, A.E., Ivey, M.B., & Zalaquett, C.P. (2016). *Intentional interviewing and counseling: facilitating client development in a multicultural society*. (9<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.



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## Counseling Skills Feedback Sheet

Did student appropriately greet client?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student provide adequate introduction?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Were the limits of confidentiality discussed at all?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student mention SI/HI?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student use term "kill" instead of "hurt/harm"?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student mention child/elder abuse?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student provide adequate eye contact?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Were student's vocal qualities and tone appropriate?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student present with open, welcoming body language?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student match their facial expression to content of session?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student provide good non-verbal expressions (e.g., head nod)?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student provide adequate encouragers (e.g., "mm-hmm")?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student ask more open-ended than closed-ended questions?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Approximate number of empathic statements:		_____
Approximate number of summarizations:		_____
Approximate number of paraphrasing statements:		_____
Approximate number of perception checks:		_____
Did student use silence effectively?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student provide appropriate conclusion to session?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student ask client for feedback about how the session went?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Did student appear professional and engaged?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Any other comments?		



## Mock Session and Peer Review Rubric

Professionalism	Student discussed limits of confidentiality and throughout session maintained professional behavior.	/40
Counseling Skills Implemented	Student engaged in basic counseling skills (reflective listening, encouragers, summarizing, paraphrasing, appropriate questions, and empathic statements.)	/40
Peer Review Feedback	Students have reviewed the three assigned recordings of their peers and provided thoughtful feedback. Student discussed and explored areas of strength and areas that need continued improvement. Feedback presented in a positive and constructive manner.	/20
Total		/100



## Mock Session and Transcript Analysis Rubric

Professionalism	Student discussed limits of confidentiality and throughout session maintained professional behavior.	/20
Counseling Skills Implemented	Student engaged in basic counseling skills (reflective listening, encouragers, summarizing, paraphrasing, appropriate questions, and empathic statements.)	/30
Organization of Transcript	Transcript was organized in a professional manner, transcript was accurate to the audio session, and use of nonverbal behaviors were documented in the transcript	/20
Self-Reflection/Constructive Critique	Student reviewed session and transcript and was able to engage in appropriate self-reflection and critique. Student discussed was able to explore strong areas and areas that need continued improvement.	/30
Total		/100