

Access to Higher Education Unit

This unit forms part of an Access to HE Diploma. If delivering the graded version of this unit, please refer to the Provider Handbook for details on grading descriptors and the application of these across units within your programme.

Unit Title: Personal Development in Counselling

Graded Unit Reference Number: GA36COU03

Ungraded Unit Reference Number: UA36COU03

Module: Counselling

Level: Three [3]

Credit Value: Six [6]

Minimum Guided Learning Hours: 60

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Develop self-awareness and reflective capacity within the context of counselling	1.1 Explain how reflective practice contributes to increased self-awareness.
	1.2 Reflect on personal emotional, behavioural, and cognitive responses in interpersonal or group interactions.
	1.3 Evaluate how increased self-awareness contributes to personal and professional development in counselling.
2. Understand theories and concepts of the self, relevant to counselling	2.1 Describe key theories relating to self-concept, self-esteem and the developing self.
	2.2 Compare and contrast at least two theoretical perspectives of the self, relevant to counselling practice.
	2.3 Explain how theories of the self can inform an individual's understanding of their own personal development.
3. Understand the role of personal therapy and self-development in counselling practice	3.1 Describe recognised models of self-development used within counselling training.

		3.2	Explain how personal therapy or personal development activities can support self-understanding.
		3.3	Evaluate how increased self-understanding enhances the therapeutic relationship.
		4.1	Explain key factors that influence the development of self in childhood.
4.	Understand how early life experiences and socialisation influence personal development	4.2	Analyse how two personal experiences of socialisation have influenced own development.
		4.3	Evaluate how early experiences may impact interpersonal relationships in adulthood.

Indicative Content

Learners could cover the following:

(The information below is provided for guidance only and is not mandatory)

LO1	AC1.1 Purpose of reflection: developing insight into thoughts, emotions, behaviours; recognising patterns; improving self-understanding and professional readiness. Reflective models: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, Rolfe et al. ("What? So what? Now what?"), Schön (reflection-in-action/on-action). Components of self-awareness: emotional awareness, triggers, values, beliefs, biases, strengths and limitations. Reflective tools: learning journals, experiential logs, feedback, supervision discussions. Relevance to counselling practice: supporting congruence, presence, ethical decision-making, and development of relational skills.
	AC1.2 Internal responses in group or interpersonal contexts: emotional reactions, assumptions, defensive responses, projection. Awareness of interpersonal dynamics: communication styles, participation patterns, group roles and behaviours. Link between internal responses and past experiences. Skills for effective reflection: honesty, curiosity, open-mindedness, non-judgement, linking experience to theory.
	AC1.3 Impact of self-awareness on counselling relationships: empathy, reduced bias, clearer boundaries, improved attunement.

	Professional development: feedback integration, improved communication, self-regulation, reduced reactivity. Parasympathetic effects (vagus nerve): reduced heart rate, reduced conduction (rest/digest).
LO2	AC2.1 Humanistic approaches: self-concept, self-esteem, congruence/incongruence, actualising tendency, conditions of worth. Rogers’ organismic self and “fully functioning person.” Johari Window: open, hidden, blind and unknown areas of self-awareness. Gestalt perspectives: awareness continuum, contact, figure-ground. Cognitive-behavioural approaches: schemas, automatic thoughts, links between thoughts/emotions/behaviours. Psychodynamic perspectives: introjects, ego, internal working models, object relations. AC2.2 Contrasting humanistic vs psychodynamic views of self-development. Differences between stable trait theories and process-based theories of self. Application to personal development: usefulness, limitations, relevance to adult learners. AC2.3 Using theory to interpret personal experiences and development. Identifying how past experiences shape current behaviours and responses. Recognising areas for personal growth informed by theoretical models.
LO3	AC3.1 ASK model (Awareness–Skills–Knowledge). Stages of Change model (Prochaska & DiClemente): pre-contemplation to maintenance. Professional self vs personal self in therapeutic work. Developmental progression in counselling training: increasing self-insight, managing emotional responses, professional maturity. AC3.2 Purpose of personal therapy: exploring own issues, increasing insight, reducing blind spots, supporting emotional growth. Self-development methods: mindfulness, journaling, reflective groups, creative

	exploration, peer feedback. Professional expectations: ethical frameworks recognising the need for personal development to ensure safe practice. AC3.3 Benefits: enhanced empathy, reduced projection, clearer boundaries, increased compassion, stronger relational depth. Impact on therapeutic presence: authenticity, congruence, attunement. Risks if self-understanding is limited: reactivity, over-identification, burnout, impaired judgement.
LO4	AC4.1 Attachment and caregiving: secure/insecure attachments, emotional attunement, availability of caregivers. Family environment: communication patterns, expectations, values, boundaries, roles. Biological and temperament factors: individual differences influencing emotional and behavioural development. Social, cultural and environmental influences: norms, expectations, socio-economic factors, experiences of inclusion/exclusion. AC4.2 Primary socialisation: family relationships, early learning, emotional development. Secondary socialisation: peers, school, community, media influence. Cultural identity formation: beliefs, roles, gender expectations, social rules. Evaluating personal experiences: recognising strengths, challenges, and long-term influence on adult identity. AC4.3 Attachment patterns influencing adult behaviour: trust, intimacy, boundaries, communication style. Learned behaviours and internalised beliefs: “scripts”, core beliefs, emotional regulation patterns. Relevance to counselling practice: empathy for clients, understanding transference/countertransference, increased relational awareness.