

Essential Skills required for Guidance Coach

Attending and active listening

The art of being in someone else's company and being able to give them your full attention, with no distractions - attending makes clients feel supported and important and it's crucial to a counsellor building a therapeutic relationship with the client, as is active listening. The client needs to feel that their problems and issues are recognised and understood by someone empathetic but impartial. By actively listening you not only take in what the client says but also encourage them to keep talking.

During client sessions it's essential that you're able to strike a balance between talking and listening and know when each action is required.

To 'attend' successfully you need to pay attention to a client's body language, listen to pauses and silences, maintain eye contact to demonstrate to clients that you value what they have to say and moderate your tone of voice so clients don't feel rushed.

Respect for confidentiality and professional boundaries

Confidentiality issues need to be strictly observed. Only in exceptional circumstances should anything that is discussed in client sessions be passed on to third parties other than the counsellor's clinical supervisor. You will also need to be aware of, and keep up to date with, the ethical and legal responsibilities you have towards your clients. In terms of professional boundaries, clients should be supported to come to their own decisions and conclusions without being influenced by their counsellor's views.

Resilience, patience and humility

The work of a counsellor can be very intense and demanding. You'll support clients through emotional issues on a daily basis, which can lead to burnout if you let stress, performance pressure and overwork build up. You need to develop sufficient emotional robustness and a capacity for self-care, as well as a willingness to recognise your own limitations.

A non-judgemental approach

A counsellor's job isn't to pass judgement or give advice on a client's actions or feelings; instead through talking therapy they aim to help clients see things clearly, from a different, more optimistic viewpoint. To do this client's must feel free to express their thoughts and feelings without judgement, criticism or rejection. As a counsellor you need to contain and manage your own reactions in a supportive and professional manner.

A genuine interest in others

Not technically a skill, but essential nonetheless. For a lasting and gratifying career, you will need to remain curious and committed to improving the emotional wellbeing of your clients. Being able to demonstrate real interest in your clients' individual situations will promote a positive and trusting client-counsellor relationship.

Counselling training

Training providers offer a number of options at entry level, as well as further training to support qualification and career progression. Providers also offer courses in a variety of specialist areas, such as children and young people, trauma therapy or couples counselling. The options are vast and enable you to choose a flexible programme that allows you to learn more about a particular area of interest.

Careers in counselling

Once qualified the majority of counsellors make a living by setting up their own private practice and combining this with part-time work, however becoming self-employed requires experience.

Within the education sector you could work in schools, colleges and universities, helping to support students with study and personal issues.

Successful private practice is a possibility with some years of experience, as is the management of agencies offering counselling and related activities