



GUIDELINES for Emotional Safety in Counselling / Consultation with Others

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In order to use your time and investment in counselling / group-based consultation wisely, please commit to using these 8 guidelines for communicating with others, during sessions:

This is key to creating an atmosphere where you feel emotionally safe to speak openly, so that you can find resolutions together and connect with one another.

1. No name calling.
 - It is natural to want to protect and defend ourselves, but it cannot come at the expense of another person's dignity and it cannot be done to hurt or harm another person.
2. Avoid making any generalizations about others or your own situation.
 - Avoid using words like "always" and "never".
3. Speak honestly, clearly and thoughtfully, from your own experiences and perspectives.
4. Listen to what another person is saying with an open mind, with respect for who they are and compassion for the hurt that they've experienced (*even if you didn't intend to hurt them or you disagree with them*).
 - Remember, counselling is NOT mediation and there is no one to pass judgement on which person is more right or wrong than another person.
5. Do not interrupt another person while they're speaking. Do not blurt out your responses.
 - Take a moment to pause, breathe, and choose your responses carefully, especially when feeling angry, frustrated, disappointed or defensive.
6. Use this formula when you want to express the impact of the another person's words or actions on you and to express what you need from them to move forward:

"When you do / say _____", (or "when _____ happens,")

"I feel _____." (or "I think that _____.")

"In the future, I would appreciate it if you / we _____."

(or "In the future, it would be helpful if you / we _____.")

7. Build and sustain patience, both with the other person and yourself.
8. Let's agree on a **Time-Out Signal**.
 - Each person (including the counsellor) can use this signal whenever discussions are escalating or becoming hurtful or unhelpful, so that we can take a 5-minute break to breathe, get a glass of water or some fresh air, before we return to the discussion together.

Based on Marty Babits' "Seven Guidelines for Middle-Ground Communication" in his book: "**The Power of the Middle Ground**" (2009: p.153).