
UNIT 1 CASE WORKER CLIENT RELATIONSHIP AND PRINCIPLES OF CASE WORK

Contents

**Archana Dassi*

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Nature of Relationship
- 1.3 Relationship in Case Work
- 1.4 Uniqueness of Case Work Client Relationship
- 1.5 Attributes of Case Work Relationship
- 1.6 Principles of Case Worker Client Relationship
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the types and nature of relationship;
- understand the uniqueness of Casework Client Relationship;
- understand the attributes of a casework relationship;
- understand the guiding principles of Casework Client Relationship; and
- learn the modalities for the usage of the principles.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings as social animals thrive and prosper on social interactions with fellow beings. Growth and development of an individual's personality depends largely on his/her relationships with significant others. Human relationships are indeed known for their warmth, comfort, security, nurture and emotions. Relationship is a catalyst, an enabling dynamism in the support, nurture and freeing of people's energies and motivation towards problem solving and the use of help. Vital relationships between people arise out of shared and emotionally charged situations. The climate for the growth of human personality, the nutrient for its development, and the stimulus for its subtle adaptations are emotionally charged relationships with other human beings. The very first contact that all persons have when they are born is with their mothers. Parent child relationship is the most vital relationship that contributes in a major way towards laying the foundation for one's personality development, confidence, attitudes, towards self and others. It would be no exaggeration to state that our very existence is in terms of our relationship with people around us – our family, friends, colleagues, relatives and others. All the societal institutions around us - family, marriage, caste are all based on social relationships.

**Dr. Archana Dassi, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi*

1.2 NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

According to Helen Harris Perlman (1957), 'Relationship is a human being's feeling or sense of emotional bonding with one another. It leaps into being like an electric current or it emerges and develops cautiously when emotion is aroused by and invested in someone or something and that someone or something "connects back" responsively. We feel "related" when we feel at one with another (person or object) in some heartfelt way'.

Relationships may be 'good' or 'bad', brief or enduring, complex and heartfelt or superficial and skin deep, swift and spontaneous or carefully built. But whatever be its nature and substance, its dynamics are the presence, recognition, deposit, reception and responsiveness of emotion between individuals or between a person and an object or activity by which he/she has been moved. The emotions felt and shared may be joy as well as anguish, gratification as well as deprivation, hope and despair, merriment and despondency, rage and gracefulness, guilt and hostility and any or all of these. To illustrate, a child who is extremely attached to his/her parents, feels joyous on meeting them. On the other hand, an abandoned child would react in a different way on meeting the family. The emotions felt in the latter case may range from hatred, anger to resentment. In most mutually reciprocative relationships, there is a hunger for emotional bonding and dependency like in parent child relationships. In the usual life of an adult, hunger for emotional bonding with others is gratified in many ways- in love and friendship bonds, in marriage and in parenthood. The words used to describe a meaningful relationship are- warmth, love, care, acceptance, responsiveness, concern and understanding. It may be remembered that any relationship that seeks to enable a person, child or adult to feel secure and move forward, to risk new learning and new experiences combines a warm acceptance of the person in his/her uniqueness as a human being.

1.3 RELATIONSHIP IN CASE WORK

Relationship is termed as the *basis* of social casework. The relationship between the caseworker and the client is of utmost importance. It is the principal of life which vivifies the process of study, diagnosis and treatment and makes casework a living, warmly human experience. Social work thrives in its belief in the basic worth and dignity of individuals and enhancing their capacities to reach their human potential to the fullest. Relationship between the caseworker and the client is the medium through which the knowledge of human nature and of the individual is used; knowledge alone, without skill in relationship is inadequate. Relationship is also the channel of the entire casework process; through it, flow the mobilization of the capacities of the individual and mobilization of the community resources; through it flow the skills in interviewing, study, diagnosis and treatment (Biestek: 1957).

1.4 UNIQUENESS OF CASE WORK CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Casework client relationship is different from other relationships that exist in society at large like the parent-child relationship, teacher-pupil, friend-friend and colleague-colleague. The casework relationship differs from other relationships

on a number of points. One needs to analyze and compare other relationships with casework relationship keeping in mind the levels of equality, mutual benefits being derived, presence and the level of emotional involvement in the relationship. Firstly, it may be borne in mind that casework relationship is temporary in nature. It begins with the referral of the client to the caseworker with a problem and terminates after the completion of the casework process and treatment. Parent- child relationship or relationships between siblings are lifelong relationships as they are tied by blood and kinship. Secondly, the emotional component in the casework relationship is not very deep and penetrating. This is unlike the relationships that exist between the spouses, parent- child or siblings. Though casework process is an emotionally charged one, it is operationalized in such a way that the expression of emotions is controlled and purposeful, focusing towards achieving clear cut goals of client's well being and treatment. Such an approach is missing in the relationships cited above. The third difference between casework relationship and others, is based on the levels of equality and mutuality. For example, friend-friend relationship is characterized by its equality, mutual help and sharing. The caseworker and the client are fundamentally equal as human beings. In a casework relationship however, caseworker takes on the role of a professional helper while client is the person who needs help. Thus the grounds of equality are not uniform since in this relationship, caseworker is the person having knowledge, skills and is assigned to help the client through a professional relationship. Client on the hand is a person having some maladjustment and in need of professional help. Thus, this type of relationship is not based on mutual help and equality. One can also compare the casework relationship with that of a teacher-pupil relationship, which is more on an intellectual level. The teacher or the *Guru*, in the Indian context is highly respected as it is the *Guru* who guides the *shishya* about the values, inspires, transmits knowledge and information. However, in this relationship, there is hardly any intentional use of emotional involvement. If at all emotions do crop up in the teacher-student relationship, they are accidental and more on the part of the pupils rather than the teachers. Casework relationships, as mentioned earlier are throughout highly charged with emotions in a purposeful manner.

Caseworker client relationship also differs from other professional relationships such as doctor-patient and psychiatrist-client. From an Indian perspective, health has become a serious area of concern. The medical services available are insufficient and lack adequate infrastructure, quality and maintenance. Doctor is considered only next to God. It is not a custom to question the doctor about the nature of one's illness, leave aside enquiring about the line of treatment. Patients in most cases are the passive recipients of medical treatment being administered by the doctor. This is in contrast to the casework client relationship where client is an equal partner in the treatment process and is encouraged to open up and express inner thoughts and feelings.

The only relationship that casework is close to, yet distinct in its finer aspects is with the Psychiatrist-Client relationship. In this relationship, client is encouraged to talk about his/her problems. However, the psychiatrist focusses on the unconscious mind of the client in contrast to the caseworker who pays attention on the environmental manipulation and working on the personality maladjustment at the conscious level of the client's mind.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Explain the term Relationship. Why is it considered as a necessary ingredient for the delivery of casework relationship?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) How is the casework relationship different from the other social and professional relationships?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

1.5 ATTRIBUTES OF CASEWORK RELATIONSHIP

Casework relationship goes much beyond merely a friendly relationship between the caseworker and the client. Clients bring into the casework relationship their feelings, attitudes and behaviour which they have experienced with others. The client therefore tends to react to the casework situation in a manner derived from his/her personal experiences. Casework focusses on understanding the client, his/her psychosocial needs and making a ‘contact’ to build the relationship. If this contact is to be of any value at all, the client must have confidence in the worker’s good faith and the worker must have respect for the client as an individual. It is the responsibility of the caseworker to establish this relationship. This professional relationship is formed with the purpose of developing in the client a personally satisfying and socially useful life. It is the individualized purpose which is unique to every relationship and is set to be achieved in each case. The conscious purposive and deliberate efforts to develop a helping relationship comprises of the following attributes:

- 1) **Warmth:** Warmth connotes some positive, lively, outgoing interest in another person (or object or activity), a spontaneous reaching out to take in another with pleasure or compassion (Perlman: 1979). By exhibiting an open, ‘warm’ attitude, caseworker is able to convey to the client his/her openness and concern to understand the client’s problem, client’s attitudes and sharing of experiences. Warmth is demonstrated by the worker when he/she attends to the client with attention, listens patiently, gives confidence and conveys an understanding of the client’s problem. By this he gains trust of his client.
- 2) **Empathy:** Empathy means feeling *with* and *into* another person, being able to get into the other person’s shoes ((Perlman: 1979). It may occur spontaneously

or may be a carefully learnt 'listening with the third ear' and responding in tune to the other person. Empathy involves looking at a situation/ case from another person's perspective. Through empathy, the caseworker is able to convey to the client his/her understanding of client's problem with accuracy and 'oneness'.

Empathy is different from sympathy which gives a bond of feeling of being helped by another person. The caseworker conveys sympathy by saying statements such as 'I understand how you feel', 'I can feel that you are feeling sad and upset'. Empathy is leading one self to another to feel into and take in the moment's essence of the other. By feeling caseworker's empathy, the client feels understood and important. It may be noted here that empathy does not mean the loss of objectivity. Caseworker in a professional relationship with the client, remains objective by being aware of his/her own emotional and reactive responses to persons and situations.

- 3) **Genuineness:** To be genuine and congruent, the caseworker relies on his/her own moment to moment felt experiences in the relationship with the client. To be genuine is to be free of pretension. It is to have a sense of wholeness of being put together, of knowing who and what one is, what one's guiding values are, and as a result of being on fairly good terms with oneself. Genuineness is the product of life experiences that make it possible to be self observant, self aware and self accepting of strengths and limitations (Perlman: 1979). A genuine and congruent relationship consists of a consistent and honest openness and behaviour matching with the verbalized intentions and values of social work. For example, a school social worker is asked about contacts of an adoption agency regarding which she/he may not be aware of. It would be honest and genuine on the part of the worker to be frank and admit to the client about his/her lack of information. If possible, the worker may however, assure the client of making an effort to seek information about the agency and getting back to the client within a stipulated time. The worker must also then get back to the client or give a source of contact that may provide the requisite information.
- 4) **Authority:** Authority is an essential element of caseworker client relationship. Authority has been referred to by Perlman (1979) as 'ableness' to be used *for* the client and not *over* or *against* the client. Authority in a casework relationship does not mean domination or willful imposition. Client has the right to accept, reject or modify advice given by the worker. Authority rather conveys the meaning of carrying those rights and powers that are inherent in special knowledge and are vested in special functions (Perlman: 1957). Having authority does not make the worker superior to the client. It rather implies that the caseworker possess the expertise in understanding, assessing and dealing with the problem faced by the client. Authority is that of knowledge and expertise. The Client goes to a worker in need of help who has the authority of knowledge and skills, someone who knows more than him/her.

Hand in gloves with authority comes the responsibility to be borne by the caseworker. The responsibility is to make judgements on the basis of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. For example, let us take up a case of a man who fears that his wife is trying to kill him. He cites several incidents to the worker to prove that his wife was conspiring to end his life. On meeting the client's wife, the worker finds her to be a fairly reasonable

and objective person who might not plot her husband's murder. Thus, on the basis of assessment of the client's expression of feelings, behaviour and gaining facts of his environment, the worker gains a wholistic understanding of the client's life situation. The worker draws up the conclusion that the client is suffering from delusions and needs psychiatrist's help. Here, the worker has every authority to refer the client to a psychiatrist and it is also his/her moral responsibility as a professional not to continue with the case if she/he feels that the client's problems would be best handled by another expert. Thus, authority and responsibility go hand in hand.

5) Transference and Counter Transference:

The most frequently encountered necessity to 'work' a relationship occurs with the phenomenon called transference or transference reactions. To any emotionally charged relationship, each of us bring conscious and unconscious feelings and attitudes that originally arose in or still belong to the earlier important relationships (Perlman: 1957). For example, in casework with an adolescent girl to help her regarding her career options, the worker listens to the girl's aspirations and dilemmas. The worker helps her to draw a choice of careers helping her to keep in mind her aptitude as well as preferences and also arranges for her visit to a nearby vocational training centre. In such a case, what may happen is that the girl may begin to feel toward the worker as she felt towards her mother/grandmother when she was young. The degree of emotional satisfaction which the client gets from such a relationship is far beyond the realistic limits of the caseworker-client relationship. It may be remembered that the client who approaches the agency often feels helpless and inadequate for not being able to tackle his/her own problem. Due to this, the clients are prone to transfer irrational elements into the relationship and want to regress, desiring to have parental nurture and parental domination. These however, are damaging to the client since it can tempt the client to stay in an unrealistic, infantile dependence instead of moving towards self reliance in the relationship.

These transferred elements could be affection, attraction or repulsion, yearning or defensiveness, liking or dislike and may occur at any point in the helping relationship. **Transference** is said to have taken place, when the client reacts inappropriately, with excessive or distorted feelings towards the caseworker. As seen in many casework relationships, clients often remark to the worker, *You are like a father/mother/sister to me* or may say, *let us be friends*. Transference may also manifest itself in the way the client reacts towards the worker by being very obedient, helpless and approval seeking. The worker has to recognize these non verbal cues. The effort in the casework relationship is to maintain reality and to keep the client and the worker aware of their joint objective, their separate and realistic identities and their focus upon working some better adaptation between the client and his/her current problem. Transference manifestations need to be recognized, identified and dealt with as they occur. Every effort has to be made to manage the casework relationship and to give minimum encouragement to transference (Perlman: 1957).

The caseworker may also be expected to unconsciously transfer into the professional relationship, certain positive or negative reactions that are realistically uncalled for, for example, distrust and hostility or strong feelings of attachment. This phenomenon is called **Counter Transference** that is, transference on the part of

the helping person. Any subjective involvement on the part of the caseworker with the client or client's problem may be part of a real counter transference or it may represent only a single instance of loss of professional objectivity. To illustrate, let us take up the case of a medical social worker who worked at the emergency ward of the hospital and was handling a man who had brought his wife to the hospital in a critical condition from a road accident. The man was in a heightened state of emotional trauma while narrating about the love for his wife and how the accident had taken place. The worker got so moved with the details of the case that she began to identify with the man and somewhere related his life with her own. Finally, when his wife died, both the client as well as the worker sobbed. In this case, the worker got involved with her own personal feelings and lost the objectivity. She was unable to provide professional help that she ought to.

The caseworker must remain objective throughout the helping relationship and be aware of his/her own feelings. If at all, they do crop up, they must be handled and controlled.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) What are the characteristics of a Caseworker Client Relationship?

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.6 PRINCIPLES OF CASEWORKER CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Principles of casework are principles of action, based upon a fundamental which influences, guides and directs. The principles are also referred to as qualities or elements as they are present in every good casework relationship and are the constitutive parts of the relationship (Biestek). There are seven principles of the casework relationship:

- A) Principle of Individualization
- B) Principle of Purposeful expression of feelings
- C) Principle of Controlled emotional involvement
- D) Principle of Acceptance
- E) Principle of Non Judgmental attitude
- F) Principle of Client's right to Self Determination
- G) Principle of Confidentiality

Let us take these principles one by one and get a clear understanding on their application in the Indian context:

A) PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUALIZATION

Individualization is the recognition and understanding of each client's unique qualities and the differential use of principles and methods in assisting each of

them towards a better adjustment. Individualization is based upon the right of human beings to be 'individuals' and to be treated not just as human beings but as a human being with his/her personal differences (Biestek 1957).

Principle of individualization emanates from the basic recognition of each person as a unique entity. Individualization is one of the essential notes in the concept of a person who according to Boethius is 'an individual substance of rational nature'. Each person is individualized by his/her heredity, environment, innate intellectual capacity, strengths and limitations. Each person experiences unique life situations from birth, forms distinct inter personal relationships. The thoughts, feelings, behaviours and capacities of each individual are distinct and differ from each other. Thus their problems and the help they need also vary from each other. Casework help, therefore, must be differentiated to meet the particular needs of the individual clients and to help the clients use their abilities and resources for self help in order to work towards problem resolution and better adjustment.

Each person is conscious of being unique (Biestek: 1957). This awareness is particularly poignant when the client approaches the agency in a state of maladjustment in social functioning. The client needs the worker's undivided and individualized attention to discuss his/her problem. By gaining worker's respect for his/her as an individual with rights and needs, the client feels understood. The success of helping relationship depends upon the individualization of each case by the worker, treating each person as a unique individual having special problems rather than being treated as a 'case/category/patient'. It is observed many times in agencies that clients who approach the agency for help are referred to as *patients* by the staff. This makes an individual clients feel like 'medical patient'. Clients must be referred to with their names exhibiting respectful manner. This is the initiation of individualization.

Pre Requisites for application of Principle of Individualization

- *An open and unbiased attitude:* It is essential for the caseworker to be aware of personal biases and prejudices and not to let them have an influence in establishing casework relationship. Accurate assessment of the client's problem, his/her life situations requires the worker to be objective and free from pre conceived notions and prejudices, if any. The prejudices can pertain to diverse categories or groups like low caste, class or gender distinctions, destitute, drug abuser, alcoholics, criminal, sex worker, unwed mother or people indulging in pre or extra marital relationships etc. A worker while handling cases must be honest and aware of personal feelings, needs and counter transference tendencies.
- *Knowledge of human behaviour:* Caseworkers often have to deal with complex human behaviours of people with diverse personalities. It is imperative for the caseworker to have inter-disciplinary knowledge and understanding derived from psychology, sociology, psychiatry etc.
- *Listening and Observing:* Attentive listening to the narration of client's problem brings an understanding of the problem for the caseworker. As the client talks about his/her relationships with family and community, caseworker is able to gain a wholistic understanding about the client. Competent and professional listening requires not only paying attention to the words being said by the client but observing and analyzing the body gestures, physical

signs of hesitation, emotions and facial expressions. Ability to interpret non verbal communication can yield a lot of information to the caseworker which can help in imparting future direction to the caseworker.

- *Moving with the client's pace:* As the caseworker sees each client, he/she must begin where the client is and proceed at the client's pace. In the application of the principle of individualization, correct pacing is the secret to the timing at every stage of the casework process- study, diagnosis and treatment. For example, caseworker working with a HIV positive person might be interested in quickly gathering information about how the client contracted the virus or to fill up all the personal details in the case sheet perform. But this kind of hurry may harm/retard the building of trust between the worker and the client. Hastening the client to divulge details, especially intimate information before he/she is ready would stall the helping process and hamper the casework relationship. Caseworker has to move at the client's pace and allow time to the client to develop trust in the caseworker.
- *Ability to enter into feelings of people:* The feelings of the client are his/her most individualized characteristics. Recognizing uniqueness in each person implies the realization that each person's coping strategies are different and every person responds to his/her life situations in a distinct manner. For example failure in board examinations may lead one adolescent to commit suicide while another may strive to work harder next time to clear the examination. Another example may be considered of a women engaged in sex work. While one sex worker may enjoy her work due to the lure of money that she is paid, another sex worker might have feelings of guilt and shame. Thus, similar life situations may bring about different responses from different individuals. Each person is distinct and possesses own individualized reactions to situations. Individualization requires sensitivity and a response to these feelings. The principle quality of the response is warmth, and to enter into the 'feeling' experience of the client and understand client's perspective.
- *Ability to keep perspective:* The emotional involvement of the caseworker should be controlled and be directed to the larger situation. This enables the worker to keep a wholistic view of the case and progress further in the helping relationship. For example, while narrating an incident of sexual abuse, the client is likely to talk of the incident in a detailed manner, sharing intricate feelings about the traumatic experience. In such a case, the worker has to empathize with the client at her *here and now* feelings and also keep the larger picture in mind. The worker would be required to study and assess the impact of the incidents of abuse on the client's relationship on her mind, her relationships with the significant others, stress management skills etc. Having a wholistic perspective helps the caseworker to keep the focus on the client in his/her entirety and analyze the interplay of psychosocial, conscious and unconscious factors affecting the client.

Demonstration of Principle of Individualization

- a) *Thoughtfulness and understanding:* Thoughtfulness in working out small details aids in demonstrating individualized attention to the client. For example, a casework meeting with a street and working child may require the child to leave his work for the appointment which would cost him a day's

labour. Similarly scheduling an appointment with a professional who is unable to come at the scheduled time would be insensitive. As far as possible, appointments should be best suited as per the client's convenience.

- b) *Providing Privacy in Conducting Interviews:* In many agencies, casework interviews are conducted in an open office space. This hinders the privacy of the client as he/she is not comfortable in talking openly about the problem. This is a great hindrance to the casework confidentiality. The noise may also create barrier in communication as the caseworker is unable to give undivided and individualized attention to the client. As far as possible separate cabins should be allotted to different case worker.
- c) *Care in keeping appointments:* As mentioned earlier, appointments have to suit both the client and the caseworker. Caseworker must keep a diary and promptly keep the appointments. If at all, the meetings have to be rescheduled due to an urgent work, client must be informed in advance. A promptly kept appointment gives a feeling of reassurance and importance to the client.
- d) *Preparation for interview:* One of the best immediate preparations for individualizing the client is to review the past written case records. This helps in refreshing the details of the earlier discussions and enables the caseworker to plan ahead for the next meeting in a purposeful manner.
- e) *Engaging the client:* Demonstrating the principle of individualization involves engagement of the client according to his/her capacity in the casework process i.e. in the study, assessment and treatment. For example, casework with a woman who is in a disturbed marital relationship would imply encouraging her to objectively assess her situation, weighing of the probable alternatives beforehand incase she wants to be out of the marriage. She may be helped to carry out a cost benefit analysis of each of her alternatives before taking a decision. Enabling the client in selecting the treatment goals and encouraging the person to make a choice stimulates client's self confidence and demonstrates the principle of individualization.
- f) *Flexibility:* Caseworker needs to be open minded and modify the treatment goals in accordance with the client's needs, knowledge about client's life situations and problems. The ability to adjust goals and methods calls for mature judgement, objectivity and skill on the part of caseworker. Flexibility is a special way of individualizing the client.

B) PRINCIPLE OF PURPOSEFUL EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

Emotions are an integral part of an individual's nature and their healthy development is necessary for the development of the total personality of a person. In the modern helping professions, the importance of a well ordered emotional life has been eminently recognized. Both psychology and psychiatry have studied the normal, healthy role of emotions in the personality structure. These disciplines have given social work, a body of knowledge about human growth and development which has made the helping process of social work eminently more effective.

The basic psychological needs of human beings have been identified as the need for affection, security, status, expression, achievement and independence. The degree of these needs varies from person to person. The need for expression and for sharing of experience has been singled out by social work as a pertinent dynamic in casework relationship. Purposeful expression of feelings according to Biestek

is the “recognition of the client’s need to express the negative feelings. The caseworker listens purposefully neither discouraging nor condemning the expression of these feelings, sometimes even actively stimulating and encouraging them when they are therapeutically useful as a part of the casework service”. The client’s expression of feelings should have a valid purpose in the casework process.

Purposes of the Purposeful Expression of feelings are as follows:

- *Relieving pressure:* Giving vent to one’s feelings, talking about the problem aids in catharsis which in turn enables an individual to see his/her own problem more clearly and objectively. This enables the client for positive and constructive action. For example a client who has just witnessed the death of a spouse needs sympathetic listening before he/she is ready to take interest in alternative strategies of living life.
- *Assessment of problem:* The expression of feelings helps the caseworker to understand the problem of the client more accurately and evaluate strengths and limitations of the client. This gives a way forward to making assessment objectively.
- *Psychological support:* Listening to a person while he/she talks about the problem in life provides immense psychological support to the client. The client feels understood and relieved from the burden of the problem.
- *Working towards negative feelings:* At times, negative feelings of the clients serve as the source of origin of problems. Sharing these feelings helps to bring them into the forefront of attention so that they may be resolved.
- *Strengthening casework relationship:* Talking about the problems, sharing feelings strengthens the casework relationship. Encouraging the client to express his/her feelings helps in deepening the bond between the worker and client. This also brings comfort, warmth and trust in the caseworker client relationship.

The client’s expression of feelings in the casework process also has certain limitations. **The limitations of the Purposeful expression of feelings are as follows:**

- *Agency constraints:* Functions of an agency may limit the expression of feelings to those which can be treated within the agency. The case worker is expected to work within the boundaries of the agency. For example if a client comes to an agency and expects monetary help whereas the agency is a hospital setting meant for providing treatment facilities to its clients. The case worker can only do referral services although he/she is appreciative of the need of his/her client.
- *Workload:* Workload with the caseworker determines the amount of time a caseworker can devote to each case. For example, if a caseworker is handling fifty cases apart from regular agency work, he/she may not have enough time to encourage expression of deeper feelings which require more time in each interview.
- *Premature expression of deep feelings:* Caseworker needs to be cautious in the early interviews about client’s premature expression of deeper feelings. For example, talking about intimate details of having undergone through a

rape by a victim in the very first meeting may not be desirable. This may inculcate feelings of guilt and hamper the casework relationship. Caseworker has to structure the entire casework process and slowly work towards building a relationship based on trust rather than allowing ventilation of deeper feeling at a premature stage.

- *Client Engagement:* Clients may have the tendency to put the total burden of conflict resolution on the caseworker. This is more common in the Indian situation where people have the tendency to talk about their problem and look up to the helper for 'readymade quick fix recipes' for problem resolution. Caseworker must ensure engagement of the client in the helping process right from the beginning to avoid undue dependence on the worker.

Demonstration of Principle of Purposeful Expression of Feelings

An essential function of the caseworker is to create a permissive environment that would encourage the client to freely express his/her feelings. This includes gaining trust and confidence of the client. Most clients talk at a superficial level and do not disclose their inner feelings till they are sure of the worker's accepting and permissive attitude towards client as an individual. Secondly, the caseworker's real desire to help and feeling *with* the client has to be communicated to the client at the 'feeling' level. Creation of a permissive environment is essential for purposeful expression of feelings. This may be done in the following ways:

- *Relaxed attitude:* Caseworker should be in a relaxed frame of mind, free from any preoccupations so that full attention may be devoted to the client. Ensuring privacy during interviews, having comfortable furniture in the room are some of the important steps to make the client feel comfortable and open up.
- *Preparation:* Prior to the interview, the caseworker must go through the earlier work done through the case records. This would refresh the memory and prepare the worker in planning and structuring the upcoming interview.
- *Listening:* Client's purposeful expression of feelings depends upon the quality of attention that is given by the caseworker. This enables the client to feel caseworker's genuine interest, sincerity, understanding and makes him/her to open up and express emotions. By asking appropriate questions, making empathic comments, nodding and showing interest through facial expressions, caseworker can demonstrate active listening to the client.
- *Encouragement:* The client has to be encouraged to talk and express feelings. Thus, by asking non threatening questions, repeating important phrases or words being said by client, making comments, expressing empathy; worker can motivate the client to talk freely. Statements like 'I realize how difficult this must be for you. What happened thereafter?' 'How did you *feel* when this happened?' are open ended statements/questions that require elaborate expression of feelings by the client.
- *Pace of progress:* A sensitive awareness of the client's pace of movement in each interview towards his/her casework goals is very necessary. Client's motivation to work towards resolving the problem would reflect upon the need and desire to express feelings at any given time.

- *Being Realistic*: Caseworker should refrain from giving any unrealistic reassurances, interpreting too early or too much in the expression of feelings by the client. Caseworker must not over estimate or under estimate client's capacity to tolerate anxiety. Caseworker must allow the client to talk, express feelings and feel relieved.

The principle of Purposeful expression of feelings aids in study and diagnosis in casework. Purposeful expression of feelings helps the caseworker to gain invaluable material for study and gain a realistic understanding of the client and his/her progress in totality. This helps in seeing the problem clearly and working towards its resolution. By their expression the feelings are brought out in the open for discussion and increase the client's participation and involvement to help himself/herself.

C) PRINCIPLE OF CONTROLLED EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Communication is a two way process between the communicator and the receiver with the flow of information. The content of communication comprises of the following:

- Ideas only
- Feelings only
- Ideas and feelings

When a woman seeks information at the railway reservation counter, she is only seeking information and expecting a factual response. On the other hand, when a teenage girl who had been raped discovers her pregnancy shares with her friend, *I do not know how I will face the world*, she is communicating her feelings. In such case only her feeling response would be appropriate.

In casework interviews, the content of communication is most often a combination of *thought* and *feeling* (Biestek: 1957). The nature of content depends upon – problem of the client, function of the agency, needs and feelings of the client in particular interviews, changing moods of the client within an interview and the purposes of the caseworker in the ongoing processes of study, diagnosis and treatment.

The social caseworker needs the skill to communicate at both the *thought* and *feeling* levels. Caseworker has to gain factual information and at the same time study client's ideas, thoughts and feelings. The element of controlled emotional involvement in a casework relationship according to Biestek, is the caseworker's sensitivity to client's feelings and understanding of their meaning and a purposeful, appropriate response to the client's feelings. There are three components in demonstration of controlled emotional involvement:

- a) Sensitivity
 - b) Understanding
 - c) Response
- a) **Sensitivity**: Sensitivity means seeing and listening to the feelings of the client carefully. Many times, clients are unable to express their feelings verbally or are ready to divulge personal details. With the knowledge of human behaviour,

observation and analytical skills, the caseworker has to observe the minutest of the details and draw an understanding by putting them in proper perspective. Body language or the non verbal communication can be effectively used as clues and indices to identify and interpret client's feelings. For example, use of hands, arms and legs, pace, tone of speech, posture, eye contact, silence, repetitive body actions are important indicators of client's non verbalized feelings.

- b) **Understanding:** As a professional helping person, the caseworker needs to understand the meaning of the client's feelings in relation to the client's problem. The worker's own life experiences and professional practice help in introspection and analysis of the professional situations. This includes knowledge of common human needs, patterns of human reactions and defenses in times of stress. This general knowledge is then used as a framework within which this particular client, with his/her individual and unique qualities, can be better understood and helped
- c) **Response:** Sensitivity and understanding are insufficient in themselves; they are means to the response. The caseworker's response to the client on the *feeling* level is the most important psychological element in the casework relationship and is perhaps the most difficult to the casework skills. The response is not necessarily verbal. Essentially it is a response of attitude and feeling, guided by knowledge and purpose. It is primarily an internal response where the caseworker consciously and purposefully identifies with the feelings of the client. It is a sharing of a warmly human professional person with fine sensitivities of another human being who needs help (Biestek: 1957)

The response of the worker should reflect the skill to probe in order to gather factual as well as feeling information from the client, while verbalizing understanding. It should convey warmth and empathy to the client.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) What are the prerequisites for the application of the principle of individualization?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) How does a caseworker demonstrate the Principle of Purposeful Expression of Feelings to the client?

.....
.....
.....
.....

D) PRINCIPLE OF ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is one of the commonly used term in social work profession. It is an important value in social work is that guides social workers to accept people as they are, with their strengths and limitations, potentialities and weaknesses, positive and negative feelings. In social work, acceptance is related with 'quality of life, professional attitude, the central dynamic and a principle'. According to Biestek (1957), action of acceptance is indicated as therapeutic understanding, respecting, loving, perceiving, acknowledging, helping and receiving. The three steps in the action of acceptance are as follows:

- Perceiving
- Therapeutic understanding
- Acknowledging

The caseworker must first objectively see what he/she is accepting. The worker must see the object of acceptance in relation to the causes which brought about the object in relation to what it means to the person, and in relation to the purpose of the casework process in each individual case. The caseworker must acknowledge this as a pertinent reality. The qualities of acceptance are warmth, courtesy, listening, respect, concern, consistent maturity, firmness and willingness to consciously enter and share in the life experiences of another (Biestek :1957). The purpose of acceptance in casework is different from other interpersonal relationships e.g. with spouse, siblings, friends etc. Acceptance in casework process is therapeutic in nature as it aims at helping the client to deal with problems and needs after perceiving his problem from his perspective and then acknowledging it.

Distinction between Acceptance and Approval

An important standpoint in casework is the distinction between acceptance and approval. Acceptance does not mean concurrence with or approval of client's behaviour. To illustrate, let us take an example of a man who has committed a murder and now seeking help from a caseworker. In this case, following the principle of acceptance would not imply that the worker's approval of the crime committed by the client. The worker would objectively study the client and assess the probable reasons that led the man to commit such a crime. Caseworker would accept the client as an individual possessing all his dignity and worth as an individual. However, the worker would disapprove of the murder committed by the client. The worker would not verbally praise or condemn the act and show empathic interest in getting to know the client and his life situations better. By acceptance one does not mean that the worker becomes partial in the face of the deviant behaviour that has added on to misery and deviance in society. It may be remembered that the client would not really be helped if his/her anti social behaviour (murder in this case) is apparently appreciated by the worker. The objective of acceptance is not the *good* but the *real*. Its objective as mentioned earlier is therapeutic i.e. to aid the worker to understand the client better and making the helping process more effective. The purpose is to free the client from using defense mechanisms and enabling him/her see the reality and realistically deal with the problem. Thus, principle of acceptance as defined by Biestek (1957) is as follows:

“Principle of acceptance is a principle where the caseworker perceives and deals with the client as he/she really is, including strengths and weaknesses, congenial

and uncongenial qualities, positive and negative feelings, constructive and deconstructive attitudes and behaviour, maintaining all the while a sense of the client's innate dignity and personal worth".

Understanding the client better

Let us try to understand the client's perspective. The client comes to the agency with some problem or maladjustment which he/she has been unable to cope with. Thus on one side, there is a sense of failure to resolve one's problem and having to seek outside help. At the same time, there is also a sense of own pride and dignity which make the client feel ambivalent. The strength of the desire to change and readiness to effect change is varying in each individual. This ambivalence extends to the caseworker as the client realizes that some weaknesses have to be shared since he/she is seeking outside support. This makes the client fear disapproval from the worker and feel insecure. To deal with this insecurity, the client makes use of defense mechanisms that help the client to hide the anxieties and inner feelings from one's self and from the worker.

In such a situation, by making the client feel accepted, showing interest and genuine concern, the worker helps the client in reducing the anxiety and lowering the defense mechanisms. The principle of acceptance aids the casework process as the client begins to express feelings and open up to the caseworker. However, the client constantly checks the reactions of the worker to his/her disclosure of feelings especially negative feelings.

Demonstration of Principle of Acceptance

- Giving the client focussed response, directed to the needs of the client rather than worker's own needs;
- Realizing client's potential for self help and exercising professional responsibility for the promotion of the growth of the client;
- Giving responses that contain the elements of both *thoughts* and *feelings*; and
- Providing agency specific help to the client.

Limitations of Principle of Acceptance

- Inadequate knowledge of human behaviour;
- Counter transference;
- Caseworker being judgemental about the client's situation;
- Caseworker's personal biases and prejudices;
- Unrealistic assurances by the worker;
- Confusion between acceptance and approval;
- Lack of respect for the client.

E) PRINCIPLE OF NON JUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDE

One of the most talked about principles of casework that is also a difficult one to practice is the Principle of non judgemental attitude. According to Biestek (1957), Principle of non judgemental attitude is defined as "Quality for casework relationship, it is based on a conviction that the casework function excludes

assigning guilt or innocence or degree of client responsibility for causations of the problem or needs, but does include making evaluating judgements about the attitudes, standards or actions of the client: the attitude which involves both thought and feeling elements, is transmitted to the client”.

Casework is a helping process where judgment would imply blaming the client and making him/her responsible for causing problems in his/her life. Let us take an example of a woman who has approached a child guidance clinic to seek help for her daughter who is showing symptoms of depression. Being judgemental in this case would imply blaming the mother for her daughter’s condition. Similarly, passing a judgment on a HIV positive person would mean blaming the client for his/her physical condition and for contracting HIV. As mentioned earlier, wholistic understanding of the client and his/her life situations is necessary in the casework relationship. However, this does not give the caseworker an authority to make judgements about the clients.

Understanding Client’s perspective

Seeking outside support for conflict resolution is not an easy task. The necessity to seek help from an agency can in itself produce a host of painful feelings. One of these feelings is the fear of being judged. In the initial interviews, the client looks at the caseworker as one of the members of the larger society which is often judgmental with fixed standards of Do’s and Don’ts. The client fears of being labeled by the caseworker, keeping in mind the preset standards of right and wrong. As a result of these feelings, the client adapts by using defense mechanisms and is hesitant to express inner thoughts and feelings. In such a scenario, demonstration of a non judgemental attitude helps the client ‘feel’ assured of the caseworker’s disinterest in making any kind of judgement, in praising or condemning the client. As the relationship gradually strengthens, the client grows in faith in the worker and begins to discuss needs and problems, develops objective analysis necessary for constructive change.

Evaluation of Attitudes, Standards and Actions of client

There is a clear cut difference between being non judgmental towards the client and judging client’s *behaviour* which may be moral/ immoral. While the caseworker refrains from judging the guilt or innocence of the client; he/she objectively evaluates the attitudes, standards and actions of the client. In order to understand this, let us take the case of a woman who is in a live-in relationship and seeking help to deal with problems with her lover. While dealing with such a case, the worker has no right to give the client a moral lecture on the grounds of her live in relationship, which is still not readily accepted in large parts of India. However, the worker has to probe into her life situation and make inquiries in order to make evaluations of her behaviour. The purpose in this case would be to understand the client and this would aid in the treatment process.

There are strong and valid reasons for practicing a non judgmental attitude. The worker being a social worker is a member of the larger society and his/her function is to help the client (and not condemn) within the law and basic values of society. If the caseworker is oblivious towards delinquent and immoral behaviour/attitude of the client, the client would not feel understood and may underrate the worker’s ability to provide professional help. Moreover, the caseworker has every right to

have his/her own social, moral and spiritual values. The worker must, however, ensure that his/her personal values, beliefs, opinions and code of ethics are not imposed on the client in any way. The worker has no right to judge the client by personal standards.

Demonstration of Principle of Non Judgemental Attitude

- Encouraging the client to open up and express own thoughts and feelings
- Being respectful and attentive to the client throughout the casework relationship
- Being aware of personal biases and prejudices and not letting them influence the casework relationship. E.g. the worker might have been socialized to develop a dislike for certain castes/castes/categories like alcoholics, differently abled, sex workers, scheduled castes/tribes etc. While in a casework relationship with such clients, worker must ensure not to let personal dislike interfere in the helping process. The worker must recognize and control personal biases and develop capacity to see people objectively and not subjectively.
- Treat the client as a unique person. Worker should refrain from making references to people who have faced similar problems
- Understanding negative feelings of the client towards the worker should be related with the use of defense mechanisms.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) How does a caseworker demonstrate the Principle of Non Judgemental Attitude?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What are the limitations of Principle of Acceptance?

.....
.....
.....
.....

F) PRINCIPLE OF SELF DETERMINATION

One of the firmest convictions of social work profession is that a person has an innate ability for self determination. A conscious willful violation of the client’s freedom by a caseworker is considered unprofessional as it transgresses the client’s natural right and impairs the casework treatment. The principle of self determination is defined by Biestek (1957) as follows:

“The principle of self determination is the practical recognition of the right and need of clients to freedom in making their own choices and decisions in the casework process. Caseworkers have a corresponding duty to respect that right, recognize

that need, stimulate and help to activate that potential for self direction by helping the client to see and use the available and appropriate resources of the community and of his/her own personality. The client's right to self determination is however, limited by the client's capacity for positive and constructive decision making, by the framework of civil and moral law, and by the function of the agency".

Client as a human being has the responsibility of living his/her life in such a manner that he/she is able to work towards achieving life's goals. The client also has the right to decide the course of action to achieve. However, the client seeks professional help from social caseworker to know the various alternatives and objectively evaluate each alternative. Following are the ways by which principle of self determination can be demonstrated:

- a) *Communicating the problem*: The caseworker's acceptance of the client and the diagnosis after the study phase has to be communicated to the client. The caseworker has to enable the client work through the emotional disturbance and clearly see the problem
- b) *Enabling identification of resources*: Caseworker must help the client identify available resources that may be used for problem resolution. Caseworker and the client work together to carry out cost benefit analysis of the alternatives available to the client. The role of the worker is to delicately balance activity as well as passivity. The passivity consists of doing things for and to the client, thus helping the client to express fully and freely. The caseworker is however active in observing and evaluating the words, actions and emotions of the client, analyzing client's strengths as well as limitations, enriching outer and inner resources of the client and stimulating the client towards his/her activity (Biestek).
- c) *Activating client's resources*: Worker has to help the client to get free from stress, fears and provide support to grow through the worker client relationship. The ultimate goal is to capacitate the client to be self reliant.
- d) *Facilitative relationship environment*: Caseworker has to create a relationship environment in order to enable the client grow and work out the problems. With active listening, the caseworker facilitates client participation in deeper realization of own problems, identify resources to work out own problems.

In application of the principle of Self Determination, the caseworker however must not assume the principle responsibility for problem resolution for the client. The client must be helped to take an active role while caseworker's role is more of a facilitator and supporter. Caseworker should not in any way manipulate or persuade the client in choosing the course of action or in decision making.

Limitations of Principle of Self Determination

- *Client's capacity for positive and constructive decision making*: Each client's physical and mental capacity to take personal decisions varies. For example, a mentally retarded child would not be able to take decisions related to career/vocational activity to be taken up. Similarly, persons suffering from mental illnesses (schizophrenia, cases of acute depression or those having suicidal or homicidal tendencies) may not be emotionally stable to take objective independent decisions. In such cases, the caseworker would have to assume a lead role in order to protect the client from taking inappropriate decisions.

- *Limitations related to civil law:* Authority and law are realities of an organized society. The general purpose of law is to prevent individuals from abusing or misusing liberty and to protect the society from such an abuse. While Principle of self determination encourages the client to take his/her own decisions, caseworker has to help the client accept and adjust to the limitations of personal freedom arising from law and authority.
- *Limitation related to moral law:* The natural right to make choices and decisions about one's own life does not extend to moral evil; a person might have the physical power to make such a choice but he/she has no real right to do so (Biestek: 1957). Commonly accepted moral laws may relate to inappropriate behaviours such as stealing, kidnapping, murder etc. In India, the moral laws widen due to the existence of multiple religions where each religion prescribes its own moral behaviour- food habits, marriage, divorce, adoption etc. The caseworker has to accept the conscience of the client and help the client make choices and decisions that are within the boundaries of that conscience.
- *Limitation related to agency function:* Each agency has its own ethos, goals, functions, eligibility criteria, networks and areas of concern/action. The client has a duty to respect this and is obliged to remain within the framework of the agency function.

G) PRINCIPLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality in social work can be considered from two standpoints- as an item in the professional code of ethics and as an element of the casework relationship. The principle of confidentiality is very complex and difficult to apply to concrete casework situations. Biestek (1957) has given its following definition of the principle of confidentiality:

“Confidentiality is the preservation of secret information concerning the client which is disclosed in the professional relationship. Confidentiality is based upon a basic right of the client; it is an ethical obligation of the caseworker and is necessary for effective casework service. The client's right however, is not absolute. Moreover, the client's secret is often shared with other professional persons within the agency; the obligation then binds all equally”.

Client when approaches an agency with a problem is aware of the necessity to verbalize and reveal pertinent facts, inner feelings and fears about his/her life to the caseworker. Without expressing these, the client can not expect help in conflict resolution. This information may be very personal, might be related with immoral or socially undesirable behaviour of the client and may hamper 'social image' of the client, if disclosed to people. Therefore, there is a need to practice the principle of confidentiality by the caseworker.

Ethical obligations of caseworker

Confidential information can be defined as a fact or a condition, or the knowledge thereof pertaining to a person's private life which is normally hidden from the eyes of others. Biestek (1957) has given three classes of confidential information:

- a) The Natural Secret
- b) The Promised Secret
- c) The Entrusted Secret

- a) The *Natural* secret is the information which, if revealed would defame, injure or unjustly sadden the person. E.g. information related to having undergone through sexual abuse, incest, having marital discord, premarital/ extra marital relationships, failure in examination etc. The obligation to preserve natural secrets binds everyone, regardless of the nature of the relationship.
- b) The *Promised* secret is one in which the confidant gives an assurance, a promise, after she/he has learnt the secret information that caseworker would not divulge it. The subject matter may include the defamatory facts about the client's personal life which he/she does not want to be revealed.
- c) The *Entrusted* secret is information which is communicated to a confidant with the previous explicit or implicit understanding that the matter will not be revealed. The subject matter may or may not include a natural secret.

In casework relationship confidentiality includes all three types of secrets. There is always a presumption that the caseworker would be ethically bound to keep the confidence of the client. However, since the caseworker works within an agency set up, the personal information shared by the client does not confine to the individual worker but remains within the agency. The agency would not be able to provide services unless the information is shared by the caseworker with colleagues/teammates. The information also gets recorded in the case files of the client. However, all the persons in the agency are bound to guard the confidentiality of the client.

Limitations of Principle of Confidentiality

- *Conflict within the client:* An apparent conflict may exist between the client's right to preserve own secret and another of his/her rights and duties. The solution of this conflict requires evaluation of the rights without any exaggeration. The presumption should always be that the right to confidentiality remains dormant until clear evidence to the contrary appears.
- *Conflict with the rights of another individual:* At times, preservation of the client's secret may harm the rights of an innocent person. e.g. client may confess about motives to kidnap someone. In this case, if the caseworker decides to stick to the principle of confidentiality, it would mean putting an innocent person's life in danger and causing unnecessary misery. Caseworker thus has to evaluate objectively and take a decision.
- *Conflict with the rights of the social worker:* Occasionally by keeping the client's secret, the worker may forfeit own personal rights, which may be more important than the client. The worker can not be expected to surrender own rights in the performance of professional duty.
- *Conflict with the rights of the social agency:* Every agency has got its own set of goals, programmes, target groups and services. In case an extreme situation arises where by keeping the client's secret, a right of the agency would be violated and the agency would be forced to operate contrary to its function; the agency would not be bound to preserve client's secret.
- *Conflict with the rights of the society as a whole:* Each person has the right to maintain peace, harmony, promoting common good and welfare of people. The general principle is that the obligation of the entrusted secret ceases when the preservation of the secret would constitute a real and serious damage to the common good.

Check Your Progress V

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) Define the principle of right to self determination?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Bring out the limitations of Principle of Confidentiality.

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.7 LET US SUM UP

The relationship between the caseworker and the client is of utmost importance.

The caseworker and the client are fundamentally equal as human beings. In a casework relationship however, caseworker takes on the role of a professional helper while client is the person who needs help. Caseworker client relationship also differs from other professional relationships such as doctor-patient, psychiatrist-client.

Casework relationship goes much beyond merely a friendly relationship between the caseworker and the client. Clients bring into the casework relationship their feelings, attitudes and behaviour which they have experienced with others. By exhibiting an open, 'warm' attitude, caseworker is able to convey to the client his/her openness and concern to understand the client's problem, client's attitudes and sharing of experiences. Through empathy, caseworker is able to convey to the client his/her understanding of client's problem with accuracy and 'oneness'.

By feeling caseworker's empathy, the client feels understood and important. Authority is an essential element of caseworker client relationship. The degree of emotional satisfaction which the client gets from such a relationship is far beyond the realistic limits of the caseworker-client relationship.

There are seven principles of the casework relationship:

- Principle of Individualization
- Principle of Purposeful expression of feelings
- Principle of Controlled emotional involvement
- Principle of Acceptance
- Principle of Non Judgmental attitude

- Principle of Client's right to Self Determination
- Principle of Confidentiality

Principles of casework are principles of action, based upon a fundamental which influences, guides and directs. The principles are also referred to as qualities or elements as they are present in every good casework relationship and are the constitutive parts of the relationship (Biestek). Every principle has certain pre-requisites and can be demonstrated by the caseworker so as to reach the desired goal of problem solving.

1.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Biestek, F.P. (1957), *Casework Relationship*, Unwin Hyman Ltd, London

Davidson, E.H. (1970), *Social Casework*, Williams & Williams Company, Baltimore.

Hamilton, G.(1951), *Theory and Practice of Social Casework*, Columbia University Press, New York

Mathew Grace, (1992), *An Introduction to Social casework*, TISS, Bombay

Nicholas, E. (1963): *A Primer in Social Casework*, New York: Columbia University Press

Perlman, H. (1957), *Social Casework: A Problem Solving Process*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Perlman, H. (1979), *Relationship: The Heart of Helping People*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Upadhyay, R.K. (2003), *Social Casework; A Therapeutic Approach*. Rawat Publications.