

IMMEDIACY

Immediacy is somewhat related to self-disclosure. When using immediacy, the counselor briefly and appropriately discloses his/her immediate reactions about the client to the client. The distinction between self-disclosure and immediacy is that self-disclosure is limited to factual information while immediacy involves a more emotional reaction. In addition, immediacy involves reactions that are immediate to the relationship with the client as it is occurring now. Immediacy is used in situations where it is deemed appropriate to share a personal reaction with the client in order to facilitate self-understanding or develop rapport within the relationship. For example:

Client: (Pacing) I'm really nervous. I'm wired. I can't stop my mind from racing! I feel like everything is going wrong! It just keeps getting worse and worse!

Counselor: I can see that you are very anxious right now. I think that the best thing to do is to try some relaxation. It would be helpful for me if you would sit down.

Client: I can't.

Counselor: It would make me more comfortable if you would sit down. It is difficult for me to help you relax while you are pacing the room like that. Thank you. Now take a deep breath and try to relax. . .

OR

Client: It's no use. There is no reason for me to think that I can approach her. I haven't got the skills to relate to women. She'll just think that I'm odd and reject me like everyone else.

Counselor: You know, I don't think you are odd. When I look at you I see a very handsome gentleman with good taste in clothing. But I don't think the way you degrade yourself is very attractive. I wonder if your difficulty might be more related to the quality of person you keep telling yourself you must be rather than the person you actually are? And it seems to me that you are quite capable of relating to me, and I am a woman. It seems to me that many of the social skills you have will come in quite handy when you reduce your anxiety a little. Maybe we should focus on the specific anxiety you feel when confronted with a situation involving a potential romantic relationship rather than disqualify all of your social skills.

In the above two examples, immediacy is being used to accomplish very specific goals within the context of counseling. It may be important in the second case to clarify the boundaries associated with a professional relationship when making such a disclosure, but that does not disqualify its utility or appropriateness in this situation. As with any other intervention, timing and context are important to consider.