

INTRODUCTION TO INFERTILITY COUNSELLING

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INTRODUCTIONS

- What is counselling, and what it is not?
- Core Conditions of Counselling and key skills
- Why Counselling for Infertility?
- What do people bring to counselling?
- How do people benefit?

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WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

- It is a professional process informed by theoretical knowledge and based on agreed codes of ethics and values.
- It takes place when a counsellor meets with a client/patient in a confidential setting to explore any difficulty, distress or dissatisfaction with life that the client/patient may be experiencing.

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- It can increase a client's/patient's ability to make choices and change aspects of their situation. It may include the offer of information but does NOT involve giving advice or directing a client/patient to take a particular course of action.

BI CA Guidelines for Good Practice 2006

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CORE CONDITIONS

- **EMPATHY** - Seeing the other person's world from his/her perspective, and that you can understand his/her feelings and experiences without influence from your own.
- **CONGRUENCE** - Being genuine, controlled and open about your own feelings. It is about being fallible, vulnerable and admitting you don't know all the answers.
- **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD** - being non-judgemental and accepting the other person without your own prejudices.

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KEY SKILLS

- Attention giving
- Empathy, genuineness and non-critical acceptance
- Reflecting and responding
- Paraphrasing
- Open questions
- Summarising

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LISTENING SKILLS

- Listen with undivided attention, without interrupting
- The more you listen less you say, the better your memory
- Base Line - what is not said but being felt
- Watch for non-verbal clues
- Listen to yourself - how would you feel?
- Tolerate pauses and silences
- Keep calm and relaxed

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COUNSELLING IN THE UK HFEA Mandatory Requirements - Draft 8th Code of Practice Human Fertilisation and Embryology (HFE) Act 1990 (as amended)

- 13 (6) A woman shall not be provided with treatment services of a kind ...unless she and any man or woman who is to be treated together with her have been given a suitable opportunity to receive proper counselling about the implications of her being provided with treatment services...

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INTERPRETATION OF MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

The law requires that counselling be offered when:

- (a) an individual or couple seek treatment that will create embryos
- (b) an individual or couple seeks to store their gametes or embryos
- © an individual or couple seeks to donate their gametes or embryos
- (d) an individual consents to be a legal parent of any child born as a result of their partner's treatment, or
- (e) a patient gives consent to her partner being a legal parent of any child born from her treatment

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**SO WHY DO PEOPLE NEED
COUNSELLING WHEN
GOING THROUGH
INVESTIGATIONS AND
TREATMENT FOR
INFERTILITY?**

Exercise

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IT CAN:

- Raise legal, ethical, social, psychological and emotional issues
- Outcomes uncertain
- It can be a financial as well as an emotional burden
- It can be felt as a life crisis and can throw up past unresolved issues

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**SO WHAT DO PEOPLE
BRING TO
COUNSELLING?**

Exercise

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ISSUES THAT COUNSELLING MAY HELP WITH

- Feelings of loss and grief
- Relationship and communication issues
- Stress from
 - investigations/treatment
 - family/friends expectations
 - others' pregnancies etc.
- Issues surfacing from the past (e.g. abuse)
- Implications of some treatments (e.g. donor Tx)
- When and if to end Tx
- How to live with the ending ?adoption ?doing nothing

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CASE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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"But I wanted to thank you for all your help and support in the last few months. Our sessions have made an enormous difference - reassurance that I wasn't completely losing my marbles, an opportunity to thrash through particular issues, an oasis of calm in a desert of craziness, and an outlet for a whole lot of pain."

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