

THE HELPING OR PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS IN SOCIAL WORK

John Dewey in his book “How We Think ”

- Problem solving process is describe as what goes on in the human mind when confronted with a problem.
- The problem solving behavior s based on the reflective thought that begins with a feeling of doubt or confusion.

FIVE PHASES OF REFLECTIVE THINKING – JOHN DEWEY

1. Recognizing the difficulty
2. Defining/ specifying the difficulty
3. Raising a suggestion for possible solution and rationally exploring the suggestion, which include data collection.
4. Selecting an optimal solution from among many proposals
5. Carrying out the solution

PROBLEM SOLVING FRAMEWORK IN SOCIAL WORK

Helen Harris Pearlman – originator of P-S Framework in sw.

- In her book “Social Casework: A Problem Solving Process” she describes the social work process as a progressive transaction between the professional helper and the client, consisting of a series of problem solving operations which can be summarized as follows:

1. STUDY (facts that constitute and bear upon the problem must be ascertained and grasped)
2. DIAGNOSIS (facts must be thought about, examine relationship and searched for significance)
3. TREATMENT (some choices or decision must be made as an end result of the consideration of the particular facts with the intention of resolving the problem)

IN GENERAL, THE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS DEMANDS THAT A WORKER BE SUCCESSIVELY INVOLVED IN THE FOLLOWING SEQUENTIAL STEPS

1. Recognition or definition of the problem, and engagement with the client system
2. Data collection
3. Assessment of the situation
4. Goal setting and planning of an action
5. Intervention or the carrying out of an action
6. Evaluation
7. Termination

THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP

The worker-client relationship is such a crucial factor it can spell difference between successful or unsuccessful problem-solving. All of the worker's professional relationships should involve self-discipline and self-awareness.

Emmanuel Tropp (Developmental) – developed an important set of statement that sum up the essential characteristics of the worker's presentation of self to each of her clients:

1. Compassion
2. Mutuality
3. Humility
4. Respect
5. Openness
6. Empathy
7. Involvement
8. Support

- 9. Expectation
- 10. Limitation
- 11. Confrontation
- 12. Planning
- 13. Enabling
- 14. Spontaneity and control
- 15. Role and person
- 16. Science and art

SELF-AWARENESS may be called for in situation where worker's values clash with the client values. Many of these values usually been so internalized that the worker is often not conscious that she is judging other people's behavior along these values.

PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

- Essentially a cognitive process, a rational procedure involving series of steps to be followed sequentially.

SOCIAL WORK HELPING PROCESS

- Is not just a cognitive process since it involves a relationship between 2 parties (C-W system).

Professional values and ethical principles guide this relationship particularly in relation to the handling of feelings, attitudes that inevitably enter the picture.

STEPS IN SOCIAL WORK HELPING PROCESS

1. Assessment
2. Planning Beginning Phase
3. Intervention Middle Phase
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation Ending Phase
6. Termination

Helping Relationship has the ff elements:

1. SELF-DISCIPLINE AND AWARENESS

Noimi Brill believes that an effective worker must:

- a. Be aware that she is a walking values
- b. Use all means to become conscious to those values

- c. Strive to evaluate herself and her on values by looking at the origin
- d. Strive to change those values that need to be changed

2. AUTHORITY/PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITY/POWER

Position or functions in the agency; and professional knowledge and experience

3. COMMITMENT AND OBLIGATION

Accountability and responsibility to Clients and others

Naomi I. Brill – recognizing the worker's value system defines her behavior and relationships with other people, believes that the effective worker must:

1. Be aware that she is a walking system of values
2. Be conscious of what these biases are
3. Strive to evaluate herself and her values objectively and rationally
4. Strive to change those values that, on the basis of this evaluation, need changing

AUTHORITY (and the power that accompanies it) 0 there are 2 sources of a worker's authority – her position and corresponding functions in the agency, and her possession of knowledge and experience.

GODSTEIN points out that in SW relationships, when one seeks something from another person "that cannot be obtained elsewhere – the relationship cannot be equalized.

COMMITMENT AND OBLIGATION – to bind or pledge one's self to relationship; to obligate one's self is to perform the moral responsibility that goes with a pledge or a promise made

HELPING CONTRACT is frequently used in reference to the expectations and terms of the commitments and obligations of both client and worker, which are often clearly spelled out.

STEPS IN SOCIAL WORK HELPING PROCESS

Max Siporin – assessment is a process and product of understanding on which action is based.

The process involves the collection of necessary information and analysis and interpretation in order to reach an understanding of the client, the problem, and the social context in which it exists.

ASSESSMENT

- Also termed as diagnosis and social study
- Involves the collection of necessary information and its analysis and interpretation
- The ultimate purpose is to provide understanding necessary for appropriate planning.
- The major tasks involved during this stage are data, gathering, and problem definition based on the agreement between the client and the worker as to the problem-for-work.
- These tasks culminate in the worker's writing of an Assessment Statement or a Problem Definition.

TYPES OF SOURCES

1. Primary source – the client
2. Secondary source – significant others
3. Existing source – records and reports
4. Worker's own observation

PRINCIPLE IN DATA GATHERING

1. The client should be the main source of information although, when appropriate and available sources should be used.
2. Data to be gathered should directly relate to the identified problems.
3. The client should be informed about the source being used for data collection. In certain cases, his permission should be sought before certain kinds of information are obtained.
4. Data collection is a continuous process, but it is the collection, organization and synthesis of such data that is especially critical to the definition of the problem and setting of goals.
5. The type of client and the general nature of the problem can guide the worker on the type of data that should be collected and how much.

THE INTAKE PROCESS AND THE PRESENTING PROBLEM

Intake – process by which a potential client achieves the status of a client.

- On the client's part, this involves the presentation of the self and the problem or need as he/she is experiencing
- On the worker's part, this involves some assessment of the client and the problem and whether or not the agency is in a position to help.
- A good intake interview should provide the client with adequate understanding of the agency and its policy and program in relation to the need or problem, as well as the responsibilities and obligations from both client and worker.
- Intake may be accomplished in one session with a client.

Presenting problem- problem that is a threat to the client's or other's welfare, and usually stated or presented as it is being perceived or experienced. In working in a small group, a worker does individual or group intake interviews. Individual Intake Form: community identifying information, presenting problem and circumstances relating to this, background data and other pertinent information obtained during the initial contact with the community.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Compton and Galaway- the way you define the problem will define the data collected and will dictate what are seen as appropriate answers.

Problem for work- place of beginning together which means problem or part of the problem that:

Defining the problem – the problem for work means:

1. The problem or part of the problem that the client system is most important or a good beginning place.
2. The problem or part of the problem that in the worker's judgement is most critical
3. The problem or part of the problem that in the worker' judgement can most readily yield to help
4. The problem or part of the problem that falls within the action parameter of the helping system.

***** the Clients Presenting Problem:** , if it is the problem or part of the problem the client system feels is most important, it may serve as the “Problem for Work”

******* if the client system presents multiple problems, the worker may use **PARTIALIZATION** – the process of separating from so many problems identified by the C and the W, the problem that need to be addressed first, and will be the focused of the helping relationship.

PRIORITIZING- the added aspect of a problem taking precedence over other problems because of its Importance.

WRITING AN ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Components of an assessment statement by Maria O'niel McMahon:

- Opening casual statement- this requires the worker to clearly indicate who's has the problem, and why the problem exists at the time.
- Change potential statement- a statement- a problem's change potential is dependent on three interdependent factors: problem, person and environment.
- Judgment- about the seriousness or urgency of the problem.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSESSMENT

1. On-going
2. Focuses on understanding the client in situation and providing a base of planning and action.
3. A mutual process between client and worker
4. There is movement within the assessment process
5. Both horizontal and vertical explorations are important
6. Assessment identifies needs in life situations, defines problems, and explains their meaning and patterns
7. Assessment is individualized
8. Judgment is important in assessment because many decisions have to be made.
9. No assessment is ever complete

PLANNING

The link between assessment and intervention Planning process translates the content of assessment into a goal statement that describes the desired results and is also concerned with identifying the means to reach the goals.

2 majors task during the planning stage:

1. Formulating goals that directly relate to the client's need or problem
2. Defining the specific actions/interventions that are necessary to achieve the goals.

GOALS

- The desired or expected outcomes of an endeavor
- The term interim goals, intermediate goals objectives- refers to specific, short-term goals which facilitate the achievement of the long term or overall goals.
- Characteristics of goals- SMART

PLANS

- Means to achieve goals
- Consist of the specific actions/steps to be undertaken in order to reach the goals.
- Jointly made by the worker and the client, helping Plan, Action Plan, or intervention Plan
- Systematic review of the client strengths when preparing of intervention plan is one way to avoid offering an intervention plan without considering alternatives with the client.

UNITS OF ATTENTION

-Intervention or Action/Helping Plan calls for an identification of other persons who, in additions to client, have to be given attention because they are involved in the situation, and work with them is essentials to goal attainment

-Systems that are the focus of the change activity.

STRATEGY DEFINED AS AN OVERALL APPROACH TO CHANGE A SITUATION

Factors that influence the plan of action

1. The community in which it is being carried out
2. The agency sanctioning the plan
3. The social problem that the plan is response to
4. The social worker involved in the plan.
5. The client.

The assessment and planning steps in the problem solving process culminates in the workers writing of a case study that contains the synthesis of the information that has been obtained on the client and his situation, and assessment statement/ definition of the problem of work and the helping intervention goals and plans.

THE HELPING CONTRACT

After having worked together in assessment and action planning, what should follow is an agreement between the worker and the client on what needs to be done and who should do it. This is called a “contract” in our setting and having verbal agreement is common practice.

INTERVENTION

- This phase in the helping process is concerned with the action that would solve the client’s problem
- Involves the rendering of all the specific and interrelated services appropriated to the given problem and situation in the light of the assessment and planning
- Includes all the goal related activities that the worker will undertake following the agreement forged with the client based on the problem to be worked on and the plan of action to be pursued.

Compton and Galaway have very apt words for two phases of the helping process:

Deciding what to do (assessment and planning) and Doing the decided (intervention)

ECO-MAP is an assessment, planning and interventive tool. A simple paper and pencil simulation that presents the individual or family and the major systems in the life space, as well as the nature of the individual’s or family’s relationships with these various systems.

INTERVENTIVE ROLES IN DIRECT PRACTICE

Interventive role refer to the composite of activities or tasks that she is expected to undertake in order to accomplish the goals agreed upon with the client.

Resource Provider- engages the worker in the direct provision of material aid and other concrete resource that will be useful in eliminating or reducing situational deficiencies.

Social Broker- involves the process of negotiating the service jungle for client, whether singly or groups. The worker links or connects the client to needed service in the community.

- It requires a broad knowledge or community resources and operating procedures of agencies.

- Referral is considered a basic activity in this interventive role.

- Networking- worker's efforts at establishing and maintaining relationship with other community entities which have resources that can support and supplement her own agency's resources

Mediator- person who acts as an intermediary or conciliator between two persons or sides.

Advocate- the worker has to take a partisan interest in the client and his cause. The objective is to influence, in the client's interest, another party, usually possessing same power or authority over the client.

Enabler- involves the social worker in interventive activities that will facilitate the clients' strengths and resources within themselves to solve problems they experiencing

Counselor/Therapist- the goals of the worker is the restoration, .maintenance of the client capacity to adapt or adjust to his current reality.

INTERVENTIVE ROLES BEYOND DIRECT PRACTICE

Mobilizer of Community Elite- involves the worker in activities aimed at informing and interpreting to certain sectors of the community, welfare programs and services as well as need and problems, with the objectives or enlisting their support and/or involvement in them.

Documenter/Social Critique- worker documents the need for more adequate social welfare policies and programs based on her knowledge about the inadequacies or deficiencies in these existing welfare policies and programs as well as on her belief as to how there ought to be, in the light of professional values and goals.

Policy/Program Change Advocate- worker is involved in efforts to change policies and programs on behalf of particular sectors of the population based on the values of profession.

LIMITATIONS OF WORKER ACTIVITIES:

Times- the worker may not be able to give the client unlimited time

Skill- the worker should perform only those activities that are within her competence

Ethics- the worker watch out for activities that might commits her unethical behavior

Agency Function- the worker must be sure that she understand and interprets agency function properly.

EVALUATION

- Collection of data about outcomes of a program relative to goals and objectives set in advance of the implementation of that program.
- Ongoing evaluation
- Terminal evaluation
- Both qualitative and quantitative
- Summative evaluation concerned with outcomes of effectiveness
- Formative evaluation concerned with looking at the process of the work. It forces the worker to find out whether the implementation plan is being implemented as designed

Intervention plans can be viewed in 2 levels conceptual level and operational level.

-**Professional accountability**- SWer and SW agencies must answer for their work, not just to client who are the direct users, but to the public that supports them.

2 Aspects of Accountability

Effectiveness- refers to the questions on whether or not the services or intervention plans are accomplishing their intended goals;

Efficiency- refers to the cost of services and intervention plans in money, time and other resources.

TERMINATION

- End of helping relationship

MOST COMMON REASON FOR TERMINATING CLIENT WORKER RELATIONSHIP

1. When the goal set by the worker and client has been reached.
2. When, after reasonable period of time, there has been very little movement toward the attainment of the goals formulated, and the prospect for any change in the situation held unlikely
3. When the client thinks that the worker has provided sufficient help so that it is now possible for the client to pursue problem solving on his own.
4. When an agency does not have the resources needed by the client or the worker does not get her agency approval to provide the services needed by the client.
5. When the system outside the client makes it difficult for the client to continue with the helping relationship or when these systems influence the client to discontinue the relationship.
6. When for one reason or another, the worker must leave the agency.

TRANSFER – process by which the client is referred by his social worker to another worker usually in the same agency because the former will no longer be able to continue working with the client...

REFERRAL – an act directing a client to another worker/agency because the service that the client needs is beyond the present agency worker's competence, or the client needs additional services which the present agency cannot provide.

COMPONENTS OF TERMINATION according to Pincus and Minahan

A. DISENGAGEMENT Most Common Reactions during termination/disengagement

1. **Denial** – avoid painful feelings. Avoiding the discussion of termination.
2. **Emotional reaction** – fear of loss or fear of the unknown can give rise to the feeling of sadness and grief. There can be anger expressed in verbal outburst or physically violent behavior directed towards the worker or other significant others.
3. **Bargaining** – clients try to negotiate an extension of time or a modified schedule which can mean fewer contacts over a longer period with the worker. Some offer promises or gifts.
4. **Depression** – listlessness, little energy, withdrawal, sadness, helplessness, despair, absence of motivation to go on.
5. **Acceptance** – the client manifests an increase in energy and is able to talk about good and bad times and to think for the future.

Factors that influence their reaction during termination

1. Length of service
2. Attainment of client goals
3. Client worker relationship
4. Modality of intervention

B. STABILIZATION OF CHANGE

Ronald Lippit – contend that the main test of a change agent's help is the stability and performance of the client system's changed behavior when the change agent is no longer actively working with client. They submit "the change process must equip the client system to carry on effectively in a wide range of day to day activities after the initial change project is over"

Robert Vinter – explains this as the requirement of transferability. i.e gains achieved by the client within the helping process must be transferrable beyond this process, and the degree of improvement should be assessed according to conventional standards in the community.

C. EVALUATION

It is ongoing part of helping process. Periodic/regular evaluation allows the worker and the client to review and, if necessary, revise the goals and objectives

Spin- offs or unexpected/unwanted consequences

- This may help the worker and the client to know how to deal with future problems.
- The worker should identify what have been useful and what have not been helpful and what might have been done differently.