

EMPLOYEE COUNSELLING

by

K.SULTANA, Associate Professor
Dept. of Computer Applications
Jamal Mohamed College

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What Counselling is :

Counselling is discussion with an employee of a problem that usually has emotional content in order to help the employee cope with it better. Counselling seeks to improve employee mental health and well-being.

Good mental health means that people feel comfortable about themselves, right about other people, and able to meet the demands of life.

Counselling may be performed by both professional and non professionals. For example, both a human resource specialist in counselling and a supervisor who is not trained in counselling may counsel employees. Therapists and personal physicians also counsel employees, and even an employee's friends may provide counselling.

Both personal and job problems may affect an employee's performance on the job.

Characteristics of People with Good Mental Health

1. Feel comfortable about themselves

- Are not bowled over by their own emotions – by their fears, anger, love, jealousy, guilt, or worries.
- Can take life's disappointments in their stride.
- Have a tolerant, easy going attitude toward themselves as well as others, can laugh at themselves.
- Neither underestimate nor overestimate their abilities
- Can accept their own shortcomings
- Have self-respect
- Feel able to deal with most situations that come their way
- Get satisfaction from simple, everyday pleasure.

2. Feel right about other people

- Are able to give love and to consider the interests of others
- Have personal relationships that are satisfying and lasting
- Expect to like and trust others
- Respect the many differences they find in people
- Do not push people around
- Can feel they are part of a group
- Feel a sense of responsibility to their neighbours and others

3. Are able to meet the demands of life

- Do something about their problems as they arise
- Accept their responsibilities
- Shape their environment whenever possible
- Plan ahead but do not fear the future
- Welcome new experiences and new ideas
- Make use of their natural capacities
- Set realistic goals for themselves
- Are able to think for themselves and make their own decisions
- Put their best effort into what they do and get satisfaction out of it.

Need for Counselling:

The need for counselling arises from a variety of employee problems, including stress. When these problems exist, employees benefit from the understanding and guidance that counselling can provide.

Most problems that require counselling have some emotional content. Emotions are a normal part of life. Sometimes emotions can get out of control and cause workers to do things that are harmful to their own best interests and those of the firm.

Managers want their employees to maintain good mental health and to channel their emotions along constructive lines so that they will work together effectively.

What Counselling can do

The general objective of counselling are to help employees grow in self-confidence, understanding, self-control, and ability to work effectively. These objectives are consistent with the supportive, collegial, and system models of organizational behaviour, which encourage employee growth and self-direction.

The counselling objective is achieved through one or more of the counselling functions. The six activities performed by counselling are :

(i) Advice (ii) Reassurance (iii) Communication (iv) Release of emotional tension (v) Clarified thinking (vi) Reorientation.

- 1. Advice** : To give useful advice requires a counsellor to make judgments about a counselee's problems and to lay out a course of action. Advice giving may breed a relationship in which the counselee feels inferior and dependent on the counsellor. Advice occurs in routine counselling because workers expect it and managers like to provide it.
- 2. Reassurance** : Counselling provide employees with reassurance, which is a way of giving them courage to face a problem or a feeling of confidence that they are pursuing a suitable course of action. Reassurance should be handled carefully because the temporary self-confidence may fade away as soon as they face their problem again.

3. Communication : Counselling can improve both upward and downward communication. In an upward direction, it is a key way for employees to express their feelings to management. An important part of any counsellor's job is to discover emotional problems related to company policies and to interpret those type of problems to top management. Counselling also achieves downward communication because counsellors help interpret company activities to employees as they discuss problems related to them.

4. Release of Emotional Tension : This release is sometimes called emotional catharsis. People tend to get an emotional release from their frustrations and other problems whenever they have an opportunity to tell someone about them. They are more relaxed, and their speech is more coherent and rational. This release of tension removes mental blocks in the way of solution, enabling them to face their problems again and think constructively about them.

5. Clarified Thinking : Realistic thinking was encouraged because he recognized that he was talking to someone who knew the facts and was not emotionally involved. In order to clarify the counselee's thinking, the counsellor serves as an aid only and refrains from telling the counselee what is right. The result of any clarified thinking is that a person is encouraged to accept responsibility for emotional problems and to be more realistic in solving them.

6. Reorientation : involves a change in the employee's psychic self through a change in basic goals and values. It is largely a job for professional counsellors who know its uses and limitations and who have the necessary training. The manager's job is to recognize those in need of reorientation before their need becomes severe, so that they can be referred to professional help in time for successful treatment.

The Manager's Counselling Role : Excluding reorientation, the counselling functions usually can be performed successfully by skilled managers. They will at times perform all six counselling functions. On other occasions, if professional counselling services are available and a problem is significant, they will, and should, refer employees to the professional counsellors. The point is that when counselling services are established, managers must not conclude that all their counselling responsibilities have been transferred to the counselling staff.

Managers are important counsellors because they are the ones in day-to-day interaction with employees. Emotions are part of the whole employee and must be considered a part of the total employment situation for which a manager is responsible. All managers from the lowest to the highest levels, need training to help them understand problems of employees and counsel them effectively.