Models for Designing and Using Distance Guidance

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Coping With Overwhelming Information

- Internet Web sites are an increasingly popular source of information
- Easy to become overwhelmed by the amount and diversity of information on the Internet
- Make very selective use of Web sites as homework resources
Coping With Overwhelming Information

- Become familiar with a reasonable number of Web sites relevant to typical client concerns
- Recommend specific and manageable portions of a Web site addressing a specific client need
Coping With Overwhelming Information

- When client information needs cannot be met with typical sites
  - Model good information seeking behavior during the counseling session
  - Locate valid sources of information that have the potential to meet the client’s needs
Coping With Overwhelming Information

- Use a model that helps clients limit the scope of information by linking Web site content with specific client goals
Model for Client Web-Site Use

Three goals for client use of Web sites

1. Help the client to **understand** the nature of his or her problem

2. Assist the client to **act** in ways that help to solve his or her problem

3. Help the client to better **cope** with problems that cannot be completely solved
Understand the Problem

• Help the client to understand the nature of his or her problem
  
  – Review a portion of a Web site that explains what many individuals experience when they have a specific problem
Understand the Problem

- Potential client outcomes
  - Understand the typical causes of the client’s problem
    • May be theory-based
  - Understand how often other individuals have the same problem
    • “I am not the only person with this problem”
Understand the Problem

- Potential client outcomes
  - Understand that the client’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are often similar to other’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
  - Understand that others have successfully solved the same problem

• Instills a sense of hope without guaranteeing success in solving the problem
Understand the Problem

- Potential client outcomes
  - Understand any theory that can provide a basis for taking action to solve the problem
  - Facilitate communication between the practitioner and the client by providing a common vocabulary related to the problem
  - Facilitate communication between the client and other service providers
Act to Solve the Problem

- Assist the client to **act** in ways that help to solve his or her problem
  - Review a portion of the Web site that provides descriptions of specific counseling interventions
Act to Solve the Problem

Potential client outcomes

– Understand the nature of various intervention options

• Create more realistic expectations for change and less anxiety about the process of receiving help
Act to Solve the Problem

Potential client outcomes

- Understand the pros and cons of various intervention options
- Improve client self-esteem by making the client a more active participant in intervention decisions
Cope with Problems Not Yet Solved

- Help the client to better *cope* with problems that cannot be completely solved

  - Review a portion of the Web site that provides personal statements of individuals who have experienced, and coped with, similar problems

  - Participate in a virtual support group for clients with similar problems by reading and posting messages on a limited access bulletin board
Cope with Problems Not Yet Solved

- Understand specific coping strategies that are available
- Understand how others have successfully coped with similar problems
- Understand when and how to seek additional services in the future
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- Practitioners can give clients information or refer them to valid information from carefully selected Web sites

- There are benefits in providing information to clients via the Internet
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- Web-based information may be more current and more complete than information provided by a practitioner
  - Assumes that the information provided on the Web is valid
  - This assumption is not always true

- Obtaining Web-based information may reduce the expectation that the practitioner’s role is to provide expert information after the client carefully explains his or her problem
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- Clients may react negatively to information provided by a practitioner and engage in “Yes, but…” interactions.

- Emphasize a collaborative role
  - The practitioner focuses on helping the client find and effectively use information, rather than emphasizing an authoritarian role where the practitioner focuses on providing information.

- May reduce negative responses to perceived “advice” given by an authority figure.
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- Making greater use of Web-based information may help the practitioner become less focused on being knowledgeable about an ever increasing amount of information.

- Helping clients better understand why they are reluctant to use the information they have obtained is a better use of time in counseling.
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- Help clients assume more responsibility for decision making since they are not dependent on the practitioner for getting access to information.

- Learning how to obtain and effectively use information may help the client to be a better problem solver in the future.
Web vs. Practitioner-Based Information

- The practitioner will always provide information to clients
  - Some information is so specific or localized that it is not available on the Internet

- The practitioner needs to judge when to provide information to the client and when to recommend that the client obtain information from a specific portion of a Web site
The role of the practitioner is shifting from *providing* information to collaboratively helping clients *find* and effectively *use* information.
A four-step counseling model can help clients effectively use a Web site in completing homework

1. Screening
2. Recommending
3. Orienting
4. Follow-up
Screening

- Purpose
  - Determine the likelihood that using Web-based assessments, information resources, and opportunities for interaction with others will help the client in problem solving
Screening

- Develop an effective counseling relationship with the client
- Clarify the nature of the client’s problem
- Agree on the client’s goals for counseling
- Determine whether or not homework is appropriate at this point in counseling
Screening

- Collaboratively determine the client’s readiness for problem solving
Screening

- Determine the practitioner support necessary for the client to benefit from assessments, information sources, and interaction with others.

- Decide on the appropriateness of using the Internet to gain access to assessments, information sources, and individuals.

- Determine if the client has the ability to use a Web browser and navigate a typical Web site.
Screening

- Potential client outcomes
  - Established a good relationship with his or her practitioner
  - Concluded that the practitioner understands his or her situation and is capable of helping with problem solving
  - Clarified his or her problems and counseling goals
Screening

Potential client outcomes

– Concluded that the practitioner will provide the support that he or she needs

– Understand how assessments, information, and interacting with others may help with problem solving

– Decided that the Internet is an appropriate source of assessments, information, or interaction with others
Screening

- Potential client outcomes
  - Concluded that the practitioner will provide the support that he or she needs
  - Understand how assessments, information, and interacting with others may help with problem solving
  - Decided that the Internet is an appropriate source of assessments, information, or interaction with others
Recommending

- Purpose
  - Suggest specific Web-site content to increase the likelihood that the client will use the resources that are appropriate for his or her needs
Recommending

- Maintain an effective counseling relationship with the client
- Determine whether or not an appropriate Web site is available to help the client complete his or her homework assignment
- Collaborate with the client to create a brief written plan for using Web-site content and features that relate to specific client needs
Recommending

- Help the client understand which of his or her needs might be met by using a Web site and which needs might be met by other resources
- Whenever possible, provide the client with choices among options for obtaining information
- With client input, decide if any additional barriers exist that would limit client access to Internet Web sites
Recommending

- Before recommending a Web site for client use, ensure that the site meets applicable ethical standards (such as validity)
- Explore any potential multicultural issues the might impact the use of the Web site
- Influence client expectations that successful use of the Web site is generally possible
- Influence client expectations that the client is capable of and will follow-through with the use of the recommended portions of the Web
Recommending

- Potential client outcomes
  - Achieved an understanding of how his or her needs can be potentially met by Web-site use
  - Formulated an initial plan for using the Web site, as well as any other appropriate resources
  - Concluded that the practitioner is competent and available to help him or her make effective use of the Web site
Orienting

Purpose

- Help ensure that the client makes effective use of a Web site by promoting a realistic understanding of the potential benefits, limitations, and functioning of the site in relation to his or her needs
Orienting

- Maintain an effective counseling relationship with the client
- Briefly review the agreed upon plan for using the Web site
Orienting

Briefly review the following points

- Potential benefits and limitations of the site
- Navigation of the site
- Help features that are available
- Privacy of personal data collected on the site
- Supplemental information from external links
- Estimated time required to use the site
Orienting

- Clients with low readiness for problem solving will need more careful orientation to the Web site
  - More careful orientation may reduce anxiety associated with using a Web site
  - Importance of practitioner modeling of information seeking behavior
  - Avoid overwhelming the client with more orientation information than the client can understand and use at one time
Orienting

- Some of orientation information can be presented via traditional print materials.
- Discuss the usefulness of taking time to reflect upon what the client has learned in using the Web site before continuing on with further counseling and Web site use.
- Briefly indicate to the client any information on the site that documents the quality of the site.
Orienting

Potential client outcomes

– Achieved a greater understanding of how specific portions of the Web site might be used to meet his or her needs

– Perceived him or herself as capable of successfully using the portions of the Web site that the practitioner has recommended

– Continued to conclude that the practitioner is competent and available to help him or her make effective use of the Web site
Follow-Up

Purpose

- Help ensure that clients have appropriately used Web-site assessments, information sources, and opportunities for interacting with others, to meet their previously identified needs
Follow-Up

- Maintain an effective counseling relationship with the client
- Ask the client to describe the nature of his or her experience using the Web site, and note any problems that need resolving
Follow-Up

- Help the client to review his or her progress toward meeting the needs that were originally identified in counseling
  - If the client's needs are still unmet, recommend the use of additional portions of the Web site or other resources
  - Pay particular attention to potential inappropriate use of the site and potential negative thinking about learning
Follow-Up

- Recommend appropriate further resources and services that may be needed
- Help the client understand how the learning resulting from using the Web site can be generalized to future problem solving
Follow-Up

- Potential client outcomes
  - Fully used the Web-site to meet needs
  - Evaluated progress toward meeting needs
  - Identified other resources and services needed
  - Be better prepared to use portions of another Web site meet similar needs
  - Conclude that the practitioner is competent