

Co-counselling manual

Dick Saxton 1985

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Theory

That we are all operating on far less than our full potential because our needs have been blocked and our distress has not been released.

The human potential and needs are:

- a. To give and receive love.
- b. To understand and be understood.
- c. To be self-directing

When any of these needs is blocked we discharge our distress. When love is blocked we experience grief which we discharge through crying and sobbing.

When understanding is blocked we experience fear which we discharge through trembling and cold perspiration.

When self-direction is blocked we experience anger which we discharge through an uninhibited burst of sound and storming movements.

Embarrassment is a form of light fear and is discharged through laughter. After discharge we are left only with a memory of a pain and not the pain itself.

In our society discharge is generally taboo and is blocked, eg:

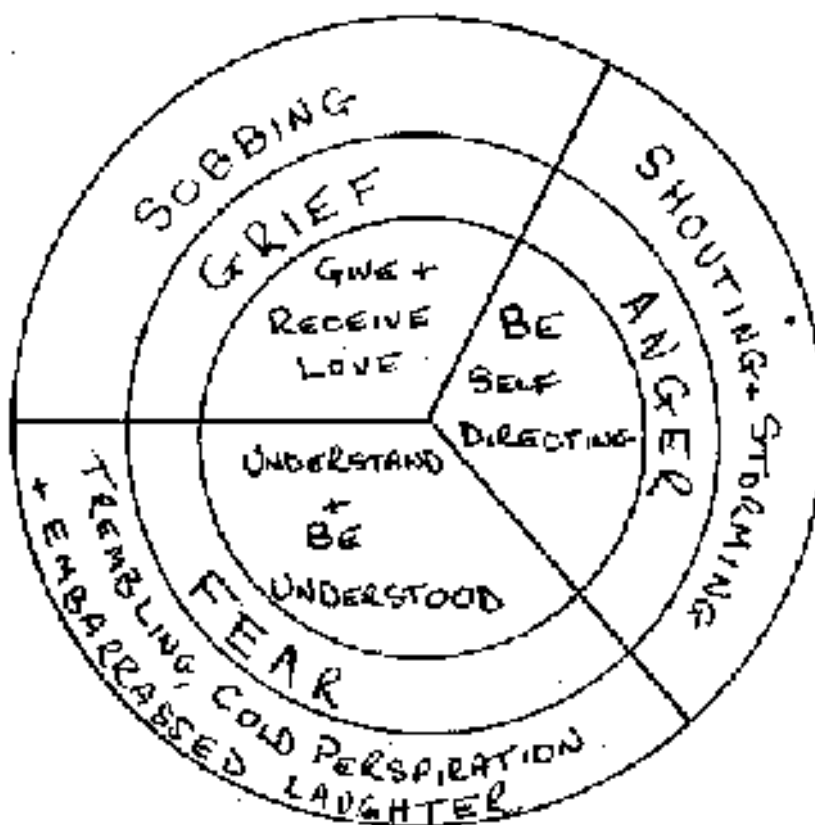
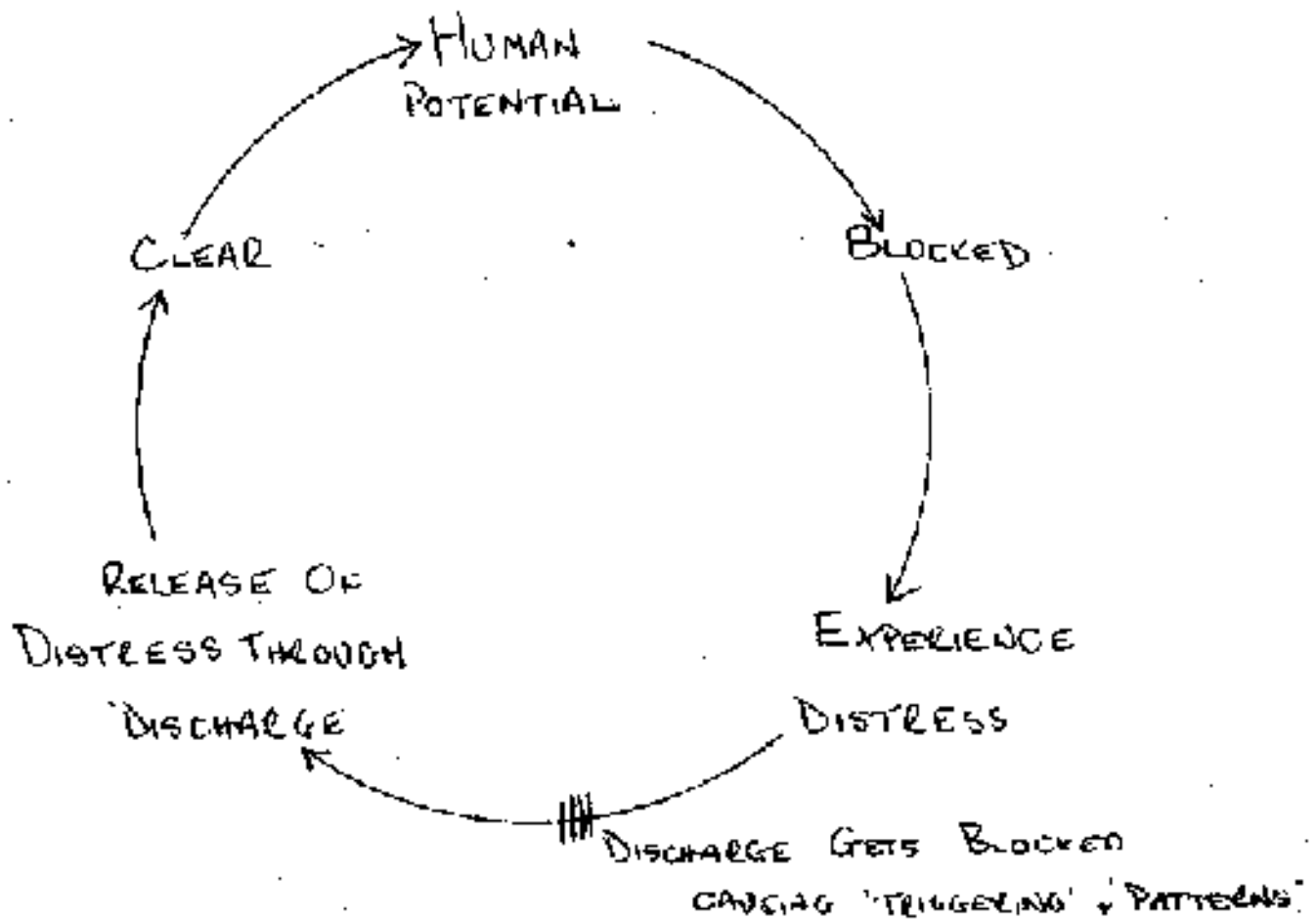
- Keep a stiff upper lip
- Big boys don't cry
- Little girls shouldn't get angry
- There's nothing to be afraid of

When the healing process of discharge is blocked we are unable to evaluate clearly what has happened and carry our hurt inside us. If a similar event occurs in the present our past hurt will be triggered and we will act compulsively. This is called restimulation.

Behaviours that result from being restimulated are called "patterns".

Through discharging our past hurts we free ourselves from our patterns and so are free to make rational choices rather than compulsive ones. We also gain insight into our past behaviour.

THEORY



Basic principles of method

Co-counselling is peer and reciprocal. Two or more people take turns to take an agreed and equal length of time as client whilst the other is counsellor.

To maintain a supportive atmosphere everything that happens within a session is confidential to that session.

Role of Client

The client is in charge, is self-directed, decides what to work on, how to work on it, and for how long. It is her time, she is free to accept or reject the counsellor's suggestions. Her working options include:

1. Celebration
2. Action planning and goal setting
3. Creative thinking
4. Regression, discharge and insight

Whilst working the, client keeps a balance of her attention out. I.e she has part of her attention on the distress on which she is working and part of her attention on the world outside - the counsellor the room, the working techniques, etc. She does not get swamped in her distress.

Role of Counsellor

The role of the counsellor is basically to be there for the client. She does not analyse, criticise, agree, disagree, advise, interpret, etc. - verbally or non-verbally. She does give supportive, expectant and validating attention to the client - to her words, tone of voice, posture etc.

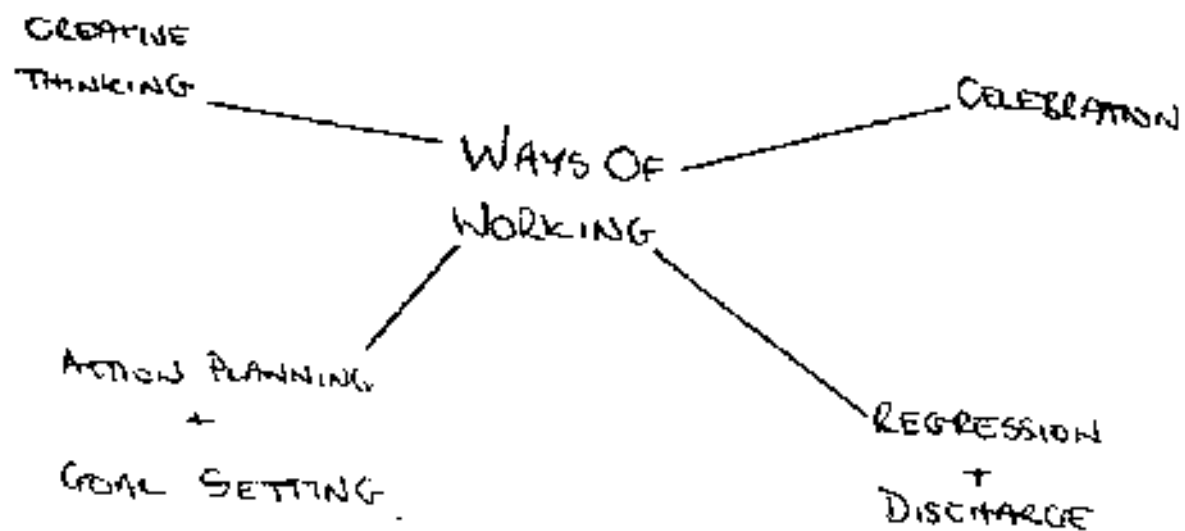
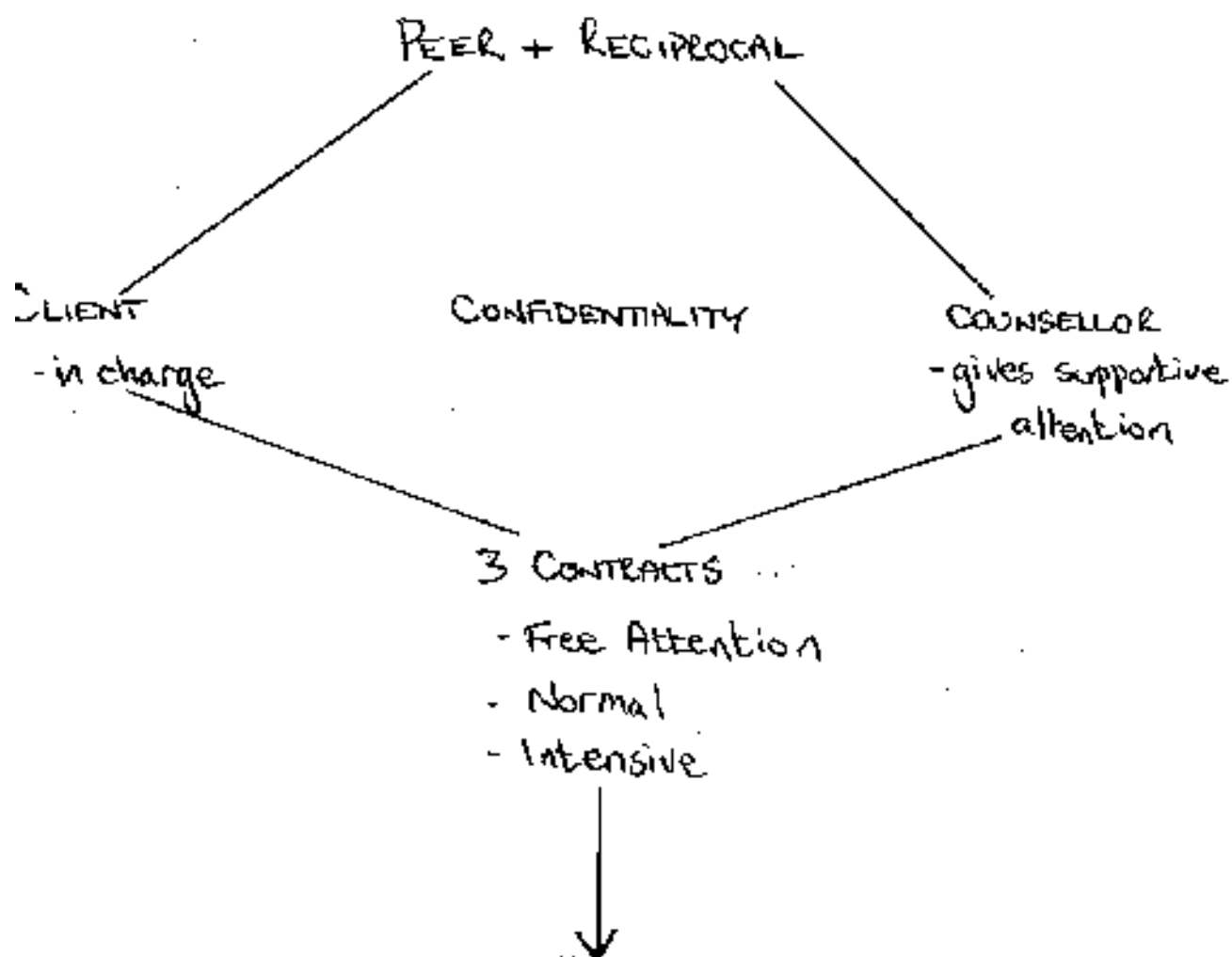
The precise role of the counsellor depends upon which of the three basic contracts the client asks for.

Contracts

1. Free attention - the counsellor gives free attention only and makes no interventions whatsoever.
2. Normal - the counsellor gives basic free attention but intervenes if the client seems to be stuck or in pattern. Interventions are always in the form of suggestions of ways of working.
3. Intensive - the counsellor picks up more of the client's cues and makes more frequent interventions.

In both 2 and 3 above the counsellor respects fully the right of the client to be self-directing and so accepts any rejections by the client of suggestions made.

METHOD



Basic working techniques for regression, discharge and insight

The four broad ways of working are:

1. passive imagination
2. active imagination
3. passive body-work
4. active body-work

Passive imagination

Getting in touch with feelings via some outside trigger eg: When watching someone else work, when seeing a moving film etc. The feelings come up spontaneously without the person consciously choosing to work. Once aware of the feelings the client may choose to work on them.

Free association - thoughts, insights and connections arising spontaneously without the client seeking them. Having arisen the client may choose to give time to think around the connections actively or allow space for more to arise spontaneously. You can actively choose to allow space for your passive imagination.

Active imagination

1. Association:

- a. Catching the thoughts which occur and working with them.
- b. Verbalising thoughts and insights that follow discharge.
- c. Scanning - either for times when I've felt like this before (when working in a session) or events to do with a particular area e.g. food, sex, religion, school, times I've felt loved, times I've felt alone. This can be done at random or chronologically backwards or forwards.
- d. Random review of simple pleasures, favourite places, minor upsets etc.

2. **Literal description:** Describe the scene in the present tense being aware of all the details such as colour, smells, sounds etc. Don't analyse what is happening.

3. **Role-play:** Relive a past event as if it were happening now - say what was left unsaid. The counsellor can play the other person in the scene.

4. **Repetition** Repeat several times a word, phrase or action containing a hint of distress or charge. It is useful to exaggerate the tone or movement or to say it louder.

5. **Contradiction:** Outwit the pattern by contradicting it with words or deeds. Let discharge flow before, during and after contradiction. You're not trying to convince yourself of the positive direction, but using the contradiction to highlight negative self-image feelings and elicit discharge. There are three possible ways of contradicting:

- a. Full contradiction: Contradict words, tone of voice, facial expression, gesture and posture.
- b. Partial contradiction: use negative self-image words but contradict tone of voice, facial expression, gesture and posture.
- c. Double negative: words, tone of voice, facial expression, gesture and posture all exaggeratedly negative -mocking the pattern (not the client)

6. **Identity Check:** Counsellor says: "Who do I remind you of?"

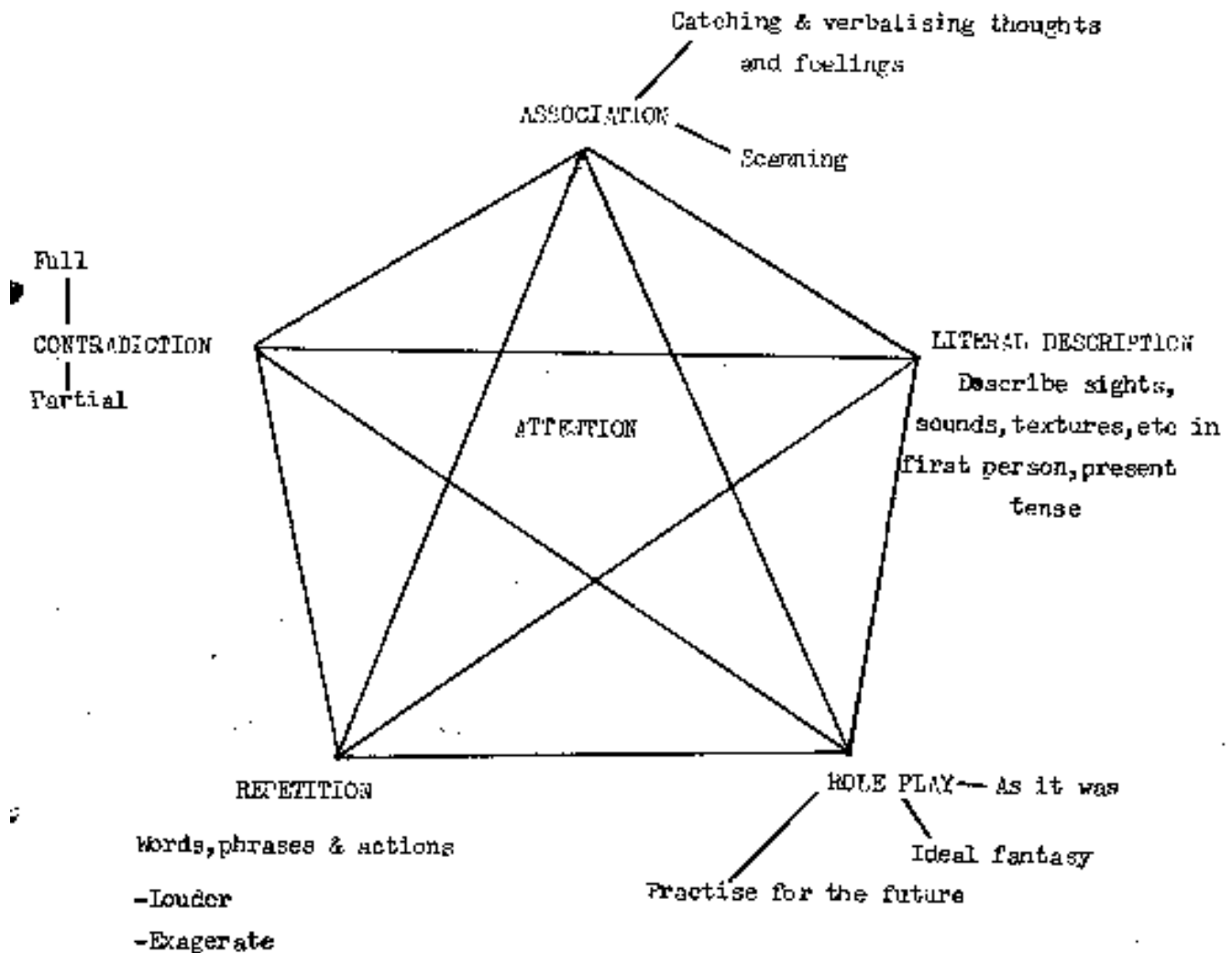
"How do I remind you of X?"

"What do you want to say to X?"....

leading into any work

"How am I different from X?"

THE FIVE BASIC TECHNIQUES



Starting a session

- What's on top
- Scanning: general or related to specifics
- Celebration
- Work on a specific issue
- Body-work/breathing
- What comes up

Finishing a session

A possible sequence: Use what feels right for you at the time.

- Own the distress proudly and lightly
- What was good then?

- Allow time to make connections between then and now
- How are things/you different now?
- Find a direction and/or make any action plans to enable you to step out of the pattern in day to day life
- If need be contract to work on it again
- What's good now?
- Shift your attention out onto the room, counsellor, colours, what you had for breakfast, etc.
- What are you looking forward to?

Direction Holding

What it is:

A word, phrase or action.

A positive script to lift me out of a negative one

A way of focussing on my power to change or, stay the same.

A way of linking a session with life.

How to use it:

In a session:

Repeat a phrase to keep discharge flowing.

Find a word or phrase to carry forward into life.

In life:

Repeat the phrase to yourself when you find yourself slipping into pattern.

A Few Hints:

- Make it a gift to yourself, not an "I ought...."
- Keep it short and punchy
- Focus on your own power
- Make sure it feels right for you, directions are very idiosyncratic. Pitch it at a level you feel comfortable with e.g. "You may just love me"
- May be better than "I'm lovable".
- Help yourself with notes and posters.

Some examples:

Pattern	Contradiction	Direction
I can't do it	I can do it	Gently does it This is my life Live life abundantly Slowly

Goal setting and action planning

Make sure its for you.

Goal setting

Be specific: "To ... by ..."

Be realistic:

- set attainable goals
- break large goals down into sub-goals
- attain goals through action planning

Action planning

- Outline sequence of action steps

- Plan to hold a direction
- Role-play how you'd like to be
- Make contracts with others
- Plan to work on the distress in future sessions

Revise and review you goals and plans after a while - again make sure it's for you and that you're not treating it like school homework.

Some possible counsellor interventions

- What sort of contract would you like?

Association

- What's the thought?
- Would you like to scan for similar early experiences?
- What incidents/associations come to mind about that?
- Who are you really saying/doing that to? ... First thought

Literal description

- Can you describe the scene in the present tense? Home in on colours, textures etc
- Try saying that in the present tense

Role play

- What do you want to say to X? ... Try saying it to them now
- What would you like to do to X?

Repetition

- Can you say/do that again? ... again ... louder/exaggerate the movement

Contradiction

- Would you like to try contradicting that?
- Try saying ... (counsellor offers contradiction)

Catching and verbalising thoughts

- What are you realising about then and now?
- How did you choose to survive then ... is that choice still with you?
- What scripting did you pick up from that experience

Action planning

- What's your immediate plan to step out of that pattern?
- What's your choice about it ... when you think clearly about it outside your distress
- What risks are you going to take about it
- How are you going to give more expression to the real you over the next few days/weeks?

Attention out at end of session

- What do you like about yourself in that?
- What do you like about yourself?
- What can you see in the room?
- What are you looking forward to?
- Are you back in present-time?

Intensive counselling

The basic aim of an intensive contract is to interrupt all the clients patterns by picking up many more of the clients cues, usually with the aim of shifting level in order to deal with the bedrock of early distress.

A few things to remember when counselling intensively:

- An intensive contract is not *necessarily* a "lots of interventions" contract. You're likely to be picking up more of the client's cues but if the client is working intensively and effectively on her own then allow yourself to give free attention.
- Think of yourself as a midwife (mid-person?) aiding a natural process and working with the client. Be sensitive to where the client is.
- Don't become attached to any of the suggestions you make. If they work, fine if not just keep your attention out for the next cue to be given off think of it in terms of trial success and error.
- Having said that, it may be that your suggestion was so bang-on that the client is avoiding something. If that seems to be so, you could try suggesting it again, but always remember that client is in charge and, beware becoming intrusive.
- Timing is important - if you see a possible intervention try it. If you spend time wondering whether its "right", it won't be anyway by the time you make it because the energy will have moved on.
- Honour the counsellor within you. I believe we're all innate counsellors - its just that in our culture we tend to lose touch with that part of ourselves. So ... give yourself time and permission to get in touch with that part of you again.

Some ideas for practicing intensive counselling.

1. Arrange practise sessions where client and counsellor agree to an intensive contract in which they give each other permission to take risks as counsellor. Possibly with a "light" topic.
2. Client gives feedback to counsellor at the end of the session as to which interventions were helpful etc.

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