



# Counselling And Psychosocial Support: Understanding The Challenges Of Communication With Abused Children

Communicating with abused children requires great sensitivity and patience. These children may be traumatized, withdrawn, or distrustful, making it challenging to establish a rapport and encourage them to open up. Providing a safe, supportive environment is crucial to help them feel comfortable sharing their experiences.



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America



Cocoa Farmers  
Association  
of Nigeria (CFAN)



LUTHERAN  
WORLD RELIEF

*Eradication of child labour in Nigeria*

# Lessons for today

1. What is counselling ?
2. Who is a counsellor ?
3. Qualities of an effective counsellor.
4. Why is counseling important?
5. Why counseling is necessary basic counseling skills.
6. Recognizing the signs of abuse
7. Establishing trust and rapport
8. Effective listening techniques
9. Asking sensitive questions
10. Providing a safe and supportive environment
11. Collaborating with professionals and caregivers
12. Empowering children through communication
13. Importance of active listening
14. Developing empathetic responses
15. Body language and nonverbal communication
16. Validating children's emotions

# COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- What is Counselling ?

- Counselling is defined by WHO as a dialogue between a client and a care provider aimed at enabling the client to cope with stress and to take personal decisions relating to child labour and other forms of abuses.
- The Counselling process includes the evaluation of child abuse experiences and the facilitation of preventive behaviour

## Who is a Counsellor ?

- The individual person who provides support and guidance is known as the Counsellor and the individual who receives the support & guidance is known as the Client

## COUNSELING & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT:

Counseling is a face to face communication in which one person helps another make decisions and act on them.

Counseling can be defined primarily a confidential dialogue between a person in need and a case provider in an effort to reduce the stressful impact of child abuse on children and individuals.

The goal of this dialogue as part of the treatment plan is to promote and maintain the maximum possible level of psychological and physical well being.

The process of counseling includes providing information that allows individuals to make decisions that reduce the risk of transmitting the infection.

## QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELLOR.

- 1) Positive regard or respect for people.
- 2) Open, non judgmental and high level of acceptance
- 3) Caring and empathetic.
- 4) Self-aware and self-disciplined.
- 5) Knowledgable/informed about subject and awareness of resources available within the community.
- 6) Culturally sensitive.
- 7) Patient and good listener.
- 8) Ability to maintain confidentiality.
- 9) Objective and having clarity.

COUNSELLING IS A TOOL, WHICH NEEDS TO BE USED VERY CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY. A LITTLE MISTAKE MAY DEFEAT ITS PURPOSE.

Hence the Counsellor : Should Do

<b>VERBAL</b>	<b>NON-VERBAL</b>
<b>Use language that the client understands</b>	<b>Use a tone of voice similar to the clients</b>
<b>Repeat in other words and clarifies client's statements</b>	<b>Nod occasionally, uses facial expressions</b>
<b>Explains clearly and sufficiently</b>	<b>Use occasional gestures</b>
<b>Summarize</b>	<b>Keep suitable conversational distance</b>
<b>Respond to primary message</b>	<b>Not to speak too quickly or too slowly</b>
<b>Encourage, 'yes, go on'</b>	
<b>Address appropriately to the clients age</b>	
<b>Give needed information</b>	
<b>Use humor or other means of reducing tension</b>	
<b>Not to criticize or censure the client</b>	



## Should not do

Verbal	Non-Verbal
Advising	Looking away frequently
Preaching and moralizing	Keeping an inappropriate distance
Blaming, judging or labeling	Sneering
Cajoling(persuading by flattery or deceit)	Frowning, scowling and yawning
'why' questions. Interrogating	Using an unpleasant tone of speech
Directing, demanding	Speaking too quickly or too slowly
Excessive reassuring	Moving around to much. Fidgeting
Straying from the topic	Having a blank facial expression or staring
Encouraging dependence	
Patronizing(condescending) attitude	

- **Why is counseling Important?**

**In the context of child abuse, the goals of counseling are**

Counseling for child abuse is a specialized form of mental health treatment aimed at addressing the emotional, psychological, and behavioral consequences of child abuse.

It involves providing support, coping strategies, and a safe environment for the child to process their experiences and work towards healing.

## Why counseling is necessary:

An abused child may have problems such as denial, guilt, anger, violent behaviour depression and suicidal tendencies.

Child counselling can be incredibly beneficial for children who are struggling with a wide range of issues. Here are ten benefits of counselling for children:

**Improved emotional regulation:** It can help children learn how to identify and manage their emotions, which can lead to improved emotional regulation.

**Increased self-esteem:** Counselling can help children develop a positive self-image and increase their self-esteem.

**Enhanced problem-solving skills:** Through counselling, children can learn effective problem-solving skills that they can apply to a variety of situations.

**Improved communication skills:** Counselling can help children learn how to communicate effectively with others, which can improve their relationships with family and friends.

**Reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms:** Counselling can help children cope with anxiety and depression symptoms, reducing their severity and frequency.

### **Why counseling is necessary:**

**Better academic performance:** Counselling can help children manage stress and anxiety related to school, which can lead to improved academic performance.

**Increased resilience:** Counselling can help children develop resilience, which can help them cope with future challenges and difficulties.

**Improved social skills:** Counselling can help children develop social skills and improve their ability to form and maintain positive relationships.

**Increased self-awareness:** Through counselling, children can develop a better understanding of themselves and their emotions, which can lead to increased self-awareness.

**Improved overall well-being:** Child counselling can have a positive impact on a child's overall well-being, leading to improved mental, emotional, and social health.

## Basic counseling skills.

- a) Using the time & resource available
- b) listening carefully & activity
- c) Questioning effectively
- d) Providing accurate information which is complete
- e) Respecting patients rights and confidentiality.
- f) Maintaining constant eye contact.

## During counseling:

- 1) Listen to your client attentively
- 2) Be attentive to what the child and the parents say
- 3) Maintain eye contact
- 4) Be non-judgmental
- 5) show genuine concern
- 6) Be patient
- 7) Maintain confidentiality

# Recognizing the Signs of Abuse

## 1 Physical Signs

Unexplained bruises, burns, or other injuries may indicate physical abuse.

## 2 Emotional Cues

Sudden changes in behavior, such as increased anxiety, depression, or aggression, can signal emotional abuse.

## 3 Behavioral Patterns

Reluctance to discuss certain topics or people, or excessive fears and worries, may point to abuse.



# Establishing Trust and Rapport

## **Empathy and Patience**

Approach the child with empathy, understanding, and a non-judgmental attitude.

Building trust takes time, so be patient and let the child set the pace.

## **Active Listening**

Make eye contact, use open-ended questions, and demonstrate genuine interest in the child's experiences and feelings.

## **Providing Comfort**

Offer comfort and reassurance, but avoid physical touch unless the child initiates it. Let them know they are safe and supported.



# Effective Listening Techniques

1

## Attentive

Focus solely on the child, avoid distractions, and give them your undivided attention.

2

## Reflective

Paraphrase what the child has said to show you understand and are engaged in the conversation.

3

## Empathetic

Validate the child's feelings and respond with compassion, not judgment or criticism.



# Asking Sensitive Questions

## **Gentle Approach**

Use open-ended questions that allow the child to share information at their own pace, without feeling interrogated.

## **Non-Leading**

Avoid questions that suggest a certain answer or make assumptions about the child's experiences.

## **Trauma-Informed**

Be mindful of the child's emotional state and avoid triggering or re-traumatizing them with your questions.

## **Reassuring**

Remind the child that they are in control of the conversation and can choose what to share or not share.

# Providing a Safe and Supportive Environment



## Comfortable Setting

Ensure the space is welcoming, with soft seating and minimal distractions.



## Privacy and Confidentiality

Maintain strict confidentiality and create a secure, private setting for the conversation.



## Ample Time

Allow ample time for the child to feel at ease and share their experiences without rushing.



## Emotional Support

Provide a caring, non-judgmental atmosphere where the child feels heard and validated.

# Collaborating with Professionals and Caregivers

1

## Multidisciplinary Team

Work closely with social workers, counselors, and other professionals to ensure a holistic approach to supporting the child.

2

## Caregiver Involvement

Engage the child's caregivers, such as parents or foster parents, to understand the child's needs and provide a coordinated support system.

3

## Information Sharing

Communicate openly and share relevant information (with the child's consent) to ensure the best possible care and outcomes.



# Empowering Children Through Communication

Validating Feelings

Acknowledging the child's emotions and making them feel heard and understood.

Encouraging Resilience

Highlighting the child's strengths and helping them recognize their own ability to heal and grow.

Fostering Autonomy

Giving the child a sense of control and choice in the communication process, when appropriate.

Connecting to Resources

Providing information about support services and community resources to help the child access the care and assistance they need.

# Effective Communication with Children

Engage children through active listening, empathetic responses, and tailored approaches. Foster meaningful connections and encourage open dialogue for a positive learning environment.



# Importance of Active Listening

## **Builds Trust**

When children feel heard and understood, they are more likely to open up and trust the person they are communicating with.

## **Enhances Understanding**

Active listening allows adults to better comprehend a child's thoughts, feelings, and needs, leading to more meaningful and effective communication.

## **Validates Emotions**

By actively listening, adults can validate a child's emotions and help them feel seen and respected, fostering a stronger connection.

## **Improves Relationships**

Active listening demonstrates care and respect, which can deepen the relationship between the adult and the child.

# Developing Empathetic Responses

## ● Recognize Emotions

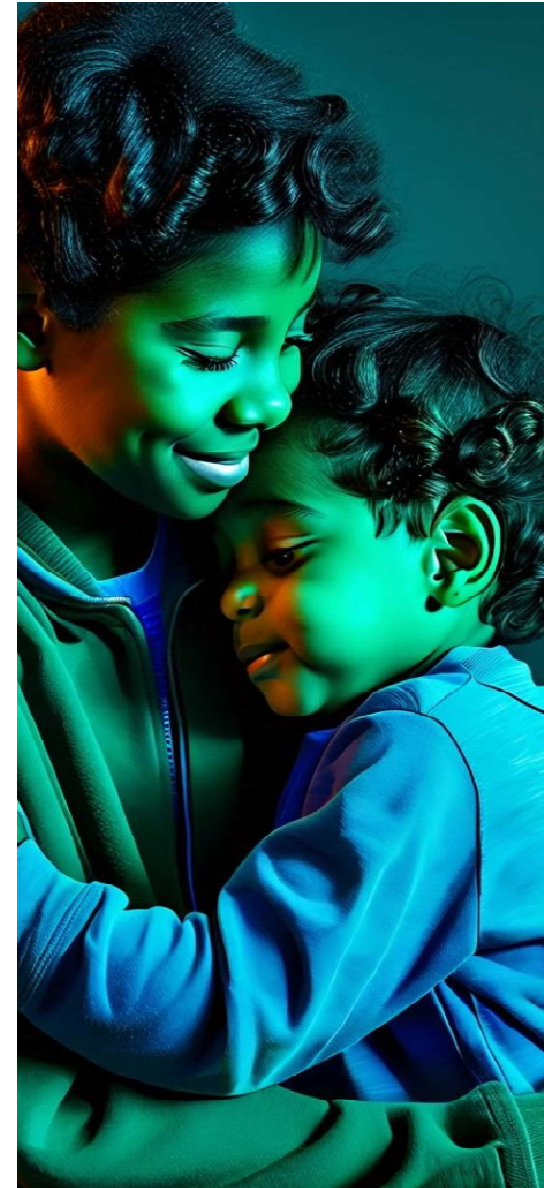
Attune to the child's facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice to understand their emotional state.

## ● Respond Compassionately

Use a gentle, soothing tone and provide comfort through your words and presence.

## ● Validate Feelings

Reflect back what you observe, showing you recognize and empathize with their experience.





# Body Language and Nonverbal Communication



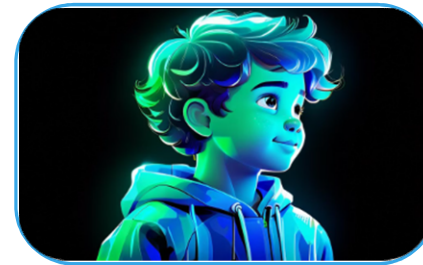
## Eye Contact

Making direct eye contact shows you are actively listening and interested in what the child is saying.



## Open Body Language

Using open, inviting body language like uncrossed arms and a relaxed posture puts children at ease.



## Mirroring

Subtly mirroring a child's body language and tone helps them feel understood and builds rapport.



## Asking Open-Ended Questions

### Encourage Expression

Open-ended questions invite children to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences more freely. This allows you to better understand their perspectives.

### Avoid Yes/No Responses

Questions that start with "what," "how," or "why" prompt more detailed responses, unlike questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

### Foster Engagement

Open-ended questions engage children and demonstrate your interest in their ideas. This can lead to more meaningful conversations and build stronger connections.

# Validating Children's Emotions



## Emotional Validation

Validate children's feelings by acknowledging and reflecting their emotions. This helps them feel understood and builds trust.



## Active Listening

Practice active listening by maintaining eye contact, paraphrasing, and asking open-ended questions to better understand their perspective.



## Empathetic Response

Respond with empathy, expressing care and concern. Avoid dismissing or minimizing their emotions, which can invalidate their experience.



# Avoiding Judgment and Criticism

## Pause and Reflect

Before responding, take a moment to pause and reflect. Consider the child's perspective and avoid making assumptions.

## Focus on the Positive

Highlight the child's strengths and positive behaviors, rather than dwelling on their mistakes or shortcomings.

## Use Empathetic Language

Choose your words carefully, using a gentle, supportive tone that conveys understanding and compassion.

# Adapting Communication Styles

Effective communication with children requires adapting your style to meet their needs.

Use simple language, speak slowly, and maintain eye contact.

Observe their body language and adjust your tone and pacing accordingly.

Tailor your approach to each child's age, personality, and communication preferences.



# Fostering Positive Interactions



## Encouraging Collaborative Play

Facilitate opportunities for children to engage in cooperative activities that promote teamwork, communication, and positive social interactions.



## Shared Reading and Storytelling

Create inviting spaces for children to gather and enjoy stories together, fostering imagination, empathy, and deeper connections.



## Cultivating Peer Support

Encourage children to assist and encourage one another, building a sense of community and nurturing their social-emotional skills.

# Conclusion and Key Takeaways

As we conclude our exploration of effective communication techniques for engaging with children, let's reflect on the key insights we've gained. Mastering active listening, developing empathetic responses, and leveraging nonverbal cues can transform how we connect with young minds.



**THANK YOU**

**END**



D.A. Oluwole, PhD.

**This material and other viable materials for self-improvement are available at <https://www.positivepsychology.org.ng/>**