In This Session I Will…

• Talk about common issues that arise in the counselling room at the Low Vision Clinic
• What techniques and strategies I find most helpful
• Links to research
What Happens Behind That Door?
Today I want to invite you in...
Before We Enter…
Confidentiality Please…
The First Thing You’ll Experience in the Counselling Room is...
The Therapeutic Alliance

The core conditions of a therapeutic counselling relationship. (Clark, 2010)
Top 5 Concerns Shared In The Counselling Room

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#1. Feelings of Loss

- Perceived loss of Independence
- Loss of driver’s license
- Sometimes job loss/career change
- Changes…I can’t do things like I used to
- Death of a loved one
#2. The What If’s???

- What if my vision gets worse?
- What if I go totally blind?
- What if I have to move out of my home?
#3. Shhh!!! It’s a secret!

I don’t want to use assistive devices because:

- I don’t want people to know I have vision loss
- I don’t want to look different
- I don’t want to be a target (white cane)
- I can’t even admit to myself that I might just need to use them!
#4. Relationships Are Complex

- My spouse/children/parents don’t understand my vision loss
- I can’t seem to meet anyone who is ok dating someone with vision loss
- Abuse issues in families and couples
- Sexual concerns
#5. I’m Lonely…

- I am no longer working at my old job and I miss the interaction & my colleagues
- With vision loss & other health challenges I just don’t have the energy I used to have
- I moved & I don’t recognize faces so it’s hard to get to know new people
- I’m depressed so I isolate
Counselling Strategies
Validate client perceptions and experience of vision loss
Acknowledge losses and normalize feelings as clients adjust to changes in vision, life style and expectations
Assess for depression and/or anxiety that could be affecting a client’s mood & expectations
Use cognitive behavioural strategies
Dr. Don Meichenbaum, a founder of CBT says...

• We ask clients “Let me get this…what happened? How did that make you feel? And what did you do with those feelings? How did that work? What was the cost?

• What have you tried before? What worked or didn’t? If we worked together what would success look like? Can you envision anything that could get in our way?

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Use Mindfulness Strategies

just breathe
Use Solution Focused Therapy
Include family members in counselling interventions when appropriate.
Use Emotionally Focussed Therapy
Consider alternate paths to meet goals
Help clients access additional community resources to help improve a client's overall quality of life
Take An Interdisciplinary Approach

Low Vision clinician (optometrist), Low Vision Therapist, High Technology Assessment Specialist, Low Vision Rehabilitation Counsellor, High Technology Assessment Specialists

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Research Says…

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Research on Loss and Grieving…

“Participants described their adaptation to vision loss as being on a continuum with ups and downs, rather than a linear experience that culminated with adaptation.”

Research on Loss and Grieving

“Patients expressed great loss caused by vision disease, emphasizing feelings of sadness & vulnerability…these feelings also appeared to be associated with challenges during the adaptation process, such as how to use assistive devices, especially the white cane.”

Evidence for CBT

“How people think about chronic illness and how they evaluate their ability to cope with it are modifiable. Illness cognitions and problem-focused CSE provide concrete starting points for designing targeted interventions to modify or neutralize unhelpful cognitions.”

Higher Depression, Anxiety But Also Social Support

“We conclude that vision loss has a negative impact on ADLs, symptoms of depression and feelings of anxiety in older people. However, social support was highest in the low-vision sample. Professionals working at vision rehabilitation services may improve their quality of care as they take such information into account in their intervention work.”

Why Counselling is Part of the Interdisciplinary Team…

“Maladaptive coping, particularly avoidant coping, has been found to reduce vision-related quality of life over time, while adaptive coping, specifically instrumental coping, social support, and use of assistive aids predicts better adjustment to vision impairment.”
Thanks for Visiting!
To Contact Me

Melinda Szilva, MTS, RP
Low Vision Rehabilitation Counsellor
Tel: 519-888-4567 ext. 36763
mmszilva@uwaterloo.ca

Centre for Sight Enhancement
School of Optometry & Vision Science
University of Waterloo
200 University Avenue West, Waterloo, OTN N2L 3G1
Fax: 519-746-2337
References