

Nutrition Learning Basket

Promoting Person Centered Approach, and Focusing Oriented Nutrition Counseling

This five session learning opportunity will introduce a person centered counseling approach; relevant to nutrition counseling. Each session will incorporate participatory facilitation methods to promote collaborative capacity that shifts passive involvement to active participation. The training is designed as a cumulative learning experience, running October 31st to November 5th. All ninety-minute sessions will begin at 12:00PM PST. Each session will be recorded, and available for viewing prior to the next session in case circumstances prevent participating in one of the five weeks. Advance materials will be provided prior to each session to enhance learning, augment presented information and foster participation. This opportunity aims to support registered dietitian nutritionist, who are considered an essential component of comprehensive health care, and who contribute to improved outcomes, quality of life and lower health-care costs.

Learning Objectives Overall:

- Develop foundational understanding of the person centered approach, by concentrating on nutrition counseling applications of the Focusing process.
- Explore through experiences and exercises, beginning to integrate the basic attitudes of unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathy.
- Experience, practice, and reflect on the differences between listening to understand versus listening to support feeling heard.
- Discuss similarities and differences between others nutrition counseling methods and a Focusing oriented process centered on a partnership attitude, pausing to understand on-going situations, and creating space for new possibilities that carry forward.

Session Dates & Objectives:

#1 (10/31)

Person centered origins, core conditions, Carl Rogers and Eugene Gendlin.

- Introduce and orient the online learning environment.
- Discuss person centered communication to supports positive change.
- Practice listening, feeling heard, and voicing what matters with group exercise.

#2 (11/07)

Focusing theory, philosophy and relevance to nutrition counseling.

- Introduce core concepts, importance of a partnership attitude and setting intensions.
- Discuss the person centered Focusing process used in a wide variety of therapeutic settings, peer-to-peer partnerships, individually, and in community wellness work.
- Initiate learning the process with experiential group exercise.

#3 (11/14)

Focusing approach to problem solving, learning, and applications to nutrition counseling.

- Introduce differences in the Focusing process from other person centered approaches, and highlight critically essential commonalities.
- Discuss specific process steps and importance of specific attitude.
- Continue learning the process with experiential group exercise.

#4 (11/21)

Focusing listening style to facilitate feeling heard, and relevance to nutrition counseling.

- Introduce a Focusing oriented process for nutrition counseling that promotes inner-awareness, and ability to make nutritional changes that have forward movement.
- Discuss, change-steps that come from learning to listen one's own felt sense.
- Advance learning the process with case studies and participatory group activity.

#5 (11/25)

Person centered approach, and Focusing oriented process summary.

- Recall and reflect upon learning and future applications to nutrition counseling.
- Describe what went well and what could be changed in a future learning opportunity.
- Promote learning synopsis with participatory group activity.

Background Information:

At the core of this learning opportunity is the relevance of Carl Rogers (1902-1987) person centered approach, to nutrition counseling. In describing the foundation of his approach, Rogers said, "It is that the individual has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behavior-and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided" (1986). His approach is considered humanistic, and also called phenomenological. This approach differs from cognitive behavioural therapy (Ellis 1913 and Beck 1921) that views behaviors as learned responses. Counseling concentrates on helping clients recognize negative thought patterns or perceptions, then teaching them how to think differently in order to positively affect feeling and behaviors. In contrast, the person centered approach emphasizes the individuals' inherent drive towards realizing and expressing their own capabilities and creativity. The counselor-client relationship is central, and meeting the client where they are with empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard. Instead of concentrating on specific behaviors, viewing oneself as whole is underscored. In counseling, attention centers on encouraging self-awareness and mindfulness to bring about positive change, actions, and behaviors. This learning opportunity will introduce one recognized person centered approach, Dr. Eugene Gendlin's "Focusing" process. It is his contribution to the person centered approach that provides a more experiential and humanly expressive process. The Focusing process is now used internationally in a wide variety of therapeutic settings, peer-to-peer partnerships, and community wellness work. In his book "Focusing", the six step process for personal development is presented. He describes the moment-to-moment process, provides specific ways to bring about change, concentrates on the ongoing client relationship, and ways in which responses stimulate and enables the client's capacity for direct experiencing and "focusing", in his book "Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy: A Manual of the Experiential Method". He considers crucial to the person centered approach the ability to concurrently remain in contact with the client, and oneself, and moreover that this has not been taken in by other methods, nor understood by most counselors, which therefore leaves the client alone most often (1983). While a student and later colleague of Carl Rogers in the 1950s and 60s at the University of Chicago, it was Gendlin's seminal research that demonstrated the clients' ability to realize lasting positive change depended on their innate ability to access a nonverbal bodily feel of their issues, which he coined a "felt sense". He and his colleagues found that the success of counseling was not determined by technique, orientation or the kind of problem being discussed, but it was an inner process within the clients. Gendlin has been described as the best theoretician of the person centered approach, who revised the "don't-rules into do-rules", and broadened Rogers meaning of the concept person centered approach (Germain Lietaer, 1983).