Practice Exercises/Chapter 8: Skills for Exploring Thoughts and Narratives

Pretend that a client makes the following statements to you. Read each of these statements, and then write both a restatement and a probe for thoughts. Compare your responses with the possible helper responses provided at the end of this practice exercise. The helper responses that are given are not the “right” or “best,” but they are provided to give you some idea of the different possibilities of ways to respond.

Statements

1. Client: “I have a lot of work to do for my classes, but I don’t know when I’m going to do it because I have to work 20 hours a week at my job. When I come home from classes and working, I just don’t have any energy to do schoolwork. I feel like I need a chance to just ‘veg’ out and watch TV.”
   Helper restatement: __________________________________________________________
                        __________________________________________________________
   Helper open question about thoughts: __________________________________________
                        __________________________________________________________

2. Client: “After I graduate, I am going to take a cross-country trip. At first I was just going to go by myself, but then my roommates heard about it, and both of them said they wanted to go. I rearranged my schedule to accommodate them, and now one of them says he isn’t going.”
   Helper restatement: __________________________________________________________
                        __________________________________________________________

3. Client: “My mother is going through a divorce. She talks to me every night about it, which seems a little odd since I’m only 9 years old. She says she has no one else to talk to. The guy she married after my father left her is a real jerk. He beat her up and is an alcoholic.”

Helper restatement: __________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Helper open question about thoughts: ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Possible Helper Responses

1. “You don’t have much energy right now for your schoolwork.”
   “When you get home from work, you don’t really want to do schoolwork.”
   “Tell me more about that.”
   “What thoughts go through your head when you ‘veg’ out?”

2. “You’ve made a lot of adjustments in your plans for your friends.”
   “You just learned that your friend will not accompany you on your trip.”
   “Tell me more about your relationship with this friend.”
   “What are you hoping for from this trip?”

3. “You’re thinking a lot about your mother lately.”
   “Lots of responsibility.”
   “What is it like for you to hear your mother talk about this divorce?”
   “Give me an example of what your mother said last night?”