INFORMATION
ACTION STAGE

Suggested assignment: Before completing the exercises, read chapter 18 (“Overview of the Action Stage”) and chapter 19 (“Skills Used in the Action Stage”) in Helping Skills.

Definition: Giving information refers to supplying data, opinions, facts, resources or answers to questions; it also includes giving feedback about the client’s work on generating, implementing, and maintaining changes in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Intentions: To give information, to promote change

Helpful hints:
• When you are offering unsolicited information, think about what is motivating you to provide this information. Be sure that you are not trying to avoid or limit other aspects of the helping process.
• When the client asks for information, make sure the client wants and needs the information. Have they already explored the situation thoroughly? Could they be avoiding exploration of an issue or expressing overdependency on you as a helper?
• When providing information is appropriate, don’t overwhelm the client with too much information at one time.
• Provide information in a collaborative manner; avoid presenting yourself as an “authority” with all of the answers. Build on what the client already knows, and reinforce the client as a resourceful person.

Difficulties helpers may experience:
• Providing information before they and the client have explored the situation thoroughly and gained insight into the problem
• Feeling that they should always know the answers to every question clients ask
• Becoming judgmental when giving feedback about the client
• Going beyond giving information to telling the client what to do

For class discussion: Describe what it might be like for you to tell clients that you do not know the answers to their questions. How might not knowing an answer influence a client’s perception of you?

Practice Exercises for Information

1. CLIENT: What you do seems really cool. My mom always tells me that I should become a counselor, but I'm not sure if I really want to listen to peoples' problems all the time. I'm not sure if it's OK to ask you this, but do you like what you do? How did you go about becoming a helper, and did it take a really long time in school? I'm not really into school and if it means going to school forever, forget it!

Helper response:

2. CLIENT: My best friend told me that some guy at a party raped her last night. I don't know what to say to her. She has been lying in bed crying all day. I want to call her mom or tell the resident assistant, but she just cries harder when I suggest these options. She doesn't want to go to the police and she thinks that no one will believe her because she was the one who asked this guy out. I feel so bad for her and so helpless about what to do.

Helper response:

3. CLIENT: I am so sick of asking my parents for money. My mom lost her job a few months ago and they are really short on cash. I feel like such a jerk whenever I call and ask them to send money. I guess I don't mind so much if I am using it for books, but when I spend money on clothes or pizzas or beers, I feel so
guilty. I've been thinking that I should get a part-time job, but I'm really not sure how to look for a job.  
How would I go about applying for something?

Helper response:

4. CLIENT: There is a really cute guy in one of my classes. We have been talking after class each week, and he often walks with me to my next class. I would never think that this guy would even consider going out with me. I was so right about this because yesterday, while we were walking, he asked me if he could look at my take home exam answers. I totally did not know what to say. I mean, he's really cute, but I don't want to cheat. I mumbled something and went to class, but I'm afraid that he is going to ask me again. I don't want to seem unhelpful, but I am really scared that we would get caught. I just don't know how I could tell him no. He seems so nice, and yet I don't want to be used.

Helper response: