

medicine. It is now most commonly used to treat people struggling with pain, stress, depression, and anxiety. Like mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, in MBSR people learn to be actively focus on what is happening in the present moment. During an eight-week program, people gain mindfulness skills through meditation as well as movement activities such as yoga. As participants learn to be more present, they are able to pause before reacting to external stimuli. This allows people to change their behavior and to notice negative thoughts and patterns that contribute to stress, depression, and anxiety.

The theories we have shared in this section represent only a small sampling of the theories that social workers draw from. The social work curriculum requires students to take courses in human behavior and the social environment that explore theories of individual human behavior, family systems theory, and theories of learning and communication in greater detail.

## Generalist Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families **LO4**

Individuals and families are most often the focus of social work intervention. Generalist social workers provide a wide variety of generalist services and interventions. Social workers help make arrangements for home health care, serve as an advocate for a child in the foster care system, assist a victim of crime, or provide crisis intervention on a suicide hotline. Social workers are the direct providers of services to individuals and families in behavioral health agencies, hospitals, schools, domestic violence shelters, child welfare agencies, homeless shelters, day treatment centers for seniors, group homes for people with developmental disabilities, drug abuse treatment centers, hospices, wellness and prevention centers, and countless other social service settings.

### Case Management

One of the direct practice roles that a generalist social worker frequently fills when working with individuals is that of case manager. Case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's needs through communication and available resources to promote quality cost-effective outcomes" (CMSA, 2010, p. 6).

Rather than just providing a specific service, such as alcohol counseling, a case manager coordinates a program of services and refers clients to appropriate places where they can receive these services. The case manager also follows up with the client, ensuring both continuity and coordination of the services that are provided. Over time, a case manager can develop a good rapport with and a deeper knowledge of the client and his or her concerns. With this understanding, the case manager can serve as an advocate for the client while providing linkages with other service providers.

### CASE EXAMPLE

One of the key provisions of case management is to view the client from the person-in-environment and strengths perspective. The case manager is uniquely positioned to follow the individual's needs in the context of his or her home, work, and community environments and help to facilitate linkages across those systems. Case management strategies include outreach and engagement, assessment of strengths and needs, planning for service or treatment, linkages to resources and referrals, service delivery monitoring, and **evaluation** of outcomes (NASW, 2013). The components of case management fit social work well, making it a significant part of our practice.

Here, we use a case example with an individual to help demonstrate the dynamic and interactive processes used in case management: engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation.

Michael is a 38-year-old, gay, white male. Although HIV positive for years, he had been fairly healthy. However, over the past year, he has developed more health problems and is now HIV symptomatic. Michael had been employed as a retail store manager, but frequent absences this past year made him take a position in the store as an hourly clerk, and his employer no longer paid for his health insurance coverage. At first Michael used his savings to pay the portion of the premiums previously paid by his employer, but his savings were exhausted. His health is deteriorating. When he was hospitalized with pneumonia, one of the nurses recommended support services. In the past, Michael preferred to rely on himself, his friends, and his family, but he realizes that he needs additional help. Thus, Michael has come to the HIV/AIDS Social Service Center.



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**Engagement and Assessment** Michael's social worker, Gwen, uses **empathy** (see Box 6.3) and other interpersonal skills in the initial **engagement** process to establish a relationship with Michael. Gwen begins by listening to Michael's story and asking questions to elicit information about Michael's concerns and challenges. Once Gwen has put Michael at ease and determines that he is currently not in a state of crisis, she reassures him and tells him that she will be able to assist him.

Gwen will draw from the theoretical framework we discussed earlier to inform her assessment and intervention plan. She begins the **assessment** process by identifying Michael's medical, psychosocial, behavioral, and spiritual needs. The most important assessment task that Gwen must complete to be successful is recognizing Michael's needs and concerns and communicating her cognitive understanding of them to him (Tsang, Bogo, & Lee, 2010). Gwen happens to be African American. The most critical factor in effectively addressing and overcoming cross-cultural differences between a worker and a client in the engagement process is the worker's ability to achieve emotional attunement with the client or demonstrate empathy (Tsang et al., 2010).



#### EP 6b