

Chapter 8: Intake and Engagement

- What is your understanding of how your family and life experiences contribute to who you are today?
 - What strengths do you possess? Are others aware of these strengths?
 - How do you protect your feelings and your self-esteem?
 - What are some of your anxieties and fears?
 - What would others who know you well say are your strengths? Weaknesses?
2. Awareness of and ability to deal with our own personality patterns and with the "stuff" that tends to cloud our perceptions
- What are some of the patterns or ways that you conduct your life that work well for you?
 - What are the barriers that get in your way?
 - What does your "inner voice" say to you? (Negative or positive self-talk?)
 - How do you view "power" within a relationship?
 - What is your view on stereotypic roles within the family?
 - What is your view on childrearing and discipline?
 - How do you handle conflict? Change?
 - What relational issues (between you and close family and friends) seem to come up time and time again?
3. Openness and freedom to perceive with clarity and relate with honesty regardless of differences and similarities
- What are your religious and political beliefs and values?
 - How are these beliefs and values reflected in your daily life?
 - How do you convey these beliefs and values?
 - What personal needs do you have that might interfere with the helping relationship?
 - What personal values guide your decisions?
 - How do you conduct yourself when disagreeing about religion or politics and values?
4. Ability to perceive and evaluate values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior of the group which the client considers himself or herself a part
- How open are you to people who are different from you?
 - In what ways do you feel (or have felt) vulnerable, disempowered, or oppressed?
 - How do you feel about interacting with people from other cultures?
 - What group(s) of people do you think are most like you?
 - Are there any groups of people you feel as though you could not interact with?
 - If you dig deep, what are your stereotypes and prejudices?
5. Ability to differ and stand alone
- How do you handle differences of opinion?
 - What issues in your life do you feel most passionately about?

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Box 8.1 Now You Try It . . . Self-Awareness

Using the five categories presented above, answer the questions presented in each grouping.

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| 1. Awareness of self and personal needs, weaknesses, and strengths. | 3. Openness and freedom to perceive with clarity and relate with honesty regardless of differences and similarities. |
| 2. Awareness of and ability to deal with your own personality patterns and with the "stuff" that tends to cloud your perceptions. | 4. Ability to perceive and evaluate values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior of the group of which the client considers himself or herself a part. |
| | 5. Ability to differ and stand alone. |

- If you had the opportunity to stand up for one social issue or social value, what would that be?
- What is your greatest fear about going out on a limb for a cause?
- What would you hope to gain or lose by advocating for an unpopular position?
- How do you receive feedback from others, and what do you do with it once you get it?
- What are your views on power and authority?

Using the preceding questions, answer those posed to you in Box 8.1F.

Cornier et al. (2011) address the importance of social workers knowing their own needs (i.e., need for control, need for approval, etc.), motivations for helping others, awareness of personal feelings, strengths, limitations, triggers, and coping skills. This kind of self-awareness is important for several reasons. First, objectivity in dealing with a client is a crucial component in avoiding blind spots or perceptions, behaviors, or ways of being that the social worker is unaware of but that may detract from building a professional relationship with clients. For example, if the social worker has unresolved issues around being abused as a child, the worker will see every client's life experience through this lens. Consequently, the social worker can project onto the client his or her own issues, perceptions, and experiences rather than dealing with the client's concerns. The relationship becomes focused on the social worker's needs instead of the client's needs. The social worker may be unaware of these perceptions; indeed, this can contribute to the client not feeling understood and the social worker remaining "stuck." Unresolved personal issues can also lead a social worker to feel angry and defensive because he or she feels attacked. In this situation, the focus is on self rather than the needs of the client.

When a social worker inadvertently uses pitfalls, such as advice giving or being judgmental, the client can become disengaged from the helping process. The frustration a client may experience when the social worker is not listening or is generally not attending to the client's needs can cause extreme frustration and disillusionment. Repairing the "damage" of unintentionally using a pitfall is discussed earlier in this text.

A client named Curtis is presented in Box 8.1. Using the Rogerian approach to practice, follow how the social worker joins with him, through positive regard and empathy. It is the nature of their relationship that brings about constructive change in Curtis's life.