

Supportive Counseling Fact Sheet for Clinicians

Some patients benefit from supportive counseling with the clinician and/or knowledgeable support staff. Counseling is provided in brief sessions using these techniques:

- Active listening
- Advice-giving
- Adding perspective
- Confirmation of appropriateness of patient concerns

Focus on Solutions

Empathize with the patient, while moving the dialogue towards the construction of clear, simple, specific behavioral change plans:

- Work
- Home
- Finances
- Health

Focus on Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can be divided into problem-focused, which are directed at situations that can be changed, and emotion-focused, which are directed at situations that cannot be changed. After helping a patient recognize whether a situation can be changed or not, some helpful coping strategies that may be suggested to patients are listed below.

Problem-Focused

Gather facts

Use problem-solving techniques

Notice negative thoughts and replace them

Emotion-Focused

Participate in pleasurable activities

Participate in activities that boost

Participate in activities that relax

Process for Developing/Monitoring Coping Strategies

1. Identify two to three coping strategies that may be helpful for the patient and clarify if the strategies will be consistent with their personality and lifestyle.
2. Create a list of these coping strategies, giving one to the patient and the other to keep in the medical record.
3. Have the patient keep track of both the problems and coping strategies that occur over the next week/couple of weeks. Have patient bring a summary to the next office visit.
4. Assess coping strategies the patient used, reinforcing strategies that are effective and making suggestions when improvements are needed.