**Basic Counseling Skills**

The counselor must develop a solid repertoire of basic counseling skills in order to function effectively. These skills form the basic communication pattern between counselor and client and facilitate both the relationship (maintenance) and content (task) functions of the interview. Most students come to the advanced practicum with these skills at a reasonable entry-to moderate-level. The following skills are necessary, but not sufficient, for good professional counseling:

A. Attending Behavior

1. Verbal
   a. Stays on the topic
   b. Focuses on the client

2. Non-verbal
   a. Maintains attentive posture
   b. Makes frequent eye contact
   c. Maintains silence when appropriate

B. Eliciting and Tracking Skills

1. Asks open-ended questions

2. Makes reflective responses (responds to feeling)

3. Makes restatement responses (responds to content)

4. Uses paraphrasing (clarifies client statement)

C. Structuring and Summarizing

1. Begins and ends session on time

2. Describes counseling process and counselor qualifications (i.e., trainee status)

3. Uses summarization

4. Obtains appropriate client consent for treatment, taping, and release of information
Expectations about counseling skill development show a progression from the first semester to the second semester as follows:

**Fall Semester:**

- Counselor demonstrates the ability to use solid basic counseling skills in interview, such as interpretation, confrontation, self-disclosure, and in-interview behavior processing (immediacy).

- Beyond implementing foundational skills, the counselor will be effective in increasing his or her own awareness of client issues and incorporating this information into a theoretical framework (i.e., beliefs about how change occurs) consistent with his or her own style. The counselor “tries on” theoretical perspectives and practices consistent application with ongoing clients.

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**Spring Semester:**

- Counselor demonstrates adequate comfort with conceptualization of client issues consistent with his or her own development and experience.

- The counselor maintains use of theory in counseling, practices use of advanced skills, and explores professional identity issues such as theoretical stance and theory of change.

- Counselor also explores techniques with a wider range of client issues and demonstrates willingness and ability to select a variety of interventions for appropriate client issues and make appropriate internal and external referrals.