

## Appendix G: Practical 2A

### Role-play 2: Part A: Initial Session with Claire Bowman

#### Participant's Briefing Instructions

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##### Claire Bowman, Client:

You are Claire Bowman, a 33-year-old woman seeing a counsellor for the first time. You have been happily married to your husband, Justin (aged 35), for six years and have a 4-year-old son together, Ethan.

You are currently a full-time stay-at-home mum, having quit your job as an Executive Assistant four years ago to stay at home and care for Ethan. You thoroughly enjoyed your old career and had a good relationship with your boss, whom you have kept in contact with over the years.

You were sad to leave but felt it was the right decision at the time to ensure that Ethan was adequately cared for. Ethan is now old enough to be eligible for enrolment in Kindergarten (i.e., Pre-School) three days a week. You and your husband have been discussing the idea, and he thinks Kindergarten would be very good for Ethan, as it would allow him to make friends and socialise with other children his age.

At the same time, your boss has offered you to return to your old job part-time, with flexible hours that would allow you to work around Ethan's Kindergarten schedule. You feel unsure about what to do. While you miss your old job and would like to accept the offer, you also feel guilty about being separated from Ethan three days a week.

Your husband has been nagging you to accept the offer, stating that he thinks that you would enjoy being back in the workforce and that it would relieve some of the financial pressure of living on one income.

Although you love caring for Ethan, you have been feeling increasingly down about being stuck at home and would like to regain some of your independence by working again. You also agree that the family could live more comfortably if you returned to your well-paid job and that it might be good for Ethan to socialise with other children at Kindergarten.

However, you are worried that it makes you a selfish person and a 'bad' mother to want to return to work. You know that you need to decide whether to return to work part-time and enrol Ethan in Kindergarten or continue being a full-time stay-at-home mum, particularly as your old boss has asked for an answer by the end of the week and would like you to start immediately so you would need to enrol Ethan in Kindergarten as soon as possible.

You have decided to see a counsellor to help make that decision and work through some of your feelings of stress and guilt surrounding the thought of returning to work.

##### During the role-play:

- At the beginning of the role-play, the student will greet and welcome you – you should respond naturally to any small talk they make.
- If the student asks you any questions about your previous experience with counselling, you should reply that you have never been to counselling before and are unsure.

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- When the student provides you with information about what counselling will involve and the details of the counselling service, you should ask any questions you might have (e.g., if you are unclear about something, ask the student to clarify it). When the student discusses confidentiality, ask them directly what would happen if their husband called and asked what they said during counselling.
- If the student asks permission to take notes during the session, you should grant it.
- When the student asks you about the circumstances surrounding you coming for counselling, you should reply that you feel guilty and unsure about whether or not you should enrol your son in Kindergarten and return to work part-time. Use the information provided in the "background character information" to help flesh out the conversation. Respond in a way that comes to you naturally based on the questions asked while using the background information. Note: Don't simply read this information out – instead, respond in a manner that makes sense to the conversation you are having with the student. Remember, your most urgent concern is deciding whether or not to enrol your son in Kindergarten and recommence work – you are interested in working through this in the session today. Your goal is to make a decision that you are happy with and stop constantly thinking and rethinking the matter so that you can move forward and not feel so 'stuck' at this decision-making point in your life.
- When talking to the student about your concerns, you should indicate that you love caring for your son but that you have been feeling increasingly down and frustrated being stuck at home all the time. You should suggest that, while you are very tempted to take the job offer and think that Kindergarten could be good for Ethan, you are worried that leaving him at Kindergarten 3 days a week makes you selfish and a 'bad mother'.
- When the student asks you to consider the costs and benefits of returning to work/enrolling Ethan in Kindergarten, you should discuss what comes naturally to you based on the Background Information. For example, the possible costs of returning to work/enrolling Ethan in Kindergarten might be that you will feel guilty and miss Ethan, that Ethan might feel distressed initially, and that you will not get to spend as much time with him. The possible benefits of returning to work/enrolling Ethan in Kindergarten might be that your family will have more money, you will regain some independence and self-esteem through work, you will be working in a job you love, you will get your husband to stop nagging you, and that Ethan will make friends and learn vital social skills. Similarly, the 32 possible costs of not enrolling Ethan in Kindergarten/remaining a full-time stay-at-home mum might be that you feel increasingly depressed and frustrated, and your husband remains frustrated. He continues to nag you, and your family remains financially strained. Your son does not make any friends or learn social skills. The possible benefits of not enrolling Ethan in Kindergarten/remaining a stay-at-home mum might be that you get to continue spending time with Ethan, and he won't feel upset or abandoned. You won't feel guilty or like a bad mother. Based on each potential course of action, you should discuss any advantages/disadvantages that come naturally to you.
- After exploring your options, if the student asks you which course of action is most appropriate for you, you should indicate that you have decided to return to work and enrol Ethan in Kindergarten, as this will offer the best outcomes for you and your family. If the student asks which steps you will take to help facilitate this decision, you should indicate that you will fill out the enrolment forms tonight and will call your old boss tomorrow morning to accept the job offer.
- Towards the end of the session, if the student asks you about other issues you would like to discuss during your future counselling sessions together, you should indicate that you would like help with better managing your guilt and worry about parenting Ethan and that you would like to feel more confident in your parenting overall.

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- Respond to any other questions in a manner that seems natural based on the counselling conversation that you have had with the student.