

Appendix J: Practical 4A

Role-play 1: Part A: Middle-phase Session with Claire Bowman

Participant's Briefing Instructions

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Instructions for Role-play Volunteer (Claire Bowman)

These are the instructions for the person helping the student with their role-play by acting in the role of the client, Claire Bowman. You must use the following information to assist you in your interactions with the student during the role-play. The role-play will include the student conducting a third counselling session with you. While you are encouraged to use your creativity and judgement during the role-play, follow the instructions below.

Please note that the gender of the volunteer doesn't need to match the gender of the character they will be playing as long as the volunteer can accurately portray the character as described in the following instructions.

Background Information

You are Claire Bowman, a 33-year-old woman who started seeing a counsellor for the first time a few weeks ago. You have been married to your husband, Justin (aged 35), for six years and have a four-year-old son, Ethan. You have attended two sessions of counselling so far. You initially sought counselling to help you decide whether or not to return to work part-time and enrol Ethan on Kindergarten (you have been a full-time stay-at-home Mum since Ethan was born, but you were offered a flexible role as an Executive Assistant for your old boss).

During your first counselling session, you decided to return to work, and since then, you have made some significant life changes – you have restarted your employment, and Ethan now goes to Kindergarten three days a week. Since that session, you have met with the counsellor again to explore the issues you have been having concerning these changes and balancing work and parenting responsibilities.

At the end of the last session (not role-played), you raised two new issues that have recently emerged within her relationship with her husband, Justin and your son Ethan. Ethan has been diagnosed with Autism and has started throwing tantrums in the evening.

Justin has tried to be supportive and help you manage Ethan's tantrums, but instead of expressing gratitude, you find yourself "snapping" at Justin and rejecting his help. This often starts an argument. This behaviour was very unusual for you and is causing you great distress. You have been happily married for six years and never used to lose her temper or argue with Justin. You told the counsellor that you wanted help to change your behaviour to communicate calmly and effectively with Justin. Because you raised this issue at the end of your last session, you agreed with the counsellor that you would explore the issue more thoroughly during this coming session.

Over the last week, you have thought more about your behaviour. You believe it is stress-related. Although you enjoy your job, you have found it challenging to return to the workforce and feel tired and stressed when you return home. You have also noticed that Ethan's evening tantrums have worsened since you returned to work, adding to your stress.

Participant's Briefing Instructions

Until a few weeks ago, you were Ethan's primary carer, spending every day with him as a full-time stay-at-home mum. During this time, you were the primary person responsible for making parenting decisions. However, now that you are working part-time again, your husband has been trying to be more supportive in helping you parent Ethan.

While you appreciate and want to encourage your husband's participation in parenting Ethan, you tend to get upset and angry whenever your husband offers to step in and help you manage Ethan's tantrums. When Ethan starts screaming and throwing things, you feel overwhelmed and stressed. When your husband steps in to offer his help and suggestions, you feel criticized and irrationally angry and will lose your temper, snapping at him and telling him to "back off!"

This often instigates an argument in which you will yell and cry and accuse your husband of thinking you are a "bad mother who can't even control her son". Your husband is adamant that this is not the case and wants to be supportive, as he can see how tired and stressed you are. Most of these arguments result in your husband walking away and leaving you to handle the tantrum yourself.

These tantrums typically occur in the early evening during Ethan's mealtime or when you try to put him to bed. You find that you tend to snap at your husband and lose your temper on days when you have been at work and are thus feeling tired and stressed.

These arguments are bothering you significantly. You want to learn how to control your stress and stop lashing out at your husband so that you can communicate with him more effectively. You want to focus on this issue during your counselling session today.

During the Role-play:

Below are some specific instructions about things you must say/do during the role-play.

- At the beginning of the role-play, the student will greet you and welcome you back to counselling – you should respond naturally to any small talk they make.
- If the student asks you about any changes in your 'snapping' behaviour towards Justin since you last spoke, you should say that this problem has continued and even worsened. You should mention that, despite your best efforts, you still get stressed out and snap at your husband whenever he tries to help you with Ethan's tantrums. You should say that you feel awful about it but don't know how to change your behaviour.
- If the student asks you if you would like to focus on this 'snapping' and fighting during the session, you should confirm that you would like to focus on how you can go about stopping this behaviour.
- You should use the information provided in the "background character information" to help flesh out the conversation if the student asks you any additional questions about what has occurred since last week. Respond in a way that comes to you naturally based on the student's questions/probes 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
- Suppose the student introduces the idea of conducting an in-depth exploration of the behaviour, emotions, and sensations underlying the issue to identify specific changes that can be made to change the behaviour you don't like or propose using a behavioural change program to address your issue. In that case, you should agree to the approach.
- When the student provides suggestions to support Ethan's diagnosis, thank her and say you will try them and let them know if you need further support.

Participant's Briefing Instructions

- The student will then ask a range of questions about the behaviour causing you concern. You should respond naturally based on the background information and the student's questions. For example:
 - Suppose the student asks about your feelings or emotions relating to the behaviour (i.e., snapping at your husband/losing your temper). In that case, you may reply that you feel upset or angry at the time and stressed and overwhelmed with trying to manage Ethan's tantrum.
 - If the student asks about the physical sensations you experience during the behaviour, you might say that your heart starts racing and your palms feel sweaty.
 - If the student asks about overt actions involved in the behaviour, you might say that you cry and yell at your husband to "back off!" and "Just let me deal with this!"
 - If the student asks you questions about thoughts and beliefs associated with the behaviour, you could say that you have ideas such as "He's criticising me", "can't he see I'm trying my best?" and "He thinks I can't control my son."
 - Suppose the student asks you about the specific situation or context in which the behaviour occurs. In that case, you should indicate that it occurs on the days you have been at work and when Ethan is having a tantrum, usually in the evenings when you are feeding or putting him to bed.
 - The student will ask you more specific questions about the antecedents (i.e., triggers) of the behaviour, the behaviour itself, and the consequences of the behaviour. Based on the Background Information, you should respond in a way that comes naturally to you. For example:
 - Suppose the student asks you questions about the antecedents/triggers of the problem. In that case, you should respond by saying that you tend to lash out at your husband when Ethan's tantrums particularly stress you out (usually when you have been to work and feel tired).
 - Suppose the student asks you questions about the behaviour. In that case, you may respond by saying that it happens approximately three times per week (on evenings when you have been at work during the day), that it only lasts for a few minutes, and that it involves you yelling at your husband and crying.
 - Suppose the student asks you questions about the consequences of the behaviour. In that case, you could respond by saying that your husband gets frustrated and will walk away to leave you to deal with the tantrum yourself, which makes you feel guilty and upset, but also feels good, as it allows you to vent your frustrations and stress onto him. You might also indicate that you are aware that this short-term relief in venting your frustrations to your husband is probably reinforcing your behaviour and making you more likely to repeat it. You may also indicate an awareness that the long-term consequences of continuing to snap at your husband might be that he will eventually stop trying to help you parent Ethan or that it may cause damage to your relationship.
 - The student will ask questions to help her formulate a specific goal for behavioural change. You should respond by indicating that you would like to manage your feelings of stress and overwhelmedness when Ethan is having a tantrum so that you will not lose your temper and lash out at your husband when he tries to help you.
 - The student may suggest a suitable program of behavioural change to address your problem. When the student means using response control techniques such as relaxation exercises or walking away from the situation to calm down when you feel overwhelmed, you should listen to the student's explanation of these techniques and agree to use the one(s) you feel would be most effective.
 - The student will then ask questions to help you decide how to record and monitor your progress towards your behavioural change goal. If the student does not suggest it, you should indicate that

Participant's Briefing Instructions

- you think it would be helpful to record a daily diary of your behaviour, recording incidences in which you lose your temper, as well as incidences in which you were able to avoid losing your temper. If the student makes this suggestion, you should agree to it.
- The student will then ask for your thoughts and feedback about the behavioural change program you developed together. You should respond to these questions by giving positive, optimistic feedback reflecting your belief that it will help solve your problem and your commitment to following through.