

Appendix C: Practical 10A

Role-play 1: Third session with Christine Baker

Participant's Briefing Instructions

Instructions for Role-play Volunteer (Christine Baker)

These are the instructions for the person helping the student with the role-play by acting in the role of the client. You must use the following information to assist you in your interactions with the student during the role-play. The role-play will consist of you acting in the role of a client in crisis and the student conducting a self-harm/suicide risk assessment with you. While you are encouraged to use your creativity and judgement during the role-play, you must ensure that you also follow all the instructions provided.

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.

Please note: This role-play focuses on issues of self-harm and suicide. Please consider your suitability for participating in this role-play before continuing. If you require support, a helpline is available from Lifeline (13 11 14), and support can be provided by counsellors and other mental health professionals.

Background Character Information

You are Christine Baker, a 38-year-old woman who has been seeing a counsellor (the student) for the last few weeks. You sought out counselling after you discovered that your partner of six years, Michael, had been having an affair with one of his ex-girlfriends. You were absolutely devastated by the discovery, but Michael told you that the affair did not mean anything, and he begged you to stay with him. Michael told you that he was fully committed to you and that if you forgave him, he would be ready to settle down and have a baby with you.

Michael had previously continually put off talk of children, saying that he wasn't ready. You have always wanted children, and you are growing increasingly concerned about your 'biological clock', so you were quite happy to hear that he was now ready to have a baby with you. You decided to stay with Michael, but you realised that you needed assistance in processing your feelings of hurt and betrayal, so you decided to seek out counselling.

You have been working on these issues with the counsellor for the past couple of weeks. However, two nights ago, your world was turned upside down when you got home from

Participant's Briefing Instructions

work and saw that there was a suitcase by the door and Michael was sitting on the couch waiting for you to get home. Michael told you that it 'just wasn't working' for him anymore and that he wants to end things. He told you that he will be staying with Stephanie and will contact you in a couple of weeks to discuss more permanent arrangements for splitting your assets. You felt numb. You cried, but you didn't say anything – you couldn't talk – you just let him leave. After he left, you sat on the couch and cried all night.

You haven't been to work since (you have called in sick), and you haven't spoken to anyone about the break-up. You have largely spent your time crying and drinking wine. You can't believe that Michael left you like that. You can't believe that he ended things so suddenly. You are now scared that you will be alone forever and that you will never have a baby. You are scared that no one will ever love you again.

You remember your scheduled counselling session and decide that your counsellor would be a good person to talk to, so you leave your house for the first time since Michael left to attend your session.

During the role-play:

Some specific instructions about things you must say/do during the role-play:

- At the beginning of the role-play, you should act in an agitated manner (i.e., you may choose to wring your hands, run your hands through your hair, or fidget).
- When the student starts the counselling conversation and asks how you are/what has been happening for you since the last session, you should respond by saying, "My life is over," and looking at the floor. When the student questions you further, you should use the information provided in the "background character information" to respond to the student's questions and prompts. 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.
- If the student asks you whether you have had any thoughts of harming yourself/suicide, you should indicate that it is something that you have thought about "a little". Use the following information to respond to any further questions that the student has:
 - You don't have these thoughts often – you have only thought about it twice since Michael left, and these thoughts have been broad thoughts of the 'pain going away' rather than of specific thoughts of harming yourself
 - You have never engaged in any self-harming behaviours or attempted suicide before.

Participant's Briefing Instructions

- You do not have any specific plans for hurting yourself.
- You would never actually hurt yourself because you know how much it would hurt your family if you did, and you know that one day you won't feel as lost and hurt as you do right now, even though you are finding that difficult to believe at the moment.

Note: Don't simply read out this information – instead, use this information to respond to any questions that the student asks you.

- If the student asks you about supports that you have, you should indicate that you are very close with your mother, your sister, and your best friend and that you know that you should talk to them because it will help but that you just can't seem to bring yourself to do it. If the student further questions why, you should respond that you are scared that if you tell anyone that Michael has left, they will judge you or blame you and not love you anymore either. If the student questions these beliefs, you should acknowledge that they are unrealistic and that you know your family and friends will support you, but you don't know how to go about telling them.
- If the student asks you to think about ways in which you might be able to talk about the break-up with your mother, sister, and best friend, you should brainstorm options to get the support you need from them. Discuss anything that comes to mind. For example, you may suggest that you could invite them all around and tell them all at once. Alternatively, you might suggest inviting one of them first and talking one-on-one to get their support before telling others. Listen to any suggestions that the student has and decide on whichever option sounds best to you. Work with the student to develop a clear picture of the steps that you will take to gain the emotional support you need from your family and friends.
- You should respond to any further questions or prompts in a manner that seems natural to you based upon the "background character information" and the discussion that you have with the student during the role-play.

Thank you for assisting the student with the role-play!