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*a resource for:*  
**Ministers and Mentors**

## Influencing Skills<sup>1</sup>



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

**Counseling and Family Services**

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# Influencing Skills<sup>1</sup>

Influencing skills are ways to be supportive and help another person change. Influencing skills are built upon the foundation of effective listening and communication skills. The following is a list of influencing techniques that range from non-directive to very directive. The necessary amount of “directness” will vary by person and situation. In this paper, the term ‘counselor’ is used broadly to include any minister, mentor, or friend who is trying to help another person (i.e., the ‘counselee’).

## 1. Restating, paraphrasing, summarizing

- The counselor takes what has been said and repeats or restates it using different words.
- This technique helps the counselee feel understood and may help them see the problem in a new light.

## 2. Giving feedback

- Sometimes counselees benefit from information on how you or others view them.
- Feedback is best internalized by counselees when the information is specific and nonjudgmental. For example, kindly saying, “I’ve noticed that you tend to ask others for ideas and then reject the ideas that they give you” is going to be internalized better than, “You never listen to anyone.”
- Be careful not to overwhelm the counselee by giving him or her too much information at once.
- Allow the counselee to respond to what you have shared.

## 3. Making self-disclosures

- At times, it can be helpful for counselors to express their own thoughts or feelings about a situation or to disclose an example of their own experience that relates to the counselee’s situation.
- A note of caution: Keep the focus of the discussion on helping the counselee. Avoid turning the focus onto yourself.
- Some helpful phrases that can be “lead-ins” for self-disclosure include, “From my perspective...,” “It seems to me that...” and “When that type of situation has occurred in my life (e.g., grieving a loss) I felt \_\_\_\_\_”
- Self-disclosures are particularly helpful in situations in which a counselee feels like he or she is the only person who has experienced something and feels alone.
- Limit self-disclosures with counselees who have poor emotional boundaries, persons of the opposite gender that you find attractive, and those who may potentially use the information against you in some way.

## 4. Making suggestions, giving advice, or providing information

- Do not give advice until you have thoroughly listened to the counselee’s issues and resist the urge to tell the individual what to do too quickly. *Proverbs 18:13* says, “*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*”
- Be respectful and gentle in giving advice, guidance, information, or suggestions. A demanding or condescending tone will tend to put the counselee on the defensive.
- Giving information in the form of suggestions is often useful. Some examples include, “How would you feel about talking directly to your boss about the way you are being treated?” “Have you ever considered \_\_\_\_\_?” or “I wonder what would happen if you would \_\_\_\_\_”

# Influencing Skills<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Making interpretations

- Counselees often benefit from hearing a different and unique way of looking at their issues that they may not have recognized on their own.
- Be tentative as you present your interpretations about what is going on; often, there are a number of different interpretations of a situation that could be valid.
- For example, “John, I noticed that most of the problems you have mentioned revolve around issues of authority. I wonder if these problems all show a tendency in you to resist any person who is in authority?”

## 6. Stating logical consequences

- Sometimes one of the best things you can do is to state what is likely to happen if the counselee continues on his or her present course of action.
- However, try to avoid statements like, “You had better cut this out or else...”
- You are more likely to achieve your goals if you state the logical consequence of an action that may come in the way of something you know the person wants. For example, “If you continue to show up late for work, you will likely be suspended and possibly even lose your job. I know you don’t want that because of your goal to \_\_\_\_\_. What could you do differently to make sure this works out the best for you?”
- Ideally, stating the logical consequences can lead to two-way discussions about how the counselee might change.

## 7. Giving directives and making confrontations

- Sometimes you will need to be more direct and pointed in your counseling.
- For example, this may involve confronting a counselee who has been lying about sinful behavior.
- Directives may also have consequences attached to them. For example, “John, your alcoholism has already cost you your job. If you refuse to go to treatment now, your family has decided to ask you to move out of the house. We love you, John, and because of that we want you to go into treatment. However, we aren’t going to stand by and watch your family suffer due to your poor choices.”

1. This handout was adapted directly from pages 45-50 of How to Be a People Helper by Gary Collins (Tyndale House). This book teaches practical, basic counseling skills and is written to a lay audience. ACCFS recommends that this book be read by all elders and ministers.