



Peer Consultation & Debriefing

Peer consultation is one of the most important resources for maintaining and increasing competence. Within the limits of confidentiality, discussing a specific concern with more experienced colleagues about how one should provide a service can help clarify what action to take and will help resolve personal conflict. Peer consultation sharpens one's professional skills by challenging one's ability to explain the concern, providing a different viewpoint, the benefit of other experiences and, in some cases, an opportunity to correct treatment errors before a client is harmed.

D. Guthman, Ed.D. www.mncddeaf.org

Providers of mental health services are encouraged and often required to obtain peer guidance, support and feedback through consultation with their colleagues. Interpreters, who also work on the front lines of mental healthcare, sometimes find they are unsure of how to incorporate this useful approach in their own practice. The case consultation format that follows provides a broad, structured framework within which interpreters may discuss challenging situations with trusted colleagues. This approach to collegial consultation highlights the individual's challenges and unique solutions, while not revealing sensitive details of assignments, or compromising the individual's sense of professional integrity, or the confidence of our consumers.

The task to be accomplished is to expand the interpreter's understanding of personal and professional dynamics at play in a given situation and to open avenues of reflection. This consultation format has at its foundation, the "A-A-A" approach to managing personal difficulty while interpreting. The steps are outlined below:

- **Acknowledge** – Notice the difficulty or stress while it is still manageable.
- **Allow** – Don't judge or try to change your feeling or experience. Just notice and let it be.
- **Another value** – Consider that the situation may be troubling because it is challenging a personal value. Because reflection on meaningful personal values helps reduce stress and increase cognitive and emotional resilience, the consultee will be asked to consider another value that can be honored in the moment of difficulty.

Instructions:

Consultee: Prepare to present your case by considering questions on the following pages. You might wish to make notes, but during the consultation, please allow new information to surface, as well.

Consultants: Your task is to offer support and consultation to your colleague in a confidential and ethical manner. Please choose an individual to read each question, one by one. Allow the consultee to respond without interruption. Feedback should only be given when requested. The consultant is advised not to skip any questions even if the consultee appears to have addressed it in a previous answer.

1. What approaches to providing feedback best support and encourage you? How you would like to be listened to and supported?
2. What situational details are important to know?
 - Setting: What was the setting for this assignment? (Example: In-patient or outpatient? Other?)
 - Type of assignment: Was this: 1-1, small group, large group, professionally facilitated or peer-led, etc.?
 - Was this an on-going or first-time appointment? Other?
 - Were you the on-going interpreter, first interpreter on new assignment, substitute interpreter for on-going assignment, etc.?
3. How would you describe the nature of *your* conflict or challenge in this situation?
4. What thoughts did you have while the situation was occurring?
5. What emotions and physical sensations did you experience while the situation was occurring? What did you notice happening in your body at the time?
6. In what ways did this conflict affect your interpreting during the situation?

7. In what ways did this conflict influence you after the assignment was over?

8. When you reflect on the situation, what metaphor, or image, comes into your mind? Images and metaphors are generated by the right hemisphere of our brains. Metaphor can lead to a unique kind of insight.

9. What personal and professional values of yours may have been challenged in this situation? Examples of values include trust, honesty, excellence, respect, freedom, clarity, etc.

10. What other values arise when reflecting on this situation from other perspectives?

11. Given what you know about this situation and its affect on you, what is at least one concrete question that you want to ask your colleagues?

12. What are you taking away from this discussion? What concerns, if any, does it bring up? How do you want it to be helpful to you?

12. Consultant(s): Please take a moment thank, acknowledge and appreciate this individual. Think about who they are and what it took them to process this situation with you. Notice what is important to them and tell them.