

Strengths

One of my strengths is being an active listener. I believe active listening is important. Being an active listener helps to validate the speaker's feelings. It shows that I am interested in what is being said. It shows respect to the speaker. I was taught to acknowledge someone when they are speaking by giving eye contact, cues by nodding or giving verbal acknowledgement. I use mindfulness when I'm in conversation with others. I try not to be distracted but give my undivided attention to the speaker. Because I give my attention, it helps the speaker to feel comfortable and at ease when talking to me. I also make sure I'm getting clarity by restating what the speaker has said. Listening to others concerns and issues fuels me. I have a heart and passion for listening to others.

I like the scripture 2 Corinthians 6:11, 13. It speaks about speaking freely to one another. I remember from a young age, I've always been transparent and allowed myself to be vulnerable in expressing my thoughts and feelings. For me expressing myself is therapeutic. When I don't express my feelings, I tend to allow my feelings to build up and be manifested in negative ways such as frustration, attitude and anger. For these reasons I try to express whatever I'm feeling in a positive way (most times). I believe this is one of the strengths of being a good counselor; being able to connect with your clients by being open and transparent when appropriate.

I believe one of the most important lessons of communications that I have learned and continue to work towards is being ok with how I feel. For me, taking responsibility for my own feelings allows me to be my authentic self. I no longer feel bad for feeling bad, mad, sad, happy or excited. I have learned that it's ok not to be ok and to be ok. I am honest with myself first and then to others about my feelings. I believe self-awareness is the first step and is important to me.

Weaknesses

Major on affirmations is a weakness due to me not being use to receiving praise and affirmation in my life. It was not a part of my childhood. My parents did not give praise and affirmation. It was an unspoken idea that they were proud of me and loved me. Since it was not a part of my vocabulary, it is sometimes difficult to give praise and affirmation to others. It makes me feel uncomfortable. I know that it is important to give praise, affirmation and validation. It helps to foster better and healthy communication.

Avoid assuming what the other person will say is also a weakness. I need work in this area because I tend to judge others due to my past negative experiences. I'm not sure if something can be a weakness and a strength but there are times when I assume that people will not hear the message that I'm trying to convey. I feel that when I express my feelings, others will misinterpret or misunderstand resulting in a negative response. Once I experience a negative response, such as blame or shame, it is difficult to express my feelings or needs with that person. I tend to shut down to avoid the disappointment.

Balancing what to say and how to say with when to say has been a struggle. My mother use to say, it's not what you say but it's how you say it. I have been accused of coming off aggressive in my tone. I do feel that I need work on my tone however, I disagree that I'm aggressive. I feel it is frustration, annoyance or my passion to get my point across. God has been working with me to know when to say things at the right moment. I think of the scripture in 1Corinthians 10:23 that says in the English Standard Version "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. I'm trying to keep the B clause of this scripture in the forefront of my communication with others.