

The Resistant Client: Case Studies and Questions for Reflection

DANIEL

Daniel is a nursing student in his second year. He has experienced a number of family problems, including his parents separating and disagreements with siblings. He feels angry and confused, and struggles to talk about his feelings. He sees himself as a private person and would rather manage his problems on his own. His personal problems have affected his studies – he has been unable to concentrate and has fallen behind with his work. In a meeting with his Head of Department he is told to attend counselling, otherwise he might not be able to continue on his course. He attends counselling, but really does not want to be there.

NOEL

Noel has been attending counselling for several weeks and has been finding it helpful. In his initial session he told the counsellor there was a 'big issue' he needed to explore to be able to 'move forward'. His counsellor has noted that, despite several opportunities for Noel to talk about the 'big issue', he has steered the discussion away from it. The counsellor challenges Noel and highlights what might be his pattern of avoidance. Noel says that he is not sure how to talk about it and changes the subject once again.

DOREEN

Doreen has been attending counselling following the death of her partner. She has been coming regularly to sessions for several months and says that while she is not finding out anything new anymore and feels generally stronger, she is not ready to finish. Her counsellor feels that it is time for Doreen to move on, but when this is discussed, she is very unwilling to do so.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- 1 How might Daniel be feeling about having been 'sent' to counselling?
- 2 How might these feelings affect the likelihood of counselling being successful, and the relationship with the counsellor?
- 3 How might you work with Noel's reluctance to talk about the 'big issue'?
- 4 What would be the relative pros and cons of focusing Noel on the 'big issue' to help him not avoid it any further?
- 5 Why might Doreen be unwilling to end counselling, even though she is feeling stronger?
- 6 In this situation, what is the therapeutic 'task'?