

Appendix E: Practical 1A

Role-play 1: Part A: Initial Session with Michelle Smith

Participant's Briefing Instructions

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Instructions for Role-play Volunteer (Michelle Smith)

You must use the following information to assist you in your interactions with the student during the role-play. The role-play will include the student conducting an initial counselling session with you. While you are encouraged to use your creativity and judgement during the role-play, following the instructions below.

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.

Background Character Information

You are Michelle Smith, a 45-year-old woman who is seeing a counsellor for the first time. You are a very busy and "stressed out" woman. You work full-time, study part-time, and are a full-time wife and mother. You are married to Jake (aged 46), and together you have two children, Trent (aged 17) and Rebecca (aged 15).

You feel you struggle to stay on top of your various family, work, and study commitments and do not get enough sleep. Jake works long hours as an architect and is not around to help much with the day-to-day running of the household or taking the kids to their various extracurricular activities. Because you work full-time, you often need to arrange for other parents to help shuttle the kids around, and you find this process quite stressful.

You are working full-time as an assistant accountant for a large manufacturing firm. You are also studying to complete your CPA (Certified Practising Accountant) qualification to improve your career prospects. Once you gain your qualification, you will be eligible for promotions within your current work and be a much more desirable candidate for any other external positions you may want to apply for.

You enjoyed your job and used to be deeply passionate about getting your CPA, but lately, you have felt exhausted, overworked, and lacking motivation. You struggled to complete your last study unit; the following team will start in two weeks. This is your second previous unit, and while you want to finish your CPA, you don't know if you have the time or motivation anymore. You are considering quitting.

This is your most pressing concern. You know you need to decide whether or not to continue within the next fortnight, which is weighing heavily on your mind.

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You have decided to see a counsellor to help make that decision and to get your life “back on track”.

During the role-play:

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

- At the beginning of the role-play, the student will greet and welcome you – you should respond naturally to any small talk they make.
- If the student asks you any questions about your previous experience with counselling, you should reply that you have never been to counselling before and are unsure what to expect.
- When the student provides you with information about what counselling will involve and the details of the counselling service, you should ask any questions you might have (e.g., if you are unclear about something, ask the student to clarify it. However, if the student has explained everything so that you are comfortable and understand it, you do not need to ask any questions).
- If the student asks permission to take notes during the session, you should grant it.
- When the student asks about the circumstances surrounding your coming for counselling, you should reply that you are stressed out. Use the information provided in the “background character information” to help flesh out the conversation. 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. Remember, your most urgent need is to decide whether or not to quit your CPA – you are interested in working through this in today's session.
- When talking to the student about whether or not to quit your CPA, you should outline that you want to continue your studies but need more time to study. If the student asks how to do this, you should suggest various options when prompted. Options that you could suggest include asking your boss for reduced hours at work, asking Jake to help out more around the house, paying for a cleaner/nanny to take care of some of your household duties, etc. (You may come up with your suggestions).
- If the student asks you to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each, you should discuss what comes naturally to you based on the options you have discussed. For example, if you discussed asking for reduced work hours, a possible advantage is that it would give you more time to study. Still, some disadvantages may include reduced income and that your boss may think you aren't serious about the job anymore, damaging your future promotion prospects. If you discussed getting a cleaner / nanny, a possible advantage is that it would give you more time while not impacting your career. Still, some disadvantages may be the financial cost and that you may feel distanced from your children because you may feel like you are not 'taking care of them as a mother

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should'. Discuss any advantages/disadvantages that come naturally to you based upon each option.

- You should respond to any further questions from the student based on your evaluations during this discussion. For example, suppose the student asks about the likely outcomes of various options or which option you prefer. In that case, you should consider your discussed advantages and disadvantages and respond accordingly.
- Towards the end of the session, if the student asks you about other issues you would like to discuss during your future counselling sessions together, you should indicate that you would like help with better managing your stress/time management and that you want to explore how you can better communicate your needs to Jake. You should also mention that you want to learn how to help your family spend more 'stress-free' time together during the time you have left before the kids go off to university.
- Respond to any other questions in a manner that seems natural based on the counselling conversation that you have had with the student.