

Items at the top of the list may be more amenable to change

forming and maintaining empathic relationships

•The home visitors were effective at forming and maintaining empathic relationships. Forming and maintaining relationships is easier for some people than others. The variables that facilitate the formation of the therapeutic relationships between home visitor and clients include: (a) "good enough empathy" (need not be extraordinarily empathic but at least averagely empathic), (b) positive regard (showing respect to the families and recognizing that the parent is the expert on their child), and (c) congruence. Although these 3 variables can be improved upon, Klass (1996) claims that they can only be learned through a long process of reflective practice.

self-awareness

•The home visitors possessed the self-awareness necessary for reflective practice. Self-awareness also assists in the forming and maintaining of better client relationships. The three variables for improving therapeutic relationships (good enough empathy, positive regard, and congruence) can be improved upon through a long process of reflective practice but this becomes difficult if the home visitor is unaware of their impact on the client relationship. The home visitors were not necessarily introspective but possessed the self-awareness to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses in order to compensate for the aspects of personality that came less easily to them. Although maturity often assists the development of self-awareness, is not necessary.

life-long learning

•The home visitors possessed an attitude of life long learning allowing them to reflect on their practice in order to continually improve and expertly perform their work. The knowledge required for home visiting is not that complicated but requires patience and a positive attitude during the long training process. The necessary skills can be taught within reflective practice as long as the visitor has a positive attitude towards their own learning and improvement.

belief in change

•The home visitors strongly believed in the ability of their clients to change. This was accomplished by focusing on client strengths. Home visitors were also able to focus on their own strengths allowing them to project confidence in themselves and their ability to assist their clients in changing.

belief in the effect of the environment on individuals

•In order for a home visitor to assist parents in therapeutic change, they need an understanding of systems theory and the impact that the environment can or has had on those clients. Empowering clients is one way to illustrate this underlying belief. Home visitors do not enter a client's home blaming clients for their negative situations. "Given our individualistic culture, it is not given that the average home visitor will take an ecological approach" (Klass, p. 96)

Personal characteristics of outstanding home visitors
Jaylene Krieg Schaefer, 2010