

# Information vs. Advice

A counselor is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "a person who counsels or advises"; however, it is important for us to realize that we counsel and advise by providing clients with information so that we empower the client to make their own decisions. Many counselors find themselves giving clients "advice" and then feeling guilty or disappointed if the client does not follow her advice. The same holds true even if the client is open to receiving advice since the outcome is rarely positive. If we give a client "advice," then:

1. Clients follow the "advice" and they are successful, they will continue to check with their counselor for everything and become dependent on the counselor rather than learning to trust themselves.

*Counselor will receive constant calls from the client*

2. Client follows the "advice" and fails to achieve their goal, you lose credibility as a counselor and so does the group you are associated with.

*Client will stop contacting the counselor and/or group out of embarrassment or guilt at failing.*

3. Client rejects the "advice" and is successful, you will lose credibility as a counselor and so does the group you are connected with.

*Counselor may not be worthy of any calls because the "advice" did not work and the client found their own solution to her problem*

4. Client rejects the "advice" and fails, they will see themselves as a failure and have no confidence in you or themselves.

**Advice usually starts with:** (takes away the client's right to choose)

"You should....."  
"You ought to....."  
"Why don't you.....?"  
"You should have...."  
"Why didn't you.....?"  
"you shouldn't have...."  
"I do it this way...."  
"Did you...?"

Moreover, when we as counselor provide a client with information it will allow a client to take charge of their situation, make their own decisions, and become confident in their own abilities. These individuals will also value groups like ours as a resource to whom they can turn. It will also help us as counselors from feeling guilty or disappointed by placing the burden of choice on the information the client is receiving rather than on our shoulders.

To give information without sounding dogmatic or opinionated, you need to eliminate judgmental words and phrases such as: “should,” “ought,” “if I were you,” and “What I’d do.”

**To give information:**

(you try to respect the client and express confidence in the client’s ability to decide what is best for them)

“I can think of several things you can try. One thing that might work for you is....”

*(This is helpful when you think the client is likely to reject your suggestion. If they say “no” to your suggestion, you can go with “another way to handle that might be....”)*

“Someone I know had that situation, and they found....”

*(you can be that “someone” if your own situation may overshadow the client’s situation)*

“What do you think would happen if you.....?”

“I wonder if you realize....”

*(This is useful for sharing)*

“Have you thought about.....”

“Many people have found success with.....”

“Let me give you some information and you can decide....”

“I’m not sure what would work for you and your family, but here are some things that have worked for others.”