

Initial Client Assessment

The Initial Client Assessment is used to gather essential information about a participant at the beginning of horticultural therapy or counselling. This assessment establishes a therapeutic alliance, identifies presenting concerns, and supports the development of a personalised plan for participation in the garden.

1. Establishing a Therapeutic Alliance

- Build rapport and trust with the client.
- Ensure the client feels safe, heard, and respected.
- Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of both the client and counsellor.

2. Gathering Key Information

- Presenting Concerns: _____
- Personal History: _____
- Goals: _____
- Strengths: _____

3. Assessing for Urgency and Risk

- Identify any immediate risks to the client's safety or well-being (e.g., suicidal or violent thoughts).
- Assess the urgency of the situation and determine whether immediate interventions are required.

4. Explaining the Therapy Process and Obtaining Consent

- Provide clear information about the process, including confidentiality and possible outcomes.
- Obtain informed consent before proceeding with therapy.

5. Developing an Initial Case Formulation

- Create a preliminary understanding of the client's issues, including contributing factors and underlying patterns.

6. Setting Therapy Goals

- Collaboratively establish SMART goals for the therapy process.
- Ensure goals align with the client's values and aspirations.

7. Scheduling the Next Session and Providing Next Steps

- Schedule the next session and outline any preparatory steps or activities.
- Provide resources or information that may be helpful between sessions.

Additional Considerations

- Confidentiality: Outline boundaries and exceptions (e.g., danger to self or others).
- Client Autonomy: Respect the client's right to make their own choices.
- Flexibility: Adapt the assessment based on individual needs.

By carefully conducting the Initial Client Assessment, horticultural therapists can lay a strong foundation for a safe, respectful, and effective therapeutic relationship that supports well-being through engagement in the garden.