



Keywords: Response-based counselling; Hospice care; palliative care; Empathy; Unconditional acceptance; Authenticity; Patient-centered care; Emotional support; End-of-life care; Patient autonomy

Introduction

Response-based counselling in hospice and palliative care shifts the focus from finding solutions to fostering a supportive environment where patients and their loved ones can navigate and express their emotional journeys. Chronic illness and end-of-life challenges bring profound unknowns, and a counsellor is called to respond with empathy and respect for each patient's unique journey. Response-based counselling generally establishes a shared emotional ground, as empathy allows the counsellor, patient, and family members to connect on a level of mutual understanding, fostering a sense of equality in facing these difficult experiences together. By grounding in principles like empathy, unconditional acceptance, and authenticity, response-based counselling builds a foundation of trust and understanding, allowing patients and families to feel safe in their most vulnerable moments [1].

Background: Embodied Resilience

Traditional healthcare often centres on solutions—a treatment or intervention that promises relief. In hospice care, however, the focus shifts from problem-solving to guiding patients and families in understanding and accepting their situation, which may not always align with expectations or desires. This journey reflects a deeper truth: while we may aim for control, there are aspects of life, like illness or death that remain beyond our grasp. In response-based counselling, creating a non-judgmental space is essential, allowing patients to express a range of emotions from anger and frustration to acceptance without fear of being judged. For patients who have led highly dignified and independent lives, adjusting to new dependencies on others for personal care can feel deeply challenging. Many express a sense of loss in not being able to tend to their own needs without assistance. In these moments, the counsellor offers empathy and validation, recognising the emotional weight of this transition and honouring the autonomy and self-respect the patient has always valued. The counsellor's role is

recognise and affirm a patient's emotions, such as fear or sadness, helping them feel acknowledged and supported. Additionally, when patients encounter existential questions, the counsellor can guide conversations that encourage them to reflect on their beliefs and find comfort in their personal stories.

Acknowledging Multi-Layered Needs: Patients and families often face layered emotional experiences that go beyond immediate medical

that meets each person's unique requirements.

Emotional Dissonance and Behavioural Burden: Conflicting emotions are frequent in palliative care. Family members may feel both a desire to help and the sadness of impending loss. Similarly, caregivers may experience shifting bonds, where patients gravitate toward certain individuals for comfort. Response-based counselling normalizes these dynamics, allowing caregivers to focus on the patient's evolving needs without self-doubt or judgment. By providing a space for both patients and caregivers to explore these complex feelings without fear of critique, the counsellor helps them find resilience and purpose.

Flexibility and Adaptation: The fluid nature of end-of-life care requires adaptability. One day, a patient may need emotional reassurance, while on another, they may feel withdrawn or introspective.

This calls for the counsellor to respond to each new emotional moment with sensitivity. Just as a loved one might yearn for a mother's comforting presence, a counsellor's adaptable response helps meet the patient's evolving emotional needs, creating an environment of stability even in uncertain times.

Empathy and Patient Expertise: Patients are often best equipped to understand their own experiences. By deeply listening and empathizing, the counsellor respects the patient's inner wisdom and autonomy, especially as they confront difficult transitions and face questions about their own dignity and care choices. This support allows patients to explore their feelings on dependency, control, and independence in an environment that respects and values their self-understanding.

C O U N S E L L I N G ' R O L E I N P A L L I A T I V E C A R E

In response-based counselling, the counsellor serves as a steady advocate, providing the patient with a consistent, compassionate presence. This is particularly significant in palliative care, where the counsellor's role involves affirming each patient's dignity and worth. Here, advocacy isn't just about supporting patient rights; it is about

personal journey, guided by principles of empathy, unconditional