

Problem Management Plus (PM+) Competencies

1. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.

Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in other activities (e.g., answers mobile, completes paperwork) <input type="checkbox"/> Laughs at client <input type="checkbox"/> Uses inappropriate facial expressions <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate physical contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allows for silences <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains appropriate eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains open posture (body toward client) <input type="checkbox"/> Continuously uses supportive body language (head nod) and utterances (uh huh) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Varies body language during the session in relation to client's content and expressions 	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
Notes:			

2. VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.

Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Interrupts client <input type="checkbox"/> Asks many suggestive or leading closed-ended questions (e.g., 'You didn't really want to do that, right?') <input type="checkbox"/> Corrects client (e.g., 'What you really mean...') or uses accusatory statements (e.g., 'You shouldn't have said that to your husband') <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally and age-inappropriate language and terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses open ended questions <input type="checkbox"/> Summarising or paraphrasing statements <input type="checkbox"/> Allows client to complete statements before responding <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages client to continue explaining (e.g., 'Tell me more about...') <input type="checkbox"/> Clarifies statements in first person (e.g., 'I heard you say,' 'I understood...') <input type="checkbox"/> Matches rhythm to client's, allowing longer or shorter pauses based on client 	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
Notes:			

3. EXPLAIN AND PROMOTE CONFIDENTIALITY

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Forces client to disclose to helper or others <input type="checkbox"/> Describes confidentiality inaccurately (e.g., 'I will only tell your family') <input type="checkbox"/> Promises full confidentiality without exceptions <input type="checkbox"/> Minimises client's concerns about confidentiality (e.g., 'It doesn't matter if anyone else hears us')	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains concept of confidentiality <input type="checkbox"/> Lists exceptions for breaking confidentiality for self-harm or harm to others <input type="checkbox"/> Explains why it can be important to break confidentiality <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Details the referral process related to confidentiality and exceptions <input type="checkbox"/> Asks questions to assess client's understanding of confidentiality <input type="checkbox"/> Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of setting	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

4. RAPPORT BUILDING AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dominates session describing a personal experience <input type="checkbox"/> Minimises client's problems by describing how the helper has dealt with this <input type="checkbox"/> Asks unnecessary embarrassing personal questions <input type="checkbox"/> Discusses confidential information of other clients	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduces self and explains role <input type="checkbox"/> Makes casual, informal conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Asks for client's introduction (e.g., 'What client prefers to be called') <input type="checkbox"/> Shares general experience related to the client (e.g., about one's community/region) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Asks client's reflection on information that helper has shared <input type="checkbox"/> Checks in on client's comfort	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

5. EXPLORATION & NORMALISATION OF FEELINGS

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes statements that client's response is unusual or atypical for others in similar situations (e.g., 'People don't usually react this way') <input type="checkbox"/> Minimises or dismisses client's feelings or emotions <input type="checkbox"/> Forces client to describe emotions	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriately encourages client to share feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Explains that others may share similar symptoms, reactions, and concerns, given similar experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Asks client to reflect on the experience of sharing emotions <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Explores potential reasons for hesitance to share emotions <input type="checkbox"/> Comments thoughtfully on client's facial expression to encourage emotional expression <input type="checkbox"/> Validates emotional responses while reframing potential harmful emotional reactions	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
Notes:			

6. DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY, WARMTH & GENUINENESS

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Critical of client's concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Dismissive of client's concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Helper's emotional response appears inappropriate, fake or acting	<input type="checkbox"/> Is warm, friendly, and genuine throughout session <input type="checkbox"/> Continuously shows concern or care for the client (e.g., 'That sounds sad, can you tell me more about it?') <input type="checkbox"/> Asks question to identify what emotions the client was feeling (e.g., 'I wonder if you felt sad or angry when this happened') <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Asks client to reflect on empathic statements from helper (e.g., 'What did you think when I said you sounded sad?')	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
Notes:			

7. ASSESSMENT OF HARM & DEVELOPING RESPONSE PLAN

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.

Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not ask about self-harm <input type="checkbox"/> Lectures client with religious or legal reasons against self-harm (e.g., ‘This is sin, or this is against the law’) <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses disbelief (e.g., accuses client of discussing self-harm to get attention; states others would not actually harm the client or client’s children) <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages client not to tell anyone else about self-harm or harm to others	<input type="checkbox"/> Asks about self-harm or harm to others, or explores harm if raised by client <input type="checkbox"/> Asks about current intent, means, or prior attempts <input type="checkbox"/> Asks about risk and/or protective factors <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> If indicated, helps client to develop safety plan (e.g., coping strategies and help seeking)

Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)

<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
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8. INTRODUCING AND EXPLAINING SLOW BREATHING

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.

Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Forces client to practice breathing strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Criticises client on performance (‘That’s all wrong; you need to do it this way’) <input type="checkbox"/> Rushes through practice or uses a loud or harsh voice <input type="checkbox"/> Gives nonspecific unhelpful suggestions (e.g., ‘Try breathing better’)	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains benefit of slow breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates technique, including appropriate hand placement (e.g., on stomach) <input type="checkbox"/> Guides client through breathing practice, checking comfort level at each step <input type="checkbox"/> Paces breathing steps with counting for inhale, holding, and exhale <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Reassures client that this does not need to be done perfectly (e.g., ‘This takes practice, you will know what feels comfortable for you’) <input type="checkbox"/> Praises client for practicing and normalises any difficulties or challenges with the practice <input type="checkbox"/> Adapts strategy as needed to ensure client’s comfort <input type="checkbox"/> Uses metaphors that are understandable to the client (e.g., balloon metaphor)

Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)

<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <i>any unhelpful behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <i>no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <i>all basic skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <i>all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill</i>
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9. LISTING AND DISTINGUISHING SOLVABLE AND UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Blames client for problems (e.g., ‘You made this problem for yourself’) <input type="checkbox"/> Says all of client’s problems are too difficult or cannot be solved <input type="checkbox"/> Tells client’s problems what their problems are without client’s input <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrectly explains what are solvable and unsolvable problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Supports client to list their own problems <input type="checkbox"/> Uses a brainstorming process to identify additional problems <input type="checkbox"/> Explains the concept of solvable and unsolvable problems <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client identify which of their problems are solvable and unsolvable <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client reframe unsolvable problems into solvable problems <input type="checkbox"/> Discusses how addressing solvable problems can improve the client’s wellbeing	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

10. CHOOSING A PROBLEM

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chooses problem for the client <input type="checkbox"/> Allows client to choose unsolvable problem <input type="checkbox"/> Criticises client’s choice of the most important problem (e.g., ‘That problem isn’t important, focus on something else’) <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to identify a single problem to focus on	<input type="checkbox"/> Works with client to rank or prioritise which solvable problems could be addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Works with client to select a single specific problem that is solvable <input type="checkbox"/> Asks for client’s feedback on the selected problem (e.g., ‘Do you feel comfortable to start working on this problem’) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client explore how their life would be different if the selected problem were addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client identify alternative problem if barriers are encountered addressing the selected problem	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

11. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Starts defining the problem without having made selection of a single problem <input type="checkbox"/> Provides complex or confusing definition of problem that does not have clear actions to take <input type="checkbox"/> Tells client the problem is hopeless <input type="checkbox"/> Minimises the problem (e.g., ‘Solving this problem is easy. Let’s focus on something more challenging’)	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishes a specific brief definition of the problem <input type="checkbox"/> The definition includes description of things that can be changed and for which the client can take action <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> If a problem has many parts, break it down and deal with each part separately <input type="checkbox"/> Asks the client to imagine what their life would be like if the problem were solved	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

12. BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS

Check all behaviours that are demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Directly gives solutions to the client rather than have client generate own solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Makes judgements about brainstormed solutions (e.g., ‘That is good,’ or ‘that is bad’) <input type="checkbox"/> Asks suggestive or leading questions about solutions (e.g., ‘That isn’t really how you want to solve, is it?’)	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage the client to think of as many possible solutions as they can <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages client to think of solutions they can do by themselves as well as those with support from others <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses the friend strategy (e.g., ‘What would you tell a friend if they had this problem?’) <input type="checkbox"/> Prompts client to think of existing personal strengths, resources, and social support in order to brainstorm more solutions	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

13. CHOOSING HELPFUL STRATEGIES

Check all behaviours that are demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chooses a solution that is unrealistic or potentially harmful (e.g., ‘You should run away from home’) <input type="checkbox"/> Tells client what solution to choose <input type="checkbox"/> Is critical of client for chosen solution (e.g., ‘I would have chosen something else. What you chose may not work’)	<input type="checkbox"/> From the list of potential solutions, helps client choose solutions that are helpful to influence the problem <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different listed solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client consider what solutions are achievable within the client’s financial, personal, and social resources <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Explores how client has solved similar problems in the past and discuss what did or did not work <input type="checkbox"/> Explores alternative solutions that could be used if selected solution becomes too difficult	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

14. DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE SOLUTION

Check all behaviours that are demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tells client what steps to do achieve the solution <input type="checkbox"/> Discourages client by identifying barriers for carrying out the action plan (e.g., ‘Your wife will never let you do this’) <input type="checkbox"/> Criticises the client’s proposed action steps for the solution (e.g., ‘You aren’t thinking through all the steps’) <input type="checkbox"/> Dismisses concerns raised by the client about the action plan (e.g., ‘That’s easy to do. I’ve seen lots of people do it. Stop worrying’)	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps client create an action plan with specific steps <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client pick the day, time, and location for when to do steps in the action plan <input type="checkbox"/> Discusses what resources would be needed to carry out the actions (e.g., transportation, childcare, a supportive friend) <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains a positive and encouraging attitude throughout discussing the action plan <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Suggests ways the client can remind themselves to carry out the plan (e.g., notes, calendar, phone reminders, connecting it with other activities) <input type="checkbox"/> Discusses alternative strategies if barriers are encountered when carrying out the action plan <input type="checkbox"/> Helps client create plan for managing distress during the action plan (e.g., ‘You can use your breathing exercise before talking to your relative’) <input type="checkbox"/> Helps the client order the action steps if multiple interconnected actions are needed	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

15. GET GOING, KEEP DOING

Check all behaviours that are demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes activity schedule without client's input <input type="checkbox"/> Schedules activities that are vague, unachievable, or potentially harmful to improve mood <input type="checkbox"/> Blames client for lack of motivation, energy, or will power to implement Get Going, Keep Doing activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains the inactivity cycle <input type="checkbox"/> Helps the client brainstorm enjoyable activities that improve their mood <input type="checkbox"/> Helps the client to choose an enjoyable and is achievable within the next week <input type="checkbox"/> Helps the client schedule when (days and times) they will complete the activity or task in the next week <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Help the client to break down the activity or task into very small and manageable steps <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss reminders the client can use to help them complete their activity <input type="checkbox"/> Connects enjoyable activity with other events or commitments <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews potential barriers or challenges to doing the enjoyable activity	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

16. STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Check all behaviours that are demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Discourages client from contacting other people about their problem <input type="checkbox"/> Tells the client whom to contact rather than following client's preferences <input type="checkbox"/> Criticises client for difficulties in communicating with family, friends, or community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains meaning and benefits of strengthening social support <input type="checkbox"/> Supports client to identify multiple sources of social support <input type="checkbox"/> Works with client to select whom from the social support network would be helpful <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages client to contact social support persons <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Completes all Basic Helping Skills</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Schedules action plan with client including when and whom to reach out to for support <input type="checkbox"/> Discusses overcoming barriers and challenges when contacting persons for social support <input type="checkbox"/> Role plays with client how to ask selected person for support <input type="checkbox"/> Recommends skills and techniques to support relationship goals	
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 all basic skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
Notes:			

The following documents supported development of competency descriptions

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- World Health Organization: Self-Help Plus (SH+). Facilitator manual Geneva, World Health Organization, 2021. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240035119>
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- Singla DR, Kohrt BA, Murray LK, Anand A, Chorpita BF, Patel V. Supplementary Material: Psychological treatments for the world: Lessons from low- and middle-income countries. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 2017; 13(April): 5.1-5.33.
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