Problem Management Plus (PM+) Competencies

1. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION (ENACT #1)

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.				
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills		
 Engages in other activities (e.g., answers mobile, completes paperwork) Laughs at client Uses inappropriate facial expressions Inappropriate physical contact 	 □ Allows for silences □ Maintains appropriate eye contact □ Maintains open posture (body toward client) □ Continuously uses supportive body language (head nod) and utterances (uh huh) □ None of the above 	 Completes all Basic Helping Skills 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 che	cked)		
any unhelpful behaviour no	evel 2 b basic skills, some but not all basic skills	Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill		
Notes:				

2. VERBAL COMMUNICATION (ENACT #2)

~ •	2. VERBILE COMMUNICATION (ENTET #2)					
	Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.					
U	nhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills			Advanced helping skills	
	Interrupts client		Uses open ended questions		Completes all Basic Helping Skills	
	Asks many suggestive or leading		Summarising or paraphrasing		Encourages client to continue	
	closed-ended questions (e.g., 'You	Ì	statements		explaining (e.g., 'Tell me more	
	didn't really want to do that,		Allows client to complete		about')	
	right?')	Ì	statements before responding		Clarifies statements in first person	
	Corrects client (e.g., 'What you		None of the above		(e.g., 'I heard you say,' 'I	
	really mean') or uses accusatory	Ī			understood')	
	statements (e.g., 'You shouldn't	Ī			Matches rhythm to client's,	
	have said that to your husband')	Ī			allowing longer or shorter pauses	
	Culturally and age-inappropriate	Ì			based on client	
	language and terms					
	Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)					
	any unhelpful behaviour no		Level 3 ic skills, all basic skills e but not all basic skills	s	Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill	
No	tes:					

3. EXPLAIN AND PROMOTE CONFIDENTIALITY (ENACT #3)

Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours Forces client to disclose to helper or others Describes confidentiality inaccurately (e.g., 'I will only tell your family') Promises full confidentially without exceptions Minimises client's concerns about confidentiality (e.g., 'It doesn't matter if anyone else hears us') Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked) Completes all Basic Helping Skills Completes all Basic Helping Skills Details the referral process related to confidentiality and exceptions Asks questions to assess client's understanding of confidentiality Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of setting Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of setting Level 1	Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.				
others Describes confidentiality inaccurately (e.g., 'I will only tell your family') Promises full confidentially without exceptions Minimises client's concerns about confidentiality (e.g., 'It doesn't matter if anyone else hears us') Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked) Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour others confidentiality for self-harm or harm to others confidentiality for self-harm or harm to others confidentiality for self-harm or harm to others understanding of confidentiality Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of setting Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked) Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills Details the referral process related to confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality and exceptions understanding of confidentiality Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of setting Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill	1 1 1	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills		
Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills Level 3 all basic skills plus any advanced skill	others Describes confidentiality inaccurately (e.g., 'I will only tell your family') Promises full confidentially without exceptions Minimises client's concerns about confidentiality (e.g., 'It doesn't	 Lists exceptions for breaking confidentiality for self-harm or harm to others Explains why it can be important to break confidentiality 	 □ Details the referral process related to confidentiality and exceptions □ Asks questions to assess client's understanding of confidentiality □ Topics of discussion are appropriate to confidentiality of 		
any unhelpful behaviour no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills all basic skills plus any advanced skill	Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)				
Notes:					

4. RAPPORT BUILDING AND SELF-DISCLOSURE (ENACT #4)

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

5. EXPLORATION & NORMALISATION OF FEELINGS (ENACT #5)

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.					
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills			
 □ Makes statements that client's response is unusual or atypical for others in similar situations (e.g., 'People don't usually react this way') □ Minimises or dismisses client's feelings or emotions □ Forces client to describe emotions 	 □ Appropriately encourages client to share feelings □ Explains that others may share similar symptoms, reactions, and concerns, given similar experiences □ Asks client to reflect on the experience of sharing emotions □ None of the above 	 □ Completes all Basic Helping Skills □ Explores potential reasons for hesitance to share emotions □ Comments thoughtfully on client's facial expression to encourage emotional expression □ Validates emotional responses while reframing potential harmful emotional reactions 			
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)					
any unhelpful behaviour	evel 2 b basic skills, some but not all basic skills	Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill			
Notes:					

6. DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY, WARMTH & GENUINENESS (ENACT #6)

b. DEMONSTRATE EMPATHT, WARMTH & GENOTHENESS (ENACT #6)				
Che	Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.			
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills		
 □ Critical of client's concerns □ Dismissive of client's concerns □ Helper's emotional response appears inappropriate, fake or acting 	 □ Is warm, friendly, and genuine throughout session □ Continuously shows concern or care for the client (e.g., 'That sounds sad, can you tell me more about it?') □ Asks question to identify what emotions the client was feeling (e.g., 'I wonder if you felt sad or angry when this happened') □ None of the above 	☐ Completes all Basic Helping Skills ☐ 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)				
any unhelpful behaviour no	evel 2 b basic skills, some but not all basic skills	Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill		
Notes:				

7. ASSESSMENT OF HARM & DEVELOPING RESPONSE PLAN (ENACT #7)

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.				
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills		
□ Does not ask about self-harm □ Lectures client with religious or legal reasons against self-harm (e.g., 'This is sin, or this is against the law') □ 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) □ Encourages client not to tell anyone else about self-harm or harm to others	 □ Asks about self-harm or harm to others, or explores harm if raised by client □ Asks about current intent, means, or prior attempts □ Asks about risk and/or protective factors □ None of the above 	☐ Completes all Basic Helping Skills☐ 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) Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills plus any advanced skill				

8. INTRODUCING AND EXPLAINING SLOW BREATHING

	Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.				
Ţ	Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours		Basic helping skills		Advanced helping skills
	Forces client to practice breathing strategy Criticises client on performance ('That's all wrong; you need to do it this way') Rushes through practice or uses a loud or harsh voice Gives nonspecific unhelpful suggestions (e.g., 'Try breathing better')		Explains benefit of slow breathing Demonstrates technique, including appropriate hand placement (e.g., on stomach) Guides client through breathing practice, checking comfort level at each step Paces breathing steps with counting for inhale, holding, and exhale None of the above		Reassures client that this does not need to be done perfectly (e.g., 'This takes practice, you will know what feels comfortable for you') Praises client for practicing and normalises any difficulties or challenges with the practice Adapts strategy as needed to ensure client's comfort Uses metaphors that are understandable to the client (e.g., balloon metaphor)
	Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked) Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4				
_	any unhelpful behaviour no	basid	c skills, all basic skills but not all basic skills		all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
No	tes:				

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			
 □ Blames client for problems (e.g., 'You made this problem for yourself') □ Says all of client's problems are too difficult or cannot be solved □ Tells client what their problems are without client's input □ Incorrectly explains what are solvable and unsolvable problems 	 □ Supports client to list their own problems □ Uses a brainstorming process to identify additional problems □ Explains the concept of solvable and unsolvable problems □ Helps client identify which of their problems are solvable and unsolvable □ None of the above 	 □ Completes all Basic Helping Skills □ Helps client reframe unsolvable problems into solvable problems □ Discusses how addressing solvable problems can improve the client's wellbeing 			
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked) Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills plus any advanced skill					
Notes:					

10. CHOOSING A PROBLEM

	Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.					
τ	Jnhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills			Advanced helping skills	
	Chooses problem for the client		Works with client to rank or		Completes all Basic Helping Skills	
	Allows client to choose unsolvable problem		prioritise which solvable problems could be addressed		Helps client explore how their life would be different if the selected	
	Criticises client's choice of the most		Works with client to select a single		problem were addressed	
	important problem (e.g., 'That		specific problem that is solvable		Helps client identify alternative	
	problem isn't important, focus on		Asks for client's feedback on the		problem if barriers are encountered	
	something else')		selected problem (e.g., 'Do you feel		addressing the selected problem	
	☐ Fails to identify a single problem to		_			
	focus on		this problem')			
			None of the above			
	Check the level	that	best applies (only one level should be che	cked)		
	Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	eve bas			all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill	
No	ites:					

11. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Check all behaviours demonstrated in each category.					
Unhelpful or potentially harmful behaviours	Basic helping skills	Advanced helping skills			
□ Starts defining the problem without having made selection of a single problem □ Provides complex or confusing definition of problem that does not have clear actions to take □ Tells client the problem is hopeless □ Minimises the problem (e.g., 'Solving this problem is easy. Let's focus on something more challenging')	 □ Establishes a specific brief definition of the problem □ The definition includes description of things that can be changed and for which the client can take action □ None of the above 	 □ Completes all Basic Helping Skills □ If a problem has many parts, break it down and deal with each part separately □ 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)					
Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour Level 2 no basic skills, or some but not all basic skills Level 3 all basic 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		
Directly gives solutions to the client rather than have client generate own solutions	 Encourage the client to think of as many possible solutions as they can Encourages client to think of 	☐ Completes all Basic Helping Skills☐ Uses the friend strategy (e.g., 'What would you tell a friend if they had		
 □ Makes judgements about brainstormed solutions (e.g., 'That is good,' or 'that is bad') □ Asks suggestive or leading questions about solutions (e.g., 'That isn't really how you want to solve it, is it?') 	solutions they can do by themselves as well as those with support from others None of the above	this problem?') Prompts client to think of existing personal strengths, resources, and social support in order to brainstorm more solutions		
Check the lev	el that best applies (only one level should be cho	ecked)		
any unhelpful behaviour	Level 2 o basic skills, r some but not all basic skills	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			
 □ Chooses a solution that is unrealistic or potentially harmful (e.g., 'You should run away from home') □ Tells client what solution to choose □ Is critical of client for chosen solution (e.g., 'I would have chosen something else. What you chose may not work') 	 □ From the list of potential solutions, helps client choose solutions that are helpful to influence the problem □ Helps client discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different listed solutions □ Helps client consider what solutions are achievable within the client's financial, personal, and social resources □ None of the above 	 □ Completes all Basic Helping Skills □ Explores how client has solved similar problems in the past and discuss what did or did not work □ 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)					
any unhelpful behaviour no	evel 2 basic skills, some but not all basic skills	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	
	Tells client what steps to do achieve		Helps client create an action plan		Completes all Basic Helping Skills
	the solution		with specific steps		Suggests ways the client can remind
	Discourages client by identifying		Helps client pick the day, time, and		themself to carry out the plan (e.g.,
	barriers for carrying out the action		location for when to do steps in the		notes, calendar, phone reminders,
	plan (e.g., 'Your wife will never let		action plan		connecting it with other activities)
	you do this')		Discusses what resources would be		Discusses alternative strategies if
	Criticises the client's proposed		needed to carry out the actions (e.g.,		barriers are encountered when
	action steps for the solution (e.g.,		transportation, childcare, a		carrying out the action plan
'You aren't thinking through all the		supportive friend)			Helps client create plan for
	steps')		Maintains a positive and		managing distress during the action
	Dismisses concerns raised by the client about the action plan (e.g.,		encouraging attitude throughout		plan (e.g., 'You can use your
			discussing the action plan		breathing exercise before talking to
	'That's easy to do. I've seen lots of		None of the above		your relative')
	people do it. Stop worrying')				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)					
	Level 1	eve			Level 4
]	, , , ,		<mark>ic skills, all basic skills</mark>	S	all basic helping skills
	or	som	e but not all basic 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				
☐ Makes activity schedule without	☐ Explains the inactivity cycle	☐ Completes all Basic Helping Skills				
client's input	☐ Helps the client brainstorm	☐ Help the client to break down the				
☐ Schedules activities that are vague,	enjoyable activities that improve	activity or task into very small and				
unachievable, or potentially	their mood	manageable steps				
harmful to improve mood	☐ Helps the client to choose an	☐ Discuss reminders the client can use				
☐ Blames client for lack of	activity that is enjoyable and	to help them complete their activity				
motivation, energy, or will power to	achievable within the next week	☐ Connects enjoyable activity with				
implement Get Going, Keep Doing	Helps the client schedule when	other events or commitments				
activities	(days and times) they will complete	 Reviews potential barriers or 				
	the activity or task in the next week	challenges to doing the enjoyable				
	☐ None of the above	activity				
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)						
Level 1	evel 2 basic skills, all basic skill	Level 4				
, , ,	some but not all basic 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
	Discourages client from contacting other people about their problem		Explains meaning and benefits of strengthening social support		Completes all Basic Helping Skills Schedules action plan with client
	Tells the client whom to contact rather than following client's		Supports client to identify multiple sources of social support		including when and whom to reach out to for support
	preferences Criticises client for difficulties in communicating with family,		Works with client to select whom from the social support network would be helpful		Discusses overcoming barriers and challenges when contacting persons for social support
	friends, or community members		Encourages client to contact social support persons	۵	Role plays with client how to ask selected person for support
			None of the above		Recommends skills and techniques to support relationship goals
Check the level that best applies (only one level should be checked)					
	Level 1 any unhelpful behaviour	eve bas			Level 4 all basic helping skills plus any advanced skill
No	tes:				

Acknowledgement. Portions of this scale are adapted with permission from the original ENACT scale, which was published CC BY-NC-ND by Kohrt et al in: Kohrt BA, Jordans MJD, Rai S, Shrestha P, Luitel NP, Ramaiya M, Singla D, Patel V. Therapist Competence in Global Mental Health: Development of the Enhancing Assessment of Common Therapeutic Factors (ENACT) Rating Scale. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*. 2015;69:11-21. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2015.03.009.

This scale and competencies are informed by research described in:

- Pedersen, G. A., Lakshmin, P., Schafer, A., Watts, S., Carswell, K., Willhoite, A., Ottman, K., van't Hof, E., & Kohrt, B. A. (2020). Common factors in psychological treatments delivered by non-specialists in low- and middle-income countries: Manual review of competencies. *Journal of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy*, 30(3), 165-186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbct.2020.06.001
- Pedersen GA, Gebrekristos F, Eloul L, Golden S, Hemmo M, Akhtar A, Schafer A, Kohrt BA. (2021). Development of a tool to assess competencies of Problem Management Plus facilitators using observed standardised role plays: The EQUIP Competency Rating Scale for Problem Management Plus. *Intervention*, 19(1):107–117. https://www.interventionjournal.org/text.asp?2021/19/1/107/312725
- Gebrekristos F, Eloul L, Golden S. (2021). A field report on the pilot implementation of Problem Management Plus with lay providers in an Eritrean refugee setting in Ethiopia. *Intervention*, 19(1):101–106. https://doi.org/10.4103/INTV.INTV 39 20
- Hemmo M, Akhtar A, Kohrt BA, Pedersen D, Alkamel AF, Sölch CM, Schafer A, Spaaij J, Bryant R, Morina N. (2025).
 Piloting competency assessments for an evidence-based brief psychological intervention with Arabic-speaking non-specialists in Switzerland. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health*, 12:e72. https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2025.10023
- McBride KA, Harrison S, Mahata S, Pfeffer K, Cardamone F, Ngigi T, Kohrt BA, Pedersen GA, Greene C, Viljoen D, Muneghina O, Brown AD. (2021). Building mental health and psychosocial support capacity during a pandemic: The process of adapting Problem Management Plus for remote training and implementation during COVID-19 in New York City, Europe and East Africa. *Intervention*, 19(1):37–47. https://doi.org/10.4103/INTV.INTV_30_20

See full acknowledgements and copyright information on https://equipcompetency.org/