

Thinking About Mental Health Counseling



If you are thinking about making positive changes in your life, but are concerned about how difficult those changes might be, you may want to consider counseling.

What Is Mental Health Counseling

Counseling is the treatment of mental and emotional concerns through the establishment of a therapeutic relationship with a mental health professional. Mental health concerns may include severe and recurrent psychological conditions or less severe and short-term emotional problems and disturbances that interfere with your life. Counseling (also called psychotherapy) is also useful in making positive life changes even without mental or emotional concerns. Counseling is both an art and a science, and has been scientifically studied. Studies show most people report success in making the changes they want with counseling.

How Does Counseling Work?

Counseling works through the establishment of a relaxed, comfortable, trusting, respectful, emotionally safe, and therapeutic relationship with a mental health professional. This relationship becomes a “tool” to help you reduce anxiety and fear so you can successfully examine and confront issues and problems that interfere with your life and your happiness.

Who Provides Counseling

Qualified and trained mental health professionals who are licensed or certified by their state or jurisdiction usually provide counseling services. Mental health professionals include social workers, licensed professional counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, marriage and family counselors, and pastoral counselors. Settings include public and private practices, and inpatient and outpatient mental health clinics.

Will I Be In Control?

Although the counselor will work with you to help clarify your goals for therapy and solve problems, you have the right to direct your own life. The counselor will expect you to achieve solutions in your own way, and your successes will be your own. This is called “client self-determination,” and it is an important ethical principle in practicing counseling.

Will Counseling Work For Me?

Research shows that active clients who want to make changes do better in treatment than clients or patients who are passive. When you choose a counselor, be sure to discuss qualifications, the counselor’s experience, the frequency of your meetings, and their duration. You should try to be as open as possible. Ask for an explanation of your diagnosis and any unclear terms. Do the “homework” or tasks the counselor suggests, avoid canceling sessions, and discuss your feelings about the counselor and your progress.

Research also shows that you may achieve significant results in just a few sessions, using a model called “short-term solution focused counseling”.

What About Cost?

Discuss cost with your counselor, and how payment will be arranged. If you have not been referred directly to a participating mental health provider, inquire about the possibility of reimbursement or direct payment by your health insurance provider. Depending on your health plan, your insurance company may require you meet your deductible before the plan will pay, and you may be required to pay a copay for each session. If you do not have insurance, or you face financial hardship, your counselor may be willing to adjust your fee or identify a counselor or clinic that does offer sliding fees.

What The EAP Can Do

The EAP can talk with you more about counseling and how to make the best use of it. Your EAP may offer short-term solution focused counseling as part of your EAP benefit. EAP counseling is free of charge to employees and their eligible dependents. Call the EAP to discuss options and the level of benefit available to you.