

GETTING THE MOST FROM COUNSELLING

Counselling is potentially a lengthy and expensive process. Here are some tips for getting the most out of the process.

BE REALISTIC. Counselling is not usually a quick fix solution but rather a process where you can get a greater understanding of yourself and the possibility of the changes needed to deal with whatever is troubling you.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS. If you feel that you aren't connecting with your counsellor, talk about it with them. If it doesn't get any better after talking about it, then maybe the best option is to find a different counsellor – your counsellor might be able to recommend another counsellor

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO COUNSELLING. People who attend counselling regularly get more out of counselling. Don't skip sessions unless you really must but if you find yourself missing sessions, ask yourself 'why'. Talking about this with your counsellor could be useful.

GIVE YOURSELF SOME SPACE AFTER THE SESSION. A short walk before driving home is a good idea so that you aren't preoccupied whilst driving.

REFLECT REGULARLY. Reflect on what has been discussed in-between sessions and how you are feeling on a day to day basis. A private journal (stored securely) can provide useful material for discussion during your sessions e.g. for identifying trends in feelings and behaviours or simply as an aide memoire.

DON'T GO LOOKING FOR ADVICE...that's what friends and family are for! A counsellor's role, rather than looking to force a change, is more facilitative, encouraging you to reach the point where you can identify yourself and take responsibility for what you need to do to make the necessary changes.

PREPARE FOR YOUR SESSION. Think about how you are going to describe your issues and feelings to your counsellor, maybe by writing it down first. This will help make more productive use of the session.

BE AS HONEST AS YOU CAN. The counselling relationship relies on trust and honesty from both the client and the counsellor. It is important that we talk about our counselling relationship in an open and honest way as it can be useful with relationships in the outside world as typically counselling problems are around the relationships we have with others e.g. partners, siblings, parents, work colleagues etc
If you feel you are avoiding talking about things, then discuss it with your counsellor so you can both work through it.

BE ACTIVE IN YOUR THERAPY. Sessions are generally led by the client, it is the counsellor's job to go with your flow so don't be afraid to be an active participant in your counselling process.

TAKE YOUR TIME. Counselling can take time, be hard work and emotionally draining. Your way of being has evolved over a long time and changing this, coupled with the natural resistance to change, can be slow and difficult. Some people only need a few sessions to get to a stage where they have enough self-awareness and personal growth to empower them to take control and make the necessary changes to confront their issue. For others this can take much longer.

PREPARE FOR THE END TO COUNSELLING. Counselling usually stops when both you and the counsellor agree you've reached a point where you feel you have made as much progress as you can or are willing to make. The counselling relationship can be very strong, just like any other relationship, so it is a good idea to talk about the feelings surrounding the end of counselling with your counsellor.