



What is therapeutic counselling?

Counsellors help people who are experiencing difficulties with relationships, bereavement, depression, anxiety, stress, domestic violence, trauma, drugs and alcohol or other personal problems concerning their past, present or future concerns. It can also help those who may want to improve the way they handle everyday life. Often people have multiple issues and these can be prioritised and worked through in a collaborative approach.

Counsellors don't offer advice, but help people examine their options and explore their own solutions in a calm and confidential setting.

The work of a counsellor usually involves:

- Agreeing a counselling or therapy 'contract' with their clients, outlining the issues that will be covered and how sessions will work.
- Giving people the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings to a professional person within a confidential and safe environment.
- Helping clients to talk about their behaviour and feelings, by listening carefully and patiently, making observations and asking questions.

Counsellors and therapists in practice may work with a range of clients or groups with a variety of reasons for seeking help. Others may specialise in a particular type of problem, such as alcohol or drug use, or work-related issues. Their approach and techniques are based on a particular 'core model', and could be:

- **Psychodynamic** - focusing on childhood experiences, the unconscious and the dynamics of the client-therapist relationship
- **Cognitive-behavioural** - rooted in the belief that unhelpful behaviours can be unlearned or reframed and recognising the link between negative thoughts and habitual responses.
- **Solution focused**-This promotes positive change rather than dwelling on past problems. Clients are encouraged to focus positively on what they do well and to set goals and work out how to achieve them.
- **Transactional Analysis**-This is based on the belief that everyone has a child, adult and parent self within them and, within each interaction with other people, one self takes the lead. By recognising these roles, a client can choose which one to adopt and so change behaviour.
- **Humanistic and person-centred** - based on self-development and personal growth
- **Integrative** or eclectic - a mixture of techniques drawn from the core models.

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