

What if I feel like I won't
get on with the counsellor?

What if I get upset?

If I go for counselling does it mean
that there's something wrong with me?

How much will it cost?

How does talking help?



What is counselling?



What is counselling?

How does talking help?

How many times have you had to make a decision or were troubled by something and talked it through with family, friends or workmates? We are constantly seeking the advice, support and opinions of others – where to go on holiday, whether to buy that dress, what to do about the noisy neighbours or how to manage a falling out with a friend.

When we discuss these things with people we know, we expect them to say what they think and what they feel we should do in the situation. We might do what they suggest or we might not, but we still may have found it helpful to talk about it.

In some ways counselling is not that different. Counselling offers you a space to talk through what you are feeling or what is going on for you in a supportive and non-judgemental way. The counsellor is there to really listen to you; to hear what you actually say and to help you explore the thoughts and feelings behind your words. The counsellor trusts in your ability to live your own life and, unlike those around you, will not try to influence you in any way. You are supported to find your own answers.

What if I get upset?

Sometimes people worry that if they get emotionally upset during the session it will also be distressing for

the counsellor. Or if they talk about how stressed they feel, the counsellor may think they cannot cope or judge them in some way. Counsellors train for many years and develop skills in listening and empathising with people. The counsellor knows that the feelings are yours, not theirs. The counsellor's role is to help you to clarify the issues that are worrying you and to support you as you sort through your feelings and find a way to move forward.

Pain on the inside is no less painful and when it gets bad, getting help is really important.

If I go for counselling does it mean that there's something wrong with me?

Sometimes people think that going to see a counsellor means they cannot cope with life and that people will think they are 'cracking up'. There is no big deal about counselling. If we have a persistent pain we go to the doctor. If we chip a tooth, we go to the dentist. If we are in emotional distress we should certainly consider seeing a counsellor. Pain on the inside is no less painful and when it gets bad, getting help is really important.

What usually happens during the first session?

Making an appointment with a counsellor is just like finding a doctor or dentist – sometimes it's a personal recommendation by a friend or from an organisation. Your local GP may also have a counsellor attached to his/her surgery. The important thing is that you are comfortable with the person. You won't know that until you have met them so most first sessions with a counsellor involve seeing how you both feel about working together. During the first session the counsellor will reassure you about confidentiality and explain any conditions such as how many sessions they can offer you, or whether there are any costs involved etc, that they feel are appropriate.

The counsellor will then invite you to say a little about what is difficult for you at this time. As you and the counsellor go through the session, both of you will form a feeling about working together and will then decide about future appointments. Some counsellors will set four to six sessions with a review at the last to see how you are finding the process.

What if I feel like I won't get on with the counsellor?

It's simple – just say so. It might not be easy to say, but counsellors understand that the dynamic between people doesn't always work.

If you feel it is too embarrassing to say why you don't feel able to continue with the counsellor, tell them that you will call them if you want another appointment. The most important thing is not to be put off. Try someone else.



How much will it cost?

Some organisations provide counselling services at no charge or at very low cost. These are usually government-funded services for specific issues such as crisis pregnancy, marriage and relationship counselling, bereavement, one-parent family issues, sexual abuse and rape, drug or alcohol related problems. Many counselling and therapy training centres offer low-cost counselling as part of their supervised training programme.

Private counsellors will often offer a sliding scale, charging less to people who cannot afford the full cost. If a counsellor cannot accommodate you they will try to refer you to someone who can.

Contacts:

One Family

asknefamily Helpline: Lo-call 1890 66 22 12

Email: info@onefamily.ie

Web: www.onefamily.ie

Information and support for all members of all one-parent families, including general counselling and crisis pregnancy counselling. Free service supported by an on-site childcare facility.

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)

Tel: 01 230 0061

Email: iacp@irish-counselling.ie

Web: www.irish-counselling.ie

IACP operates a telephone referral service and produced the *Directory of IACP Accredited Counsellors and Psychotherapists* to help you to find a counsellor near you.

Irish Council for Psychotherapy

Tel: 01 272 2105

Email: info@icpsy.ie

Web: www.psychotherapy-ireland.com

Details of psychotherapists are available on the 'Find a Psychotherapist' section of the website.

Family Resource Centres

Tel: 01 611 4100

Many Family Resource Centres offer low-cost counselling services. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the *Support for Families Directory* contact the Family Support Agency on the number above.



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