

Counseling Is Not . . .

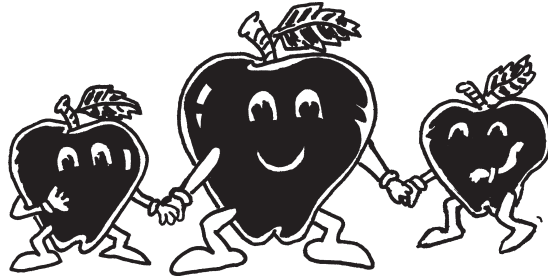
There are many mistaken beliefs about counseling. One of the most common is that people must be mentally ill, "crazy," or emotionally weak to need counseling. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone has times of stress that can make coping difficult. Most families have periods of difficulty when life becomes challenging. It is a sign of strength, not of weakness, to seek support.

Another misbelief is that counselors tell people what to do or try to change their beliefs and values. A good counselor works within a client's value system to help clarify the situation, explore options and problem solve possible solutions. Counselors suggest things to try, or behaviors to practice, but the choice is always up to the client.

Sometimes there are mistaken concerns that a counselor will assign blame for family problems. In reality, counseling is less about blame and more about peacefully resolving conflict and promoting healthy family relationships.



Need help? Don't know where to start? To find help with housing, health care, food pantries, childcare, drug or alcohol abuse counseling, mental health issues, aging concerns, and many other human services. Dial 2-1-1 or go to www.ne211.org.

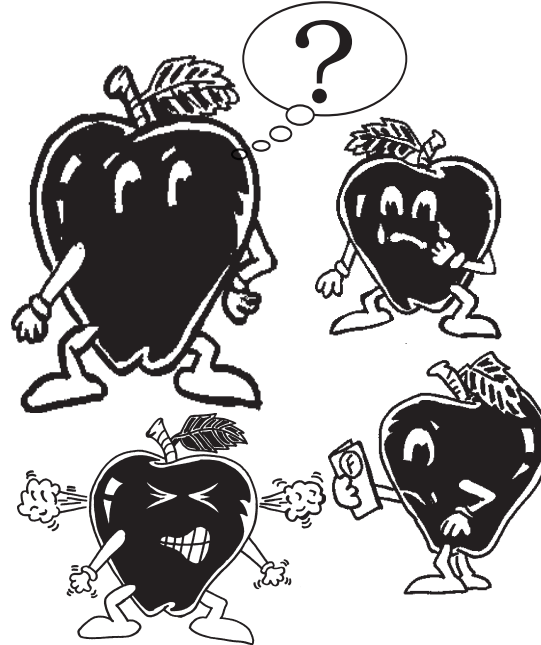


A resource provided by LPS School Social Workers... because families matter.

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THINKING ABOUT COUNSELING

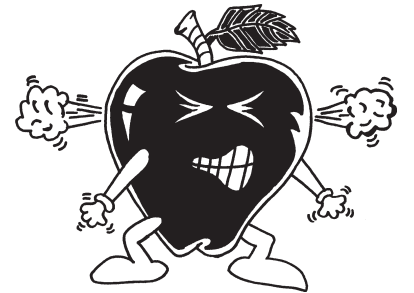


Thinking about going to counseling, for yourself or your child, can be unsettling. This is especially true if you have never gone before. If you and/or a family member are experiencing a time of stress or crisis and need some guidance, this brochure can help you understand what counseling is and what it isn't and how to get the most from it when you go. Hopefully reading this will reduce some of the anxiety you may have about the counseling process.

Counseling Is . . .

Counseling, also called "therapy," is both an agreement and a relationship. You the client, and a counselor or therapist agree to form a working partnership to explore situations, identify options and problem solve solutions. Counseling can help you better understand your relationships and how to deal with significant people in your life in a more productive manner. In addition, counseling helps one understand their patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors and change those that are contributing to a particular problem.

Counseling helps because it offers support and objective feedback in a safe setting. It allows time to focus on concerns and feelings. New skills and behaviors are learned and practiced (for example; parenting styles, methods of communication and healthy ways to express anger).



WHY GO TO COUNSELING

Along with the good times in our lives there are also times of change and stress. Counseling can be helpful when either life events or one's feelings and behaviors negatively affect one's outlook, relationships or performance. This is true for children as well as adults. Examples of these are many and can include:

LIFE EVENTS	FEELINGS AND BEHAVIORS
divorce	anger
remarriage	anxiety
past trauma	depression
loss of job	low self-esteem
moving	behavior problems
illness	school problems
death of a loved one	substance abuse

GETTING THE MOST FROM COUNSELING

Counseling can bring about many positive changes in people's lives. To get the most out of counseling it is important to:

- ☛ Let your counselor know of any fears you have about counseling.
- ☛ Be honest in sharing your situation and concerns.
- ☛ Take an active role. Be direct. State clearly what you want to be different as a result of counseling. The best solutions and goals are those you identify and are invested in achieving.
- ☛ Always feel free to ask questions. This information can help both you and your counselor.
- ☛ Let your counselor know if you disagree with, or don't understand something he/she said. If these problems are not clarified they will get in the way of the counseling process.

- ☛ Be willing to try new ideas and behaviors. Remember that it takes practice to be successful.
- ☛ Make your scheduled appointments a priority. Irregular attendance of counseling sessions will slow your progress.
- ☛ Stick with it and look for positive change. Most problems did not develop overnight. Nor do the solutions! Persistence, patience, and commitment to the counseling process are important.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How bad do things have to be to go into counseling?

Counseling can be helpful at any stage of a problem, but early intervention is best.

Where do I find a counselor?

Your school social worker, school counselor or family physician can help you find a counselor. Non-profit counseling agencies can be found in the blue pages of the phone book in the Human Services Directory. Private counselors/therapists and psychologists can be found in the yellow pages under "Counselors" or "Psychologists." If you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through your work, they will provide short term counseling at no charge and can help you find a therapist for longer-term counseling if needed.

How do I choose a counselor?

Call and request to speak directly to a particular counselor you are interested in, but expect that the counselor may have to call you back. It can be helpful to briefly share your situation and to ask what his/her experience has been with similar situations. There are many different approaches to counseling so you might want to know which of these the counselor might take. Personality is a

factor in making a choice of a counselor. It is important to choose someone with whom you feel comfortable. Don't be afraid to shop around for a therapist whose style fits your personality and needs!

What kind of training and experience should a counselor have?

Counselors in the state of Nebraska must be licensed as Mental Health Practitioners. They may have a masters degree or PhD in Counseling, Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychology or a related field with a mental health focus.

When is a psychiatrist needed? How is a psychiatrist different from a counselor?

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can diagnose, prescribe and monitor medication for a variety of mental health related illnesses. They usually do not provide counseling, but often work together with a counselor.

Who comes to counseling?

Counseling can be done individually. It can be done with a spouse, partner, child, family or with various combinations of family members. Some level of parent involvement is recommended when a child is involved in counseling. Group therapy can be a valuable form of therapy for certain issues.

How do I get my child/family to go to counseling?

Avoid blaming or threatening. Speak of the problem as one that involves the entire family and not just one member. Acknowledge your questions and concerns about what to do and your need for help to make things better. Have the expectation that your child will go and don't worry if he/she says, "I won't talk." This is a common statement made by children and should not deter you from seeking counseling. Counselors can and will work with these youth. **If a child or family member still absolutely refuses to go, go yourself.** You can receive

support. Counselors can help you learn how your behavior and attitudes can impact those for whom you have concerns.

How often do we meet?

Therapy is usually scheduled for once a week, but can be scheduled more or less often. The counselor and the client determine the frequency of the sessions.

Where do we meet?

Counseling usually takes place at an agency or the counselor's office, but some counselors will do therapy in your home. There are also some counselors who will go to the school to see your child.

Will our sessions be private?

Therapists work under a professional ethic known as confidentiality. They cannot share information from counseling sessions outside of their agency setting except for the following:

- Reports of abuse or neglect of a child, including sexual abuse
- Reports that a client intends physical harm to others or him/herself
- Under the condition of a court subpoena
- With the client's written permission

How do I pay?

Most counselors accept health insurance or Medicaid payments. Nebraska also has health insurance for eligible children under age 19 (Kid's Connection, 471-7715). If you or your child are not covered by any of these benefits, or they are inadequate, non-profit counseling agencies offer lower fees, or will base your fee on your income (a sliding fee). Some families also use counseling services at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where psychology interns offer counseling to children or families in a supervised setting. There is a nominal fee for these services. In addition, some private therapists will let you arrange a payment plan. In our community, payment need not be a barrier to receiving counseling services.
