

Getting help from a Counsellor for Yourself or a Friend

This info sheet contains information on helping you find a counsellor and what to expect. There are also some tips on helping a friend find a counsellor.

What is counselling?

Counselling mainly consists of a conversation between the counsellor and yourself. A counsellor helps people to talk about their personal issues or problems and supports them to make positive changes to their lives. Counsellors are usually pretty cool and there isn't much that would shock or offend them.

Finding a counsellor

When seeing a counsellor, it's important that you feel safe and comfortable. Some of the things that might help you choose a counsellor that you are comfortable with include whether you prefer talking to a male or female, the counsellor's age, and the location or service where they work. While some counsellors are FREE, others may charge fees. The back of this info sheet has some useful numbers and websites to help you find a counsellor.

What to expect when you visit a counsellor

At first, the idea of talking to a complete stranger about what's on your mind can seem strange. Most of the time, it gets easier to talk as you get to know and trust your counsellor. Most counselling sessions last about 50 minutes to an hour.

Counselling can be one-off, or occur over a number of sessions where the counsellor may see you every week, every few weeks, or now and again. Most counsellors would understand if you wanted to take a person along with you for support. The counsellor may ask

you how you are thinking and feeling, sleeping, eating and questions about your family and friends. This gives them a picture of you as a whole person and how other parts of your life may affect you. Feel free to ask the counsellor any question that's on your mind.

Making sure the counsellor is right for you

It is important to make sure that the counsellor is the right one for you. If something is not working out with the person you are seeing, think first about what's going on. If you are going through a tough time, it can be really painful talking about your concerns. Sometimes it can be hard to work out whether it is the counsellor, or the painful feelings themselves that's the issue. Whatever you think, talk to your counsellor about it before you make any decisions. If it doesn't work out with one particular counsellor it's still worth trying to get the help you need. Most counsellors will help you to find another person who you connect and feel comfortable with.

Helping a friend or family member

At first, it can seem difficult to get help for a friend or family member as you may not be sure if you are doing the right thing. Even if you are worried that you may be interfering, the fact is that sometimes it's important to give people a hand to get help, because they may not be well enough to get it for themselves.

What you may be concerned

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COUNSELLING

about:

While some mental health problems start all of a sudden most of the time they develop slowly over a few weeks. It can therefore sometimes be hard to tell whether something is wrong, or it's just a passing phase. If you are concerned about changes in someone's mood and/or behaviour and the changes last more than a couple of weeks, then it may be best for the person to get some help. For example, they may change from being happy-go-lucky to moody and withdrawn. They may continually sleep all day and find it hard to sleep at other times. They may be hearing or seeing things that aren't there, or are crying all the time. Writing down what your concerns are

can help clarify what you are worried about.

Where to start

Firstly it can be a good idea to discuss your concerns with your friend, or their family. A good place to start if you need professional advice is your local doctor (GP). They can help you or put you in touch with other services such as your local Community Health Centre, private practitioners (psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors), youth workers, drug and alcohol workers, school welfare coordinators, accommodation services or public mental health services. You can also ring a help line, which is anonymous and confidential to discuss your concerns.

List of Relevant Services and Websites

Kids Help Line

1800 55 1800

Trained counsellors available 24 hours.

Lifeline

131 114

General counselling, 24 hour.

Reachout

www.reachout.com.au

Info about health, mental health, dealing with family, drugs, helping friends and much more. Includes a service finder to find services close to you.

Ybblue

www.ybblue.org.au

Info on depression and mental illness, how to get help for yourself and for a friend. Includes other useful contact numbers and websites.

Headroom

www.headroom.net.au

Info about what positive mental health is, what issues and situations affect your mental health and how you can look after your mental health. Includes lots of other useful links and fact sheets.