



## Knowing How and When to End Your Counseling Experience

The length of time you may work with a counselor can vary enormously. Counseling may end for any number of reasons. Sometimes people complete their counseling goals sooner than expected and termination is jointly agreed upon and planned for by both counselor and client. Other times, clients simply stop coming to counseling, either because their motivation for change is not high enough, they become anxious about discussing difficult issues, or they don't feel comfortable with their counselor. Termination is actually a natural part of the counseling process, and it provides a learning opportunity. Here are some things to remember:

### **For planned termination:**

1. Be sure to give your counselor plenty of notice if you will have to end treatment for some reason.
2. Take the time near the end of counseling to review your progress and discuss any unmet goals.
3. Make sure you know what to do if you have a difficult time in the future.
4. If you have not met your counseling goals but you have decided to leave counseling for another reason, work with your counselor to obtain a referral to another professional. Make sure that you sign appropriate release forms so your new therapist can have any necessary information.
5. Use some of your time in the last session or two to plan how you will apply what you have learned in therapy to any upcoming challenges.
6. Congratulate yourself on sticking with the counseling process and making progress. Don't be discouraged if you still have concerns – any movement in a positive direction provides you with a foundation for future positive change.

### **If you are thinking of leaving counseling because you're not satisfied with something:**

1. Discuss your concerns with your counselor. You are the customer, and you have every right to leave counseling if you wish. However, it is always a good idea to make sure you are leaving for appropriate reasons, and not just avoiding problems that will trouble you in the future.
2. If you don't feel you and your counselor are a good match, you do have the right to request another counselor. Not every client and every counselor will "click," and as professionals, we can deal with this without turning it into a personal problem.
3. If you don't feel you are making good progress in treatment, ask your counselor to spend a session reviewing your counseling goals.
4. Don't just "no-show." For your own sake and out of courtesy to your counselor, try to make one last appointment to wrap things up and to clarify your reasons for leaving.