



## What To Expect From Counseling

Many of us enter therapy hoping to get some quick relief from the distress that we are experiencing. We are aware that therapy is costing us a lot in terms of time, money, and energy and we want to see some immediate results, especially when we are in pain. It is important that you talk with your therapist about your expectations and needs from the counseling process.

Counseling is a type of learning...about yourself, your feelings, and your relationships with others. There are many different approaches to counseling; depending on their interests, background, personality, and beliefs, different counselors have different views about how to best help people. There are, though, some things about the counseling process that don't change, no matter who your counselor is.

What will happen in counseling depends on the special needs and strengths of each person seeking assistance. For this reason, each counseling experience is unique, just as each individual is unique. The first one or two meetings are usually spent clarifying the problem and examining what solutions have already been attempted. This is often referred to as the assessment phase of counseling. During this time your counselor may gather information about your past, your personal style and relationship patterns, as well as your intellectual and emotional functioning. This aids the counselor in determining which counseling strategies might be most helpful for you.

A few things to keep in mind:

- **It takes time** to establish a trusting relationship with a therapist.
- **We all resist change.** Don't be surprised if you are tempted to quit therapy right before some real changes occur. *Don't quit* just because it's uncomfortable.
- **Your counselor will expect you to let her/him know what is most important for you to talk about.** You will be doing most of the talking. You may talk about whatever is concerning you.
- **Generally, your counselor will not give you advice or tell you what to do.** We support the development of your sense of responsibility for your own decisions and life. We help you to help yourself, through helping you to clarify what you think, feel, and value, and to generate alternate ways of thinking about yourself and dealing with your concerns.
- **Your counselor will not be able to "see through" you, or "read your mind."** The more open and honest you are, the more helpful counseling can be. However, you will not be forced to talk about anything you don't feel ready to talk about. When you do choose to talk about something that is difficult for you, your counselor will listen in a non-judgmental manner.