

HOW IS COUNSELLING STRUCTURED?

At the beginning: You usually have 1 or 2 sessions to meet the counsellor to see if she/he is someone you would feel comfortable working with and to discuss whether counselling is the best way forward for you. Sometimes you then have to wait for a regular slot to be available. You may want to discuss with your counsellor what other support is available while you are waiting.

How many sessions? The average number of sessions is 6. Counsellors will often offer you 5 or 6 sessions to begin with and then review whether counselling seems to be helping and whether more sessions are needed. Sometimes it may be appropriate to plan sessions flexibly, to suit your own individual needs. Sometimes people are helped by just one session.

Ending Counselling: If you decide you want to stop counselling, please tell the counsellor. It may be helpful to plan an ending in advance. Although resources do limit the amount of counselling that can be offered, make sure you tell the counsellor if you don't feel ready to stop as agreed, so that other resources can be considered.

Confidentiality

Counsellors who work for the NHS have a duty to keep personal information about you confidential. However, they will keep records and they may share basic information with your GP and sometimes if appropriate with other NHS Professionals involved in your care. They also have a duty to talk to your GP and sometimes other professionals if you or anyone else seems to be in danger of serious harm: your counsellor would usually discuss this with you first. If you want your counsellor to give information to anyone outside the NHS such as family members or an employer, discuss this with him/her first.

You will probably be asked to fill in a CORE questionnaire at the beginning and end of counselling. This is a standard questionnaire that has two purposes: it gives the counsellor useful information about your current difficulties and it allows us to monitor the counselling service. To protect confidentiality your name does not appear on the form and it is not filed in your medical records.

All counsellors must have their work supervised in order to practice safely. Counselling Supervision is a regular, formal, confidential meeting with one or more other professionals so that counselling issues can be discussed. Client's full names are not used in supervision. Supervisors are not connected to the GP practice. If you have concerns about confidentiality, discuss this with your counsellor.



CUMBERLAND HOUSE

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Counselling Service

Cumberland House

Waters Green Medical Centre
Sunderland Street
Macclesfield
Cheshire

Phone: 01625 428081

Fax: 01625 503128

Www.cumberlandhousesurgery
.nhs.uk

What is Counselling and could it help me?

There are times in most of our lives when we experience distressing events and feelings that seem to have no end or solution in sight. Sometimes we know that our feelings are due to particular circumstances such as relationship problems, stress at work, illness, bereavement, major life changes, trauma or abuse. Sometimes we have no idea what is making us feel depressed or unable to cope.

Counselling can help us clarify our thoughts and feelings so that we can arrive at our own decisions, or make important changes in our lives.

“It was someone listening to what I was saying without criticizing me. Listening to my problems and helping me to see them in a different way”

Most of us want someone to talk to who will listen and accept us, especially when we are going through a difficult time. Sometimes it is easier to talk to a stranger than to relatives or friends. Counsellors are trained to listen carefully, without judging you, and to help you to find your own answers.

“It was as if she was turning over pages or something, making it all so much simpler in my mind, somehow.”

Counselling does not offer magic solutions, it can be hard work and progress can be slow or painful. You may need time to build up trust in the counselor and talking may make you feel worse at first. What you talk about is your choice, and this can change over time.

“It helped me to understand my feelings of frustration and anger.”

Some people believe that having counseling is a sign of weakness and that you should be able to cope on your own. Being told to “pull yourself together” is helpful, obviously you would if you could! Seeing a counsellor doesn’t mean you are self-indulgent or going crazy; don’t let these sorts of prejudices stop you trying it. It takes strength to be prepared to look at yourself and your situation.

You can ask your GP for counselling regardless of any diagnosis you have been given or any medication you are on. Tell the GP if you want it instead of drugs, or if you want to try a combination of drugs and counseling. Your counselor will be happy to work with you while you are taking medication. Sometimes a combination of drugs and counselling works better than either on its own.

“You have more of a feeling you are in control of your own recovery. It feels far more positive and as if you are actually achieving something for yourself.”

There are many kinds of counselling, with a lot of overlap between them. Counsellors have different types of training, so their approach and way of working will vary. Research has shown that how you get on with an individual counselor is more important than the type of counseling you have. If you and the counselor can work together, trust and respect each other, counselling is more likely to work for you. Good counsellors will not impose their values or prejudices on you. Your own attitude will also make a difference. You are most likely to benefit if you are determined to make the most of every session and be completely honest about yourself. As a result of what you learn about yourself, you may be

prepared to face your fears and risk making the changes in your life that you think will be right for you. If you blame your difficulties on others or expect the counselor to “make you better” you are unlikely to benefit.

You may not be offered a choice of counsellor on the NHS but you can still ask questions. The more information you have about what to expect, the less likely you are to be disappointed. A good counsellor will expect questions and be happy to answer them.

Your counsellor will be a fully trained professional who belongs to a professional body with a code of ethics and a complaints procedure. If you are unhappy about something concerning your counselling and talking about it to your counsellor doesn’t help, you can discuss your concerns with the Practice Manager, who can also tell you about the NHS complaints procedure.

More information about counseling is given in a leaflet called “Choosing Talking Therapies”, available free by writing to DH Publications, PO Box 777, London, SE1 6XH or on the Department of Health Website:

www.doh.gov.uk/mentalhealth/choosing.htm