

Considering Counseling

What is Counseling?

In counseling (also referred to as therapy, psychotherapy, and talk therapy), a mental health professional works with an individual, family, group, or couple. Counselors don't prescribe medication but provide a safe, caring, and confidential environment to explore feelings, behaviors, or beliefs, work through challenges, and work towards desired goals.

Some counselors have training in a specific therapeutic approach. Some examples include:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Everyone needs more support from time to time. Below are some signs that indicate that you may benefit from a mental health professional:

- You're feeling overwhelmed with sadness or anger that impairs your ability to function
- You've faced trauma or abuse and are having trouble coping
- You're having harmful thoughts
- You're experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition

What is a Mental Health Professional?

Mental health professionals offer services focused on improving mental health and treating mental disorders. They have varying levels of education; some common mental health professionals include social workers, counselors, therapists, and psychologists. These professionals have completed the required training for a license or credential within their field. Common licenses include LAC, LPC, LMFT, CSW, and CSW-PIP.

Where is Counseling Provided?

- **Private Practice** – typically for-profit; mental health professionals with their own offices and who set their own schedules
- **Community Agencies** – non-profit agencies or mental health centers that provide a broad range of mental health services
- **Behavioral Healthcare** – health facilities offering behavioral health services along with other medical care
- **Telehealth Mental Health Services** – online or phone-based counseling provided by a mental health professional

How to Find the Right Fit?

Some things to consider while searching for a counselor or therapist:

- What type of help are you seeking and what results do you hope to see?
- Cost of services:
 - Do you have health insurance? If so, what mental health services does it cover?
 - Does your employer offer services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?
 - Will you need services at a reduced cost? Some mental health professionals offer "sliding fee scale" that allows you to pay for services based on your income.

- Some providers allow for phone consultation prior to your first appointment. This provides an opportunity to ask about their specialty and area of expertise.
- Remember: Finding the right counselor or therapist is like finding a good pair of shoes. Sometimes you have to try on a few before you find the right fit.

For more information on counseling options, check out one of our [Mental Health Guides](#) (which includes for profit and non profit practitioners). Or, call 211 and search our online database:

- www.helplinecenter.org/211database
 - Use the following keyword search terms:
 - Individual Counseling
 - Conjoint (Couples) Counseling
 - Family Counseling
 - Group Counseling
 - Internet Counseling
 - CBT
 - DBT
 - EMDR
 - Mental Health Expense Assistance (for sliding fee scale providers)

Sources:

- National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org>
- Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>

Disclaimer: This HelpSheet is developed by the Helpline Center. HelpSheets provide a brief overview of the designated topic. For more information, call 211 or text your zip code to 898211.

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