



The Good Counsel

The term 'counselling' has become a generic term for various situations: the teacher counsels her charges, friends counsel each other, parents counsel their children and even the hairdresser counsels her clients. Henry Lew, psychologist, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, sums it up in this report.

WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

Counselling is a growth or healing process in which people, whether individuals, groups, couples or families, are helped to:

- express themselves in a safe, supportive, collaborative, non-judgmental climate;
- identify, sort and clarify their problem-laden "stories". This would deepen their awareness of past and present stories, and alternative future stories;
- identify non-helpful patterns (e.g. "crisis" pattern);
- learn, where appropriate, more helpful coping skills (e.g. "assertive skills");
- identify and achieve goals that are important to them.

Lend Me Your Ears

Contrary to conventional thinking, counsellors are not mind readers. They are trained to ask the right questions, listen attentively and patiently and perceive the difficulties from the client's point of view so that they can help them see things more clearly from a different perspective.

Counselling is also a way of enabling choice or change or reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action. Counsellors do not judge or exploit their clients in any way.

Talk It Out

People who visit a counsellor can expect discussions to focus on thoughts and feelings that may be of concern, which will

enable them to gain new perspectives and understanding. They may learn to think in new ways and view a wide range of alternatives, as well as explore and practise different ways to react.

Psychological tests may be part of the counselling process. Counselling is sometimes provided on a one-to-one basis, or clients may be seen in the company of their partner, family or other people of significance.

Body, Mind and Spirit

In a nutshell, counselling is an encounter of body, mind and spirit in a healing relationship which encourages the shift from mental 'unwellness' to mental and physical wellness and good health.

Over the past 25 years at the Harvard Medical School, Dr Herbert Benson and his colleagues have treated thousands of people for medical problems that were poorly addressed by conventional medical practice. He views medicine as a three-legged stool: pharmaceuticals are the first leg, surgery and procedures, the second. The third leg is self-care.

Self-care consists of nutrition, exercise and spirituality. Counselling can help us to learn relaxation response techniques, proper nutrition and exercise, and reframing of negative thinking patterns so that we manage this third leg of our physical and mental health better.

Where to go if you need counselling:

CRISIS	
Samaritans of Singapore	1800-221 4444 (24-hour)
SAF Counselling Centre	1800-278 0022 (24-hour)
Youth Crisis Hotline	6252 6300 (Mon to Sat, 3pm to 10pm)
ADDICTION	
Community Addiction Management Programme (CAMP)	6389 2200 (for assessment of addiction)
CAMP Support Programmes	6471 5347
INDIVIDUAL / COUPLES / MARITAL / FAMILY CONCERNS	
ComCare Call	1800 222 0000 (24-hour)
VIOLENCE	
Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence	6555 0390
Information about family/dating violence	Family & Community Development @ eCitizen
WOMEN'S ISSUES	
Association of Women for Action & Research (AWARE)	1800-774 5935 (4pm to 10pm)
HIV / AIDS	
AIDS Information & Counselling Hotline by Action for AIDS	6254 0212 (Mon to Fri: 10am– 5.30 pm)
PREGNANCY	
Pregnancy Crisis Service	6339 9770 (Tue & Thu, 9am to 9pm)
OTHERS	
Ambulance (non-emergency)	1777
Institute of Mental Health	6389 2222
National Healthcare Group Polyclinics - Various Locations	6355 3000

Care & Counselling Centre*

536 Upper Cross Street
#05-241
Hong Lim Complex
Singapore 050536
Tel: 65366366

Care Corner Mandarin Counselling Centre

Blk 62B Lorong 4
Toa Payoh #02-143
Singapore 312062
Tel: 63531180

Family Service Centres

Tel: 1800-8380100

