

## Counseling for Dummies.....



Going for counseling does NOT mean that you're weak, stupid or crazy. What it *does* mean is that you know something isn't quite right in your life and you have the courage to find out why.

- What is it? Counseling or therapy as it's sometimes called is simply talking to a trained professional to identify what's wrong and what you can do to change things.
- Counseling is *anonymous*. That means that no one knows you're going unless YOU decide to tell someone. The counselor does NOT reveal any personal information without your consent\*.
- Don't believe in stereotypes! (Like the guy on this page!)

### Common Counseling Myths

- People cannot change
- It's too late to address my issues
- I must have severe problems to see the Counselor

- If I go to see the Counselor, my chances for obtaining a certain job will be hindered
- I am the only one who feels the way I do
- My problems are too small/big for the Counselor to help me
- My family's problems do not affect me
- My mental health has nothing to do with my academic performance
- My mental health has nothing to do with my friendships, relationships, and social skills
- Counselors "fix" problems

**People cannot change** - Everyone is always capable of change, no matter how small the change may be!

**It's too late to address my issues** – It's never too late to improve yourself! Counseling is effective at any age.

**I must have severe problems to see the Counselor** – Not true! You may only need to talk over a current situation that you find difficult. It DOES NOT mean that you're mentally ill or are "crazy" or "weak"!

**If I go to see the Counselor, my chances for obtaining a certain job will be hindered** – NO! All records of counseling are confidential. No one may have access to them without your consent. You never have to tell someone you're in counseling unless you choose to.

**I am the only one who feels the way I do** – You would be surprised to know just how many people feel the way you do! Your counselor can help you know what is "normal" and provide reassurance and support.

**My problems are too small/big for the Counselor to help me** – If you are experiencing distress from something, then it's important, no matter how big or how small. A good counselor will help you find ways to deal with your problem. Counselors are professionals; if they truly feel your situation is not in their area of expertise, they will refer you to someone who CAN work with you!

**My family's problems do not affect me** - No one, (unless they're made of stone!) is immune to problems within their family! Your family, whether you have contact with them or not, is your first experience with relationships in the world. If those relationships aren't successful or satisfying, your other relationships may be affected as well. In addition, the stress of someone else's issues within your family (like addiction, mental illness, divorce, etc.) affect you as well.

My mental health has nothing to do with my academic performance

My mental health has nothing to do with my friendships, relationships, and social skills – Your mental health has EVERYTHING to do with having a successful college experience, job and relating to others! If you are preoccupied with something in your life, you won't have the mental energy and clarity to do well in school, clinical or to invest in relationships.

Counselors "fix" problems - Nope...YOU are responsible for your self and your behavior. The counselor's role is to help you understand your problem and give you tools to deal with it.

**SO...what have you got to lose???**

## **Types of Counselors**

**Psychiatrist-** A medical doctor who is trained to provide assessment, testing, counseling and prescribe medication. (No, not everyone who goes to counseling needs medicine!)

**Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurse-** A master's prepared registered nurse who has specialized in psychiatric nursing and is certified by a specialty organization in nursing (like a board of nursing). They are able to provide assessment and diagnosis, counseling, medication management with a physician, and in some states may prescribe medication. (Your health center Coordinator is one!)

**Psychologist-** A person with a masters or doctorate degree in counseling or clinical psychology. They are licensed although they are not a medical doctor. They provide assessment, diagnosis, counseling, psychological and/or neuropsychological testing (for disabilities, etc). They do NOT prescribe medication.

**Licensed/Clinical Social Worker-** Someone who has completed a masters degree in social work and is licensed as a social worker. Social workers have great skill in networking with other services/providers. They provide counseling, assessment and diagnosis.

**Non-licensed Counselors-** These folks may have a bachelor's degree or masters degree in counseling, social work, pastoral counseling or addictions counseling. In some states, someone with a masters in counseling or family therapy may be licensed.

