

COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY





THE BASICS OF COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

UNIT 1

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What is Counselling and Psychotherapy?

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) defines counselling as taking *“place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client as no one can properly be ‘sent’ for counselling”*.

Many people find professional counselling beneficial as it provides them with a regular time to explore and discuss their thoughts and feelings, as well as work through any problems they may be experiencing with a person who is impartial and not a friend or family member. Another important aspect of counselling is that the issues discussed and explored in sessions by the client and counsellor will remain confidential.

Although counselling and psychotherapy are similar in the way that they are both ‘talking’ treatments with someone who is professionally trained to listen, they also have their differences. Counselling, for example, provides clients with the opportunity to discuss specific issues and difficulties they may be experiencing. Psychotherapy, however, is usually used to deal with deep-rooted issues, such as traumatic past experiences, which are causing the client problems in their present life.

Despite the differences in counselling and psychotherapy, the main factor in ensuring therapy is successful is the counsellor and client’s ability to work together, rather than the approach used.

What is a Counsellor / Psychotherapist?

The law currently allows anyone to be a counsellor or psychotherapist, and they can charge consultation fees, even if they have not had any form of professional training. They can come from a wide variety of backgrounds and may use some form of counselling as part of their everyday interactions with others. Nurses, doctors and those in the police, for example, often use counselling skills as part of their work.

When choosing a counsellor, clients may find it extremely beneficial to consider the training, accreditation, qualifications and experience of any counsellor they are planning to see, in order to try and initially establish if they will be suitable for their needs as a client. In addition to this, counsellors and psychotherapists who are part of a professional body will have to abide by a recognised code of ethics (see resource section).

When is a Counsellor not ready to Counsel?

A counsellor is not ready to counsel others when they lack self-confidence and feel insecure in themselves and their abilities. Alongside this, any prejudice they may hold against a client, social distance they feel, or preconceived notions regarding the issues faced by the client mean that they are not ready to enter into counselling.

Who needs Counselling?

People need counselling for a variety of issues and at various stages in their lives. The main focus of counselling is to help clients explore particular issues or difficulties in their lives, which are causing them problems. It can help them to discover new strengths and allow them to develop new skills, which they can use to help them cope with any problems which may occur in their lives. Attending counselling,

therefore, is not an admission of weakness or failure; it can help many people move forward with their lives.

There is a wide range of reasons why a person may attend counselling. These include:

- Bereavement.
- Abuse and trauma.
- Depression.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Anxiety.
- Parenting difficulties.
- Assertiveness.
- Sexuality issues.
- Addiction recovery.
- Mental health issues.
- Anger management.
- Accidents or illness.
- Improving self-esteem.

Some of these areas will be looked at in more detail further in the course.

Although these questions are self assessed (answers can be found at the back of the course) it is strongly recommended that you complete them as you would a marked assignment. Please complete the self assessment questions before continuing with your assignment. Answers to the self assessment questions can be found at the back of the course.

Self assessment 1

SAQ1) Have a look through the following statements and circle the number that best describes how you feel about it – be honest. After you have completed it read through your answers, do you think that your answer would have an impact on your counselling abilities? Are there any areas in your life that would mean you would be a good counsellor? Are there any areas in your life that you feel you need to work on before becoming a counsellor? Keep your copy of this as you will need to refer to it later.

Strongly Agree 1 **—————>** **5 Strongly Disagree**

I am as good as everyone else	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of my personal limits	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable talking to strangers	1	2	3	4	5
I am happy to be me	1	2	3	4	5
I am not afraid to make mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
I can laugh at myself.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't feel like an overall failure	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy communicating to others	1	2	3	4	5
I get frustrated with others easily	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good knowledge of different cultures	1	2	3	4	5
I like myself as a person	1	2	3	4	5
I like to take risks	1	2	3	4	5
I often jump to conclusions	1	2	3	4	5
I respect myself	1	2	3	4	5
I would only socialise or mix with people from the same ethnic background as me	1	2	3	4	5
Men and women are equals	1	2	3	4	5
Older people are wiser than younger people	1	2	3	4	5
What others say to me has no affect	1	2	3	4	5

Assignment one

1.1 Analyse the principal distinctions between psychotherapy and counselling.

1.2 Evaluate the key requirements to be an effective counsellor.

1.3 Evaluate the conditions for which it would be appropriate to see a counsellor or a psychotherapist.