

## **TRIED COUNSELING AND STILL FEEL BAD? DON'T GIVE UP!**

It's important to know that there are several types of counseling and certain approaches work best, depending on your issues and preferences. Therapists' methods vary based on training and philosophy. When choosing a counselor, be sure to ask about experience, general approach, specific methods used, and how it will help with your concerns. The many "brand names" of psychotherapy can be confusing, but they break down into a few basic approaches. Here is a brief description of the main ones – minus jargon:

### **Supportive Understanding**

A good counselor offers nonjudgmental support and asks you relevant questions about your concerns, while giving you space to reach your own conclusions. This is helpful in any situation, but sometimes you may also need direct feedback and guidance in learning specific skills for better mental health.

### **Examining Thoughts and Beliefs**

Self-defeating beliefs and thinking patterns contribute to depression, anxiety and unhealthy behavior. You can let go of unproductive thoughts and beliefs by increasing awareness. A counselor can teach you how to be more objective about yourself and can help you reach a more balanced perspective.

### **Learning About Emotions**

Many people have trouble recognizing feelings and figuring out what caused them. You may also get upset easily or have trouble calming down or cheering up. A therapist can help you identify feelings and figure out where they came from and can show you new ways to sooth distress and improve your mood.

### **Behavior Change**

A therapist can teach you healthy coping behaviors to replace unhealthy habits. If certain situations trigger anxiety, a therapist can lead you through a safe process of facing feared objects or activities. Your counselor can also help you formulate goals, so you can act from values, not from habits and worries.

### **Perspective on Past Experiences**

A therapist can help you process traumatic memories, gain insight into continuing behavior patterns, and put past experiences in perspective, so they stop invading your current life.

### **Improving Relationships**

Relationships impact all aspects of a person's life. A counselor can show you how to communicate more effectively when expressing your thoughts and feelings to partners, family, friends and co-workers.

### **Finding Practical Solutions**

It's not all in your head! Troubled relationships, personal loss, financial stress and many other factors can influence mental health. A counselor can help you figure out how to improve your life situation.

### **Personal Development**

It's important to reach your full potential. Counselors can offer support in working on personal goals for building relationships, career direction, self-expression and finding meaning and purpose in your life.

## **WHAT APPROACH WORKS BEST?**

### **Research Evidence**

The most important factor for success in psychotherapy is a trusting relationship with a caring therapist. Evidence supports therapies that increase objectivity; help with facing fears; and teach coping and communication skills. It's important to clarify values, formulate goals and practice new behaviors as well.

### **Your Preferences**

Your therapist should always honor your preferences. For example, you may not want to talk about a trauma, but you can still learn how to soothe your distress. If you feel uncomfortable in counseling, or you are not making progress, talk with your therapist. If you are still not satisfied, shop around! Now that you know more about psychotherapy, it will be easier to find a counselor that meets your needs.