

The Balancing Act

Tips to Balance Your Life and Keep You Emotionally and Physically Fit

Clearing Up the Misconceptions: The Myths and Facts about Counseling

Life is full of challenges. From work pressure, to family tension, to financial concerns—all of us contend with our own daily battles. Despite support from friends and family, sometimes you just need someone else to talk to.

Although it's no longer a taboo topic, there are still many mistaken ideas about what counseling is and who it's for.

The facts below will help debunk some of the counseling myths that may be holding you back from reaching out.

Myth: *Counseling is only for people with serious mental health issues.*

Fact: Problems that start out as everyday concerns can build up and, if not dealt with, spiral out of control. Many people make the mistake of waiting until a small roadblock becomes a major issue before seeking help. Counseling offers you the chance to deal with day-to-day concerns—whether stress, anxiety, work-life balance or another issue—and discover tangible and effective solutions that work for you.

Myth: *Only weak people who can't cope with issues on their own should seek counseling.*



Fact: There is nothing weak about seeing a counselor. In fact, it takes inner strength to acknowledge a problem. It also requires insight to proactively and responsibly deal with the matter before it negatively impacts your physical and emotional well-being and relationships.

Myth: *A stranger can't possibly help me—they don't even know me.*

Fact: This is actually why counseling is so effective. Friends and family are our greatest support systems but these relationships are two-way streets that involve give and take. Time with a counselor is all about **you**. A professional can offer you impartial, unbiased insights and support that will help you speak more openly about your situation and remove any fears or anxiety about being judged.

Myth: *I've tried counseling before and it doesn't work.*

Fact: Although counseling may not have "worked" for you before, that doesn't mean it won't a second or even third time with a different professional. Counselors use varying approaches and styles to help determine the right approach for your specific situation. Also, the success or failure of a counseling relationship will depend on your openness to the process.

Myth: *Counselors never say anything they just listen and take notes.*

Fact: Many people expect a counseling session to involve a couch, disapproving eyes and lots of silent analysis. Counseling is actually a very interactive process that creates a two-way discussion between you and your counselor. It will help you explore your choices and set goals, while providing you with some original ideas and new perspectives. As cliché as it sounds, it can be a real breath of fresh air.

Myth: *Everyone will know that I'm going to see a counselor, which will only make everything worse.*

Fact: The only person who will know you are visiting a counselor is **you**. Counselors are bound by very strict codes of ethics and confidentiality and every good professional should go over this during your first appointment. If you're meeting with a counselor through your Employee Assistance and Work/Life Program, **your colleagues and employer will never be told you are using these services** (within the limits of the law).

Regular ups and downs are an expected part of life. But sometimes life can throw you a curveball that can be difficult to gauge and handle on your own. You wouldn't think twice about going to the doctor to treat a bad cough, so why not take the same approach with your emotional health? Be proactive, put yourself first and get the support you need before your situation worsens.

Immediate and confidential help is available 24 hours a day through your Employee Assistance and Work/Life Program. You can speak to a counselor in person, over the phone or online. And if you need longer-term support, remember that your Employee Assistance and Work/Life Program can connect you to community resources and other available support options you may need to manage problems effectively and stay in top form emotionally.

