



## HOW WILL COUNSELING BENEFIT ME?

Perhaps you've never seen a counselor before, and you're feeling a little funny about coming to see one. You might wonder "why would I want to go talk to a total stranger about this problem I'm having?" Maybe you have a friend who told you about his bad experience when he went to see a counselor with his wife. You might wonder what the counselor will do with the information. If any of this sounds like a concern of yours, read on.

First off, counseling is a confidential service. All of our EAP counselors are licensed mental health professionals regulated by the laws of the New York State Education Department. This means that they must keep the information you provide completely confidential. There are only three types of situations when a counselor can "break" your confidentiality and they are 1) you threaten to harm yourself or another individual, 2) there is child abuse occurring, or 3) under the direct order of a judge in a court of law. Any other release of information would have to be with your written consent.

Sometimes an employee thinks that because their employer is paying for the EAP service, that the employer will be billed when you use the EAP and your employer will know that you came to see us. All of our contracts with employers are billed on an upfront basis depending on the total number of employees the employer has, and the projected utilization. Rest assured that when you see a counselor through Associates in Employee Assistance, your confidentiality will be protected, and no information will go back to your employer.

Another reason why some people avoid counseling is due to the experiences they may have heard from a friend. Keep in mind that every situation is unique, and your friend may not be telling you the entire circumstances of the problem they were experiencing or the complete context. They may be exaggerating what they thought they heard. The best bet may be for you to experience counseling for yourself, and not be biased by what someone else tells you.

A concern many people have is the idea of going to talk to a "total stranger." Keep in mind that everyone you have ever met in life (even your spouse or best friend) was a stranger to you before you met them. Most counselors recognize that it's a little uncomfortable coming to see them for the first time, and they do the best they can to help you feel comfortable.

A counselor is not there to judge you. Very simply their job is to find out what is troubling you, what improvements you'd like to see in your life, and what may be preventing you from achieving your goals. From there counselors are there to act as a coach in helping you direct yourself towards where you want to go. Because a counselor is friendly (but not your friend) he or she can be objective and honest about your circumstances. Unlike some friends, a counselor won't just tell you what you want to hear, but will tell you what they think you need to hear in a supportive, encouraging and professional manner.

Counselors are trained in a variety of methods and techniques to help their clients function as best as they can. The training that a counselor receives in graduate school teaches them to see the problems that their clients experience from a variety of perspectives. But more important than dwelling on the cause, most counselors are interested in helping their clients find solutions!

Most counselors are capable of viewing their clients problems from a variety of perspectives including cognitive, behavioral/learning, family systems, psychodynamic, bio-chemical, and interpersonal, to name just a few. But regardless of a counselor's theoretical orientation, their first concern is to make the counseling office a welcoming place, where you can feel comfortable working with a professional who has your best interest in mind.