



New Perspectives
Counselling

How To Make Counselling Work for You

Counselling works! Research shows that 70-80% of those who engage in counselling experience an improvement in their symptoms. Here's how to maximize your improvement.*

Take time to choose a counsellor that is a good fit. Have a phone conversation with them first to get a feel for their personality, and ask any questions you have about their therapeutic approach or any other concerns. If it feels right, attend an initial session to further determine if this person still feels like a good fit. If not, don't feel guilty about continuing your search! Every counsellor is different, just as every client is different. Research shows that 30-50% of success in counselling is due to the quality of rapport between the counsellor and client.

Take charge of your session time. It's important to make a set of clear goals with your therapist within the first session or two. This helps guide the therapy process. However, if there is something you really want to work on for a particular session, and it's not part of your overall therapy plan, that's okay! Goals can always be added or changed. Be clear about your desires at the beginning of each session. A good counsellor will work at your pace, on the things that are of uppermost importance to you. If you are not clear about what you need to work on, that's okay. Your counsellor will be able to listen to what's present for you, and help you become clear about your needs by asking clarifying questions.

Bring a journal to each session so you can make notes of things that you want to remember. It's also helpful to journal immediately after any therapeutic art or guided imagery session. Journal regularly at home. Journalling has tremendous therapeutic value, both in it's ability to get things up and out, as well as helping you to continue processing what has taken place in a therapy session.

Be honest and open in your sessions - especially with yourself! What better place to look at yourself honestly than with a counsellor who can be non-judgemental, compassionate (unconditional positive regard) and unbiased? Also, be honest with your counsellor about what is and isn't working during sessions. If you can't bring these qualities into a session, you will not achieve the goals you are after, no matter how good the counsellor is.

Bring a willingness to do the work. Yes, therapy is work. It takes courage and commitment to face difficult emotions, relationships and circumstances. However, having a good counsellor to walk with you through those difficulties makes it much easier than facing them alone. Although things can often seem to get temporarily worse before they get better, the counselling process provides containment and safety to help protect you from further harm while you are finding balance and healing. The hard work is always worth it in the end!

Here is a list of known factors that are proven to promote change in counselling: *

Positive expectations and hope	Relationship factors (trust, caring)
Disclosure / processing of content	Permission to explore new areas
Telling personal story	Feeling understood and heard
Emotional arousal	Facing fears
Emotional regulation	Reduction of stress
Honestly and directness	Rehearsal of new skills
Task facilitation	New insights and understandings
Sensitive confrontation	Challenging dysfunctional beliefs
Constructive risk taking	Focus on present, past and future
Modelling of new behaviours	Creation of meaning
Public commitment of intentions	Social support
Reframed narrative	New options and alternatives
Secondary gains eliminated	Responsibility for consequences
New resources accessed	New solutions generated
Understanding past behaviour	Future planning
Interpretation of behaviour	Tolerance of ambiguity
Tolerance of complexity	Inviting feedback
Responding to feedback	Flexible adjustments over time
Integrity and mutual respect	Follow up and accountability

*"Defining and delivering effective counselling and psychotherapy" - Lawrie Moloney - CFCA PAPER NO. 38 2016 (<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/cfca38-effective-counselling.pdf>)