

# Why choose counselling?

Counselling helps you gain new perspectives on current situations or past difficulties. These new perspectives can help you to change your life for the better.



## What do counsellors do?

- Professional counsellors are tertiary-educated and accredited by professional bodies such as PACFA [Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia] or ACA [Australian Counselling Association].
- Counsellors are mental health professionals trained to support you as you explore your experiences, feelings and thoughts. They believe that you have the innate capacity to develop solutions to the problems you are facing.
- Counsellors do not diagnose mental illnesses.
- Counsellors work using a person-centred approach, which means they foster a safe, compassionate, genuine and non-judgemental therapeutic relationship with you.
- Within this relationship, counsellors suggest a variety of evidence-based strategies and techniques to support your development and growth.

## The counselling relationship:

- creates a safe space for you to explore your concerns
- helps you to feel listened to
- validates your experiences
- encourages you to identify your strengths and resources
- helps you develop and move towards realistic personal goals
- empowers you to take control of your life
- begins the process of your emotional healing
- provides information and greater awareness about issues affecting your life

## How does counselling differ from psychology and psychiatry?

- **Psychologists** are tertiary-educated mental health professionals who are registered by the Psychological Board of Australia. Their expertise is in human emotions and they are qualified to diagnose and treat mental illnesses using evidence-based techniques.
- **Psychiatrists** have medical degrees and are qualified to diagnose and treat mental illnesses using a combination of medication and evidence-based techniques.

## How to find a counsellor:

- Search the online resources of accrediting bodies such as PACFA [[pacfa.org.au](http://pacfa.org.au)] or ACA [[theaca.net.au](http://theaca.net.au)].
- Ask for recommendations - these might come from other professional healthcare workers or organisations.
- Via specialist online therapy sites, eg Psychology Today [[psychologytoday.com/au](http://psychologytoday.com/au)] or Good Therapy [[goodtherapy.org](http://goodtherapy.org)].

## Questions to ask your counsellor:

- What are your qualifications?
- Are you professionally accredited? [Professional bodies hold their members accountable for their practice].
- What counselling strategies are you trained in?
- Are you experienced in my particular areas of need?

## What to consider after your first talk with a new counsellor:

- Did you feel comfortable talking with the counsellor?
- Did you feel your counsellor heard you, believed you and cared about you?
- Did you trust the counsellor?
- Did the counsellor keep the focus on you, and not talk about themselves?
- Did the counsellor help you to identify your own strengths and encourage you to use them?
- Did you feel confident that your counsellor could help you?