

**ARE YOU FEELING STRESSED OUT AND YOUR LIFE IS OUT OF CONTROL ?
A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR CAN HELP!**

Research conducted by a leading insurance company in the West states that people seeing a Counsellor cuts short their hospital visits by 30%

The process and purpose of Counselling is often misunderstood, and many people have a negative perception of it. There are several myths and stigma attached to the complete process of Counselling. People are often very conflicted about approaching a professional who will be discussing and analyzing their hurtful feelings, sadness, and anxieties. Therefore there is a constant sense of uneasiness and uncertainty in the minds of people and questions arise such as *“Can this professional really help me?”* or *“Would it be a painful waste of my time?”* or you might convince yourself that *“I really have no idea what I would say.”*? Especially if you have never been in counselling

SOME COMMON MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT COUNSELING

MYTH -Counseling is only for people who have serious emotional and mental problems.

FACT Seeing a counselor does not mean you are mentally ill or “crazy”. In life, almost everyone has difficulties and challenges at some point .and being able to ask for help to overcome these challenges are a sign of strength. and taking responsibility to get your life “back on track.”.

MYTH Seeking Counselling is a sign of weakness.

FACT Seeking counselling in fact a sign of taking responsibility for your well being. In fact, it takes courage to explore sensitive feelings and painful experiences. It is the first winning step for an individual in resolving their difficulties.

MYTH The counselor will “fix ” your problems.

FACT: Counselling is not a “quick fix” to cure to your problems. The counselor’s role is to help you reflect and explore your feelings, thoughts, and concerns, to examine your options, and assist you in achieving the goals you set.

MYTH: The Counsellor cannot understand you unless she has had similar experiences or is of the same background.

FACT: Counsellors are trained to be sensitive to and respectful of individual differences, including the specific concerns /needs with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, age, and socio-economic status. Many Counselors who are trained in the US and other Western countries have a super specialization in Multicultural Counseling considering diverse cultures in those countries. Counselors are professionally and extensively trained to treat a variety of life crisis and issues.

MYTH Seeking Counselling suggests you do not have enough faith that God will take care of you, and fix your problem.

FACT-While prayers and the complete trust in God are always beneficial to your life, these practices are not the only options available to you for sorting through issues. Most people who seek counseling are people who lead very normal lives and want to find solutions to their life and the problems they face.. It is important o bear in mind that everybody has significant problems at various times in their lives. Counseling is just a normal part of the process of resolving things and providing you the tools and the skills to handle them effectively.

or therapy –but the reality is -

Dubai is increasingly becoming a competitive market and environment to live. To survive and sustain in such a setting it is necessary for all of us to be mentally, emotionally and physically fit...People here are constantly bogged down with a myriad of real life issues and challenges such as a lack of permanence, competitive work environments, isolation inability to adjust to work and family pressure, need to support family back home, long commutes, long working hours,, relationship issues at home and at work are just a sampling few. Confronting and dealing with these challenges on a daily basis is tiring and impacts the well being of the individual significantly. In such situations, Stress is one of the most common symptoms experienced by many. Stress left untreated

STRESS AFFECTS YOU -

Emotionally

Feelings of sadness, lack of pleasure in day to day activities, anxiety, easily agitated, restless, a sense of unworthiness, irritability, defensive, angry, argumentative, mentally tired, preoccupied, lack of flexibility, difficulty concentrating, overcompensating, avoiding dealing with problems, or denying that you have problems

Behaviorally

Avoidance, neglecting responsibilities, Compulsive behaviors such as gambling, heavy spending, alcohol and sex, difficulty controlling aggressive impulses, indebtedness. defiance at work, tardiness, moodiness to name a few

Physically

High blood pressure, weight loss / weight gain, lack of sleep, anger, lack of appetite, or anxious, palpitations and increased sweating, overeating , headaches, muscle tension and aches to name a few.

can debilitate you physically and mentally and can impair your day to day functioning severely. Stress is treatable and curable if you seek the right help.” Counseling is one of those help forums that can relieve you from these symptoms, and help you to maximize your potential and make positive changes in your life. Visit a Licensed Professional counsellor today to regain your life and secure your well being

What brings people to Counseling

From childhood through late adulthood, there are certain times when we may need help addressing problems and issues that cause us emotional distress or make us feel overwhelmed. People often come to a counselor when they face:

Coping with stress-two fold:

- Self control-which is taking responsibility for reactions to a situation by getting help (seeking mental health Counseling, attending well being programs and positive self talk)
- Situational control-includes problem solving, effective communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and time management (which can be skills learned through counselling)

- ***Life transitions*** such as—marriage, pregnancy divorce or remarriage; having, raising and launching children ; life threatening illness, substance abuse and or addiction, moving, changing jobs, schools, friends or communities; facing retirement, loss of loved ones, job conflicts and concerns, relationship issues

- **Debilitating Feelings** such as—depression or sadness, stress or anxiety, emptiness or loneliness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence in self, fear and or phobia, disinterest in work, frequent tardiness
- **Troubled relationships**—with spouse/partner, family or friends, boss or colleagues and in school /University/ /teachers
- **Personal and spiritual uncertainties**—about the purpose, meaning and direction in life and a sense of loss of one’s ability and capabilities

What is Counselling?

Mental Health counselling is based on the science of Psychology. The methods and techniques of various treatment modalities that are used by mental health counsellors/therapists are based on scientific research. These methods are practical, solution focussed; problem solving based skill building methods whose main goal is the best interest and overall well being of the individual.

Counselling is a facilitative and interactive process where a counsellor provides to the client emotional help, guidance, insight, nurturance and clarity to life situations, crisis and dilemmas. People often behave in ways without knowing why they do so and may be living or behaving in ways that they would like to understand better and change. The process of Counselling can help to bring insight and awareness to their unconscious feelings and behaviours and the connection between them. The process eventually allows the client greater freedom in making choices that helps the client to achieve self sufficiency, a greater sense of self-worth and empowerment

WHEN IS TOO MUCH STRESS “TOO MUCH”

- Do you have difficulty sleeping at night?
- Do you have persistent headaches, backaches or stomachaches?
- Do you harbor feelings of resentment or anger?
- Do you feel overwhelmed by too much to do and the inability to organize time effectively?
- Do you find it difficult to show your feelings?
- Do you feel irritable and angry without cause?
- Do you experience a consistent lack of energy?
- Do you worry about the future and feel afraid of tomorrow?
- Do you feel isolated and alone?
- Do you find yourself spending less time with friends and more time alone?
- Are you unable to relax and laugh?
- Do you find you are eating more than usual?
- Are you uncomfortable in open (closed) spaces?
- Do you feel pressured in many areas of your life and unable to complete tasks successfully?
- Do you find yourself crying all the time or unable to cry at all?
- Do you have trouble making up your mind?
- Have you become more accident-prone?

If you answered YES to two or more of these questions, or hesitated in answering NO, you may want to seek professional help to reduce your stress or anxiety levels.
 (Source-Mental Health Association of Greater St. Louis, USA)

ESSENCE OF COUNSELING

“The Essence of counselling is always the learning of improved skills and techniques to increase one’s ability to better deal with life’s vicissitudes”

Who is your Counsellor?

Your Counsellor a highly skilled professional with a minimum of a graduate degree in the field of Counselling licensed in the area of mental health and is trained to provide the following core services-

- ❖ Assessment and Diagnosis
- ❖ Treatment planning and utilization review
- ❖ Psychotherapy-Individual, couple and Family
- ❖ Brief and solution focussed therapy
- ❖ Psycho education and prevention programs
- ❖ Crisis management and referrals to other medical professionals for consultation

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR

1. Is your Counsellor a member of the professional Counseling associations?
2. What are the educational Qualifications of your Counsellor? How long has he/she been in practice?
3. Does he or she have a Degree from an accredited and a recognized University?
4. What is his/her areas of specialization (such as family therapy, women's issues, substance abuse counseling, etc.)?
5. How can he/she help me with my problems? What type of treatment do you use? How long do you think counseling will last?

How does Counselling work?

The therapist listens to the client's reasons for seeking help. This could be initiated through a phone call, walk in, or a referral. As a follow up a screening/assessment appointment is set in person which generally lasts for about 50 minutes. In this meeting the clinician conducts an assessment with a thorough screening of the presenting problem, rule out organic symptoms that might be causing the presenting problem, provide a medical referral if necessary and recommends one or more ways of therapy to eliminate the symptoms of distress

COUNSELING BENEFITS YOU IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS-

- Improved happiness and enjoyment in life
- Improved mood, attitude or behaviour
- Overcoming depression
- Effectively managing and coping with Grief, crisis or loss
- Problem solving and stress reduction
- Learning to be more optimistic
- Learning to make significant changes to problematic choices and behaviours
- Achieving successful relationship with peers, colleagues and family members
- Rectifying maladaptive behaviours and attitudes
- Managing and overcoming mood swings and aggressive behaviors
- Decreasing conflict and improving communications
- Effectively Balancing work and family

If it is determined that other professional help is needed, the therapist will assist in making an appropriate referral. All decisions are made in consultation with the client.

What is the duration of therapy?

The time required for therapy varies with each person depending on the nature of the issues presented, personal history and agreed upon goals. The length of therapy is jointly determined by the client and counsellor and may be revised as therapy progresses. Appointments are usually once a week and last about 60 minutes. In a therapeutic model such as Crisis Counselling, the session is very solution focused with not more than three one-hour sessions. Otherwise sessions can be short term which is about six sessions with one session a week or long term which could range from about 10-12 sessions with one session a week. The objective, duration and the treatment plan is outlined at the onset of therapy to provide the client a strong structure and a committed continuity to their treatment. However, they are not fixed considering the therapist will review the progress and the outcomes achieved with the client on an ongoing basis and on a mutual agreement with the client will modify and or terminate the session accordingly.

“Regardless of the length of a session(s), therapy is hard work and client will not see a benefit unless and until the client is committed to exploration, understanding, growth and change alongside a therapist committed to facilitating that process. It is also critical that the client is committed to making therapy an ongoing and active process even once they are outside the session which means they should be committed to applying the skills and the lessons learned from their sessions outside in the real world and in their respective life and relationships” Says Ms. Menon, Licensed Counselor

Is counselling confidential?

All information shared in therapy is held in utmost confidentiality. As a client, you are guaranteed the protection of confidentiality within the boundaries of the client/counselor relationship. Counselors are mandated by their ethical commitments that no information discussed in the sessions is released without the authorization of the client. The only limitations to confidentiality occur when a counselor feels that there is clear and imminent danger to you or to others. However, no information discussed in the sessions is released without the authorization of the client. Detailed information about confidentiality and privacy will be listed in the Client’s Bill of Rights which is signed by the client before commencement of session(s).



About the writer –Sailaja Menon provides Psychological Counseling at Indian Workers Resource Centre and Consulate General of India. She is a licensed psychologist at Psychiatry and therapy Centre in Dubai Health Care city