

## What is counseling/therapy?

- People and professions will differ in how they talk about and define counseling/therapy.
- A way of seeing counseling/therapy is:
  - Empowering personal growth and relationships to influence healing goals like:
    - kindness to self
    - hopefulness for a positive future
    - assertiveness to know and voice best interests
    - responsive connections with family, friends, and interpersonal networks
    - fulfilling experiences in social situations

## What does counseling/therapy involve?

- **Counseling / therapy happens:**
  - *One-to-one (individual approaches)*
  - *Couples (two people who are in an intimate relationship, like spouses)*
  - *Other relationship-focused:*
    - *Parent-child/youth*
    - *Parent-Adult Child*
    - *Siblings*
  - *Groups – for mutual support and for processing issues (e.g., grief)*
- **Counseling / therapy builds:**
  - *Therapeutic alliance* between participant and counselor/therapist to trust that the space they create feels safe - as in welcoming and non-threatening
  - *Tools for exploring* factors inside self and outside self that affect how we feel, think, do, and find meaning, satisfaction, and honour in our identity, relationships, community, world, and universe
  - *Resources* for facilitating optimal personal growth, healthier interpersonal relationships, and more fulfilling social involvement
  - *Symptoms and problems* can sometimes worsen (intensify) before alleviating

## What are some benefits of counseling/therapy?

- Builds inside-self and interpersonal **resources**:
  - Strengthening *self-knowledge*
  - Learning skills to *handle challenges* that enter into our lives
  - Gaining a *sense of pride* from setting and completing achievable goals
  - Feeling calmed and more hopeful by a *release of negative* energy
- Facilitates **new ways of knowing, thinking and feeling** about self, relationships, life
  - Enabling abilities to *process blocked/buried information*
  - Casting *new light* on life's problems and day-to-day stressors
  - Empowering you to *change traumatic impacts* of past life experiences
  - Reducing unnecessary suffering

## How can someone know if counseling/therapy is helpful?

- Helpfulness of counseling / therapy can be known when:
  - **Relevance** to you: “Feels right”
  - Sense of **trust and connection** between participant and counselor/therapist
  - Space feels **open, safe, and non-threatening**
  - Motivates you to **commit and attend** sessions
  - **Encourages you to share** ideas on what helps and what hinders their healing
  - **Clarifies** healing issues and strategies
  - **Facilitates** organizing big goals into achievable pieces
  - **Balances** participant control and counselor/therapist direction
  - **Equips** participants getting more ‘integrated’:
    - (Re)telling old stories to find **acceptance and shift** blockages
    - **Opening awareness** of positive resources like ‘competent protectors’
    - Adjusting past injury to **reconcile wholeness and connectedness** of self, relationships, life: emotional, physical, mental, Spiritual, social

## When is it time to exit counseling/therapy?

- Not always fully under individual control; say if a set number of sessions paid by a provider like NIHB
- Acceptable to exit when:
  - Finished the specific personal growth and healing goals that brought you in
  - Balanced and not at risk
- Appropriate starting points when thinking to exit:
  - A conversation between you and counselor/therapist
  - A decision you make and inform your counselor/therapist or case manager/primary worker
  - A referral by current provider to a more specialized counselor/therapist
- Counseling/therapy viewpoints differ in the characteristic timeframes:
  - **Short-term approaches** respond to narrowly focused life challenges (e.g., quit smoking, reduce performance anxiety, grief from a recent loss):
    - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), and Solution-focused Therapies.
  - **Longer-term approaches** respond to deeper, more complex healing issues (layers of unresolved grief, unexplained trust issues, cumulative trauma):
    - Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), meridian therapy, Jungian and Gestalt psychotherapy, and somatic experiencing.

## How do I check effectiveness of counselors/therapists?

- **Good fit for you:** Has experience and insights that relate to your healing issues
- **Clarity:** Able to provide feedback to help you understand symptoms and problems
- **Professionalism:** Punctual and consistent with sessions; Follows-up agreements
- **Safety:** Facilitates you feeling physically comfortable and emotionally safe
- **Empathic listening:** You feel you are being heard for what you say and mean
- **Safe and Effective Use of Self:** Uses self-disclosure appropriately as a counseling/therapeutic tool