

# “Thoughts on Counselling” by Delphi Ellis.

“There was a shocked silence. Even Toad sat up a little straighter. None of the animals knew fully what counselling meant, but they knew it was a mysterious activity undertaken by people who had experienced some severe or shocking event. The Rat, who was a traditionalist at heart said, ‘Do you really think Toad is that bad? I mean, don’t you think it’s a bit trendy, all this counselling...In my day, people in trouble were given a couple of aspirin...’” *Extract taken from ‘Counselling for Toads’, by Robert De Board (based on the story, Wind in the Willows).*

## **Emotional housekeeping**

There has long been a stigma attached to counselling, an idea that people should perhaps be able to cope and "get on with it". However, an injured leg may require physiotherapy so, in a similar way, perhaps counselling is physiotherapy for the mind or "emotional housekeeping" (based on a definition of physiotherapy as an effort to relieve pain, regain movement and return to functioning in daily life). If you look up counsellor in the dictionary, you'll see words like "adviser", "someone who gives advice or consultation", "someone who advises or recommends". It's understandable then, why some people perceive - and maybe even expect - that a counsellor will have an "easy fix" to their problems at their first session. A professional Counsellor will never tell you what to do, or say things to you like "pull yourself together" or "cheer up". Instead they can offer you - the client - the opportunity for personal exploration during your time together.

You may feel nervous about counselling, talking to a complete stranger and opening doors to emotions that you have not opened before or for some time. Some people find it easy to talk, some people find it more difficult and may find that after one or two sessions they are not ready to uncover their emotions until a later date. There is no failing in this. Counselling sessions usually last about an hour and often a counsellor will make an assessment as to whether they can work with the client based on their own limitations and the stated needs of the client.

## **Personal exploration in confidence**

Counselling is like any form of work or contract that is entered in to, in that there are rules and boundaries which must be adhered to. In all cases what is discussed during the session will remain confidential to both parties. Professional Counsellors will receive supervision and clients may be discussed anonymously. This ensures the counsellor remains effective with the client. In some cases, counsellors may be concerned for the welfare of their client and may wish to discuss their client's progress with either the Doctor or other suitable medical professional, after performing a risk assessment. However, this is rarely done without prior knowledge of or consultation with the client. In cases where clients may have harmed themselves or others (or plan to), all counsellors have a legal obligation to make the appropriate organisation aware.

## **A talking therapy**

When we experience severe pain in our lives, whether it's physical or emotional, we may be left scarred in many ways. Pushing the experience to the back of our minds, perhaps we feel we can cope. But, months or years later things may feel as if they're going "wrong". You may have been diagnosed with depression and/or are worrying about money, work or relationships. Talking with someone impartial, in confidence, may help explore those experiences so that you can learn to live with them and move forward.

If you are in any doubt about your health or well being always consult a suitable medical professional such as your GP in the first instance.

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