

'COUNSELING AWARENESS MONTH'

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April is Counseling Awareness Month. It is an annual observance that is celebrated in April to educate the public about the role of counselors in helping individuals to live healthier, happier, and more productive lives. It is sponsored by the American Counselors Association. Counseling can be beneficial in many ways. For example, counseling can help when a person is making a life-changing decision, addressing issues that cause emotional pain, or when a person seeks to strengthen self-esteem, coping and social skills. There are several different types of counseling that can all be helpful including, pastoral or spiritual counseling, marriage counseling, job and business counseling, education counseling, and genetic counseling. There are times when all of us experience difficult situations that cause emotional distress and can have a negative impact on our health and wellbeing. Counselors can help you identify your problems and assist you in the best ways to cope with the situation by changing behaviors and finding constructive ways to deal with the problem. Counselors can offer help in addressing many issues including:

- ❖ Anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional problems and disorders
- ❖ Family and relationship issues
- ❖ Substance abuse and other addictions
- ❖ Sexual abuse and domestic violence
- ❖ Social and emotional difficulties
- ❖ Life changes, transitions
- ❖ Divorce, death of a loved one

Sometimes it can be hard to decide whether counseling is right for you. Some good indicators that you should seek counseling are when you're having difficulties at work, you're ability to concentrate has diminished or when the pain has become unbearable. Children may experience difficulty managing good behavior and academics, have strained relationships with peers and family members, mood swings, etc. Other signs and situations that counseling may be warranted for include:

- ❖ Difficulty sleeping at night
- ❖ Feeling like you cannot manage a problem on your own
- ❖ Seeing problems as getting worse, not better
- ❖ Having a loss of interest in life or think it's not worth living
- ❖ Long lasting pain and distress
- ❖ Trouble getting along with others
- ❖ Family/peer conflicts

It is important to find a counselor that you are comfortable with and feel safe opening up to. Counselors are expected to follow a Code of Ethics and Practice, which requires them to protect the confidentiality of their communications with clients with certain limitations. There are a variety of ways to locate a professional counselor including:

- ❖ Referral from your physician
- ❖ Recommendations from friends
- ❖ Crisis hotlines

- ❖ Community mental health agencies
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Hospitals
- ❖ Employees Assistance Programs

It is important to remember that counseling may be hard work at times but change and progress do happen even if it takes a long time. Counseling can help maximize your potential to deal with life's challenges and manage stress effectively. To learn more about counseling, you can visit the American Counseling Association website at <http://www.counseling.org>. The following is a poem by Samuel T. Gladding, a very prominent doctor of counseling, and author and creator of numerous publications and media.

Journey

I am taken back by your words—
To your history and the mystery of being human
in an all-too-often robotic world.
I hear your pain
and see the pictures you paint
so cautiously and vividly.
The world you draw is a kaleidoscope
ever changing, ever new, encircling, and fragile.
Moving past the time and through the shadows
you look for hope beyond the groups you knew
as a child.
I want to say: "I'm here. Trust the process."
But the artwork is your own
so I withdraw and watch you work
while occasionally offering you colors
and images of the possible.

-Samuel T. Gladding

Gladding, S.T. (1990). Journey. Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 28, 142, Copyright ACA.