

Who? Me? No, I'm Fine... I Don't Need Any Help

from the American Counseling Association

Most of us find asking for help difficult. It can make us feel weak and inadequate, which is hard to accept if we've been taught to be independent, strong and self-sufficient.

Yet, at times, life can seem overwhelming. Events or life situations may leave us feeling confused, troubled, depressed and unsure of how to make things better.

At such times most of us usually see two options. One is to tough it out, doing what we can while ignoring the rest and hoping things turn out okay. This approach, even if we finally muddle through, can cause tremendous stress and anxiety, and sometimes leads to much more serious problems.

The second option is turning to family or friends. That's not a bad choice if those we trust with our fears and problems truly are understanding and able to offer meaningful help.

But sometimes family or friends aren't available, or don't have the experience or time to provide needed assistance. That's when it's time to consider a third option – professional help.

Seeking out a professional counselor can be a difficult choice. It's not only asking for help, but doing so with a stranger, and one you have to pay. People may also fear mental health professionals, based on movie and TV stereotypes. Fictional counselors always seem to deal with "crazy" people, seldom seem to really help, and have clients who seem ashamed that they needed counseling help.

The truth, of course, is that most counseling isn't for "crazy" people, but rather for perfectly normal people facing problems that are negatively affecting their lives. It might be work concerns, family relations, school issues or a host of other everyday life situations. And it's often less expensive than imagined, especially with health insurance or through a community mental health center.

Professional counselors are trained to help people feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what to do next. They don't dictate cures to clients, but rather help patients uncover answers right for them.

Finding a counselor isn't difficult. Your local mental health association, the telephone yellow pages under "Counselors," an online search for licensed professional counselors, or going to the "Find A Counselor" link at the ACA website, www.counseling.org, can all help you find counseling assistance.

Getting needed help isn't a sign of weakness, but rather of the strength to recognize that your problems are real and that you want to do something about them.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

###