

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

No, I Really Don't Need To Go To Counseling

from the American Counseling Association

It can be difficult to ask for help. Most of us were taught from early in life that we have to be strong, independent and responsible for ourselves. Asking for help, especially from a stranger whom we are going to have to pay, seems to run counter to much of what we've been taught.

Yet, at various times, most of us are able to recognize that every now and then we just may be in a little over our heads. We might find ourselves troubled, depressed, confused or just unsure about what the next step should be. We may be overwhelmed by what life has suddenly dealt us, or emotionally buried by any of a variety of things. We need help.

Help, of course, is what the counseling profession is about. Yet many people hesitate to seek counseling, usually not because of any negative first hand experience, but from what's been depicted in novels, movies and TV shows.

They tend to worry that the counselor will think them crazy, or is going to tell them what to do. They're afraid people will think they're weak for seeking help, plus they may believe that counseling never really helps anyone.

The reality, of course, is quite the opposite. The training that a professional counselor goes through doesn't focus on a person's weaknesses or problems, but rather on the person's strengths, the things that he or she is already doing well. Professional counselors are trained to help their clients feel safe and comfortable. Their job isn't to scold, to make someone feel guilty, or to insist on certain actions or thoughts.

Does counseling work? Studies have found that those who attend even a few counseling sessions feel better than those who attend none. Some researchers have even found that it's not counseling technique or approach that makes counseling effective, but just the fact of participating in counseling. In other words, sometimes merely acknowledging that you want something in your life to change and having a professional counselor who understands you, can really make a difference in your life.

Professional counselors offer specialized help in a variety of fields from relationship to career counseling and much, much more. If you are facing issues in your life and want to make a change, set up an initial appointment to get the facts about what the counseling profession has to offer you.

"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.

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