

# Your First Counseling Session

## THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

If you've decided to take the first step toward getting extra help with your mental health from a counselor, therapist or psychologist, congratulations! You are on your way to becoming a better version of yourself, and that is worth celebrating.

Even if you've had prior experiences with counseling, a little "refresher" on what to expect may help calm any jitters.

First and foremost, remember that you are a consumer in this process and that, if at any point you feel that the fit is not a good one, it is okay to move on. You want to find a counselor who is a good match for you. Only you can decide if the relationship "feels" right and if you feel that the counselor can help you with your concerns.

### WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR INITIAL FACE-TO-FACE APPOINTMENT

The initial appointment with your counselor will probably be geared toward establishing a connection, getting to know one another, defining goals and providing you with a sense of hope for the future. If you're using your insurance benefit, the counselor may ask for demographic and insurance information. The counselor should also provide his or her HIPPA (privacy) statement and should review the confidential nature of your sessions.

### Questions your counselor may ask you

The counselor will likely ask questions surrounding the reason for your visit. Be as honest as possible with him or her, keeping in mind that the conversation is confidential, and that the counselor is interested in helping you to feel better. Questions may include:

- What brings you in to see me today?
- What are your current life circumstances?

- Have you had any counseling before? When and what was your experience like?
- How's your health? What medications are you currently taking?
- How much alcohol do you drink? Do you use any recreational drugs?
- Do you have any family history of depression or substance use?
- What are your symptoms? How have you tried to manage them thus far?
- What are your goals for therapy or counseling?
- How can I be most helpful to you at this time?
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### Questions you'll want to ask the counselor

The counselor should be willing to answer your questions so don't feel funny about asking any questions that are on your mind. These may include:

- What is your training?
- How long have you been in practice?
- What are your areas of expertise?
- Do you have experience working with individuals who have struggled with the same issues I am currently confronting?
- How do I reach you outside of my scheduled time? Do you have backup coverage if I need an immediate consultation?
- What is your cancellation policy?

Remember, this is your time. The counselor is a consultant to you and is there to help you sort through and understand current challenges while helping you make some changes in how you cope.