



HOW TO CHOOSE A COUNSELOR

Congratulations on taking the brave step of seeking help! Asking for support is a big first step toward a happier and healthier you, but many people looking for a counselor have a lot of questions about where to start.

COUNSELOR, THERAPIST, PSYCHOLOGIST, PSYCHIATRIST: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The terms *counselor* and *therapist* are often interchangeable. They indicate any mental health professional who talks with clients. These credentials indicate that the professional has completed a master's level education in a mental health field, and that he or she has an understanding of mental health issues and services. You may see the following degrees and credentials when seeking a counselor:

- LPC—Licensed professional counselor
- LCSW or LSW—Licensed clinical social worker or licensed social worker
- LMFT—Licensed marriage and family therapist

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SIX TIPS FOR COLLEGE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Going to college is an exciting time in a young person's life. It's a time for gaining new knowledge and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. Here are a few pointers for college students on staying safe and healthy.

1. **Maintain a healthy lifestyle** starting with diet and exercise. Follow an eating plan with portions from the basic food groups. Also be aware that beverages may be adding extra calories. Adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of exercise each week. Be creative about ways to get in exercise like walking across campus instead of driving, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, and working out with a friend, group or joining an intramural sports team.
2. **Managing stress and maintaining good balance** is important. A few ways to manage stress are to get enough sleep, avoid drugs and alcohol, connect socially and also take time for yourself. Seek help from a medical or mental health professional if depressed or experiencing distress. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among persons age 15 to 24. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.
3. **Sexually transmitted infections** can be prevented. They are also treatable, and many are curable. Half of all new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occur among young people under the age of 25. College students and others who are sexually active should get tested for STDs and HIV to know their status and to protect themselves and their sexual partners.
4. **Sexual assault** happens on college campuses as well as in communities. One in five women have been sexually assaulted while in college, and 80% of female victims of completed rape experienced their first rape before the age of 25. Students should know their rights, and seek help immediately if they or someone they know is the victim of violence.

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These mental health professionals work with families and individuals dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and many kinds of life changes and events, including job loss, marriage issues, quitting smoking and everything in between.

Psychologists have a doctorate (a PhD or PsyD). Psychologists may provide mental health counseling or therapy, but are also trained to test for and officially diagnose mental illnesses and learning disabilities.

Psychiatrists have completed medical training (MD), are licensed and work with clients to prescribe medication that may help with symptoms of mental health issues. A psychiatrist may or may not be trained to provide counseling. Psychologists and counselors may refer a client to a psychiatrist if they feel medication will help the client with their mental health issue.

WHICH KIND OF PROFESSIONAL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

The answer to that question depends on the issues you are facing. If you are dealing with difficulty coping day to day or you have a change in your life that is causing you a lot of stress, you may want to start by working with a social worker or licensed counselor.

If you think you may have medical issues such as ADHD, clinical depression, panic attacks or anxiety that will be helped by medication, you may want to request a referral

to a psychologist for diagnostic testing or to a psychiatrist who can prescribe helpful medication.

HOW DO I CHOOSE THE BEST PERSON FOR ME?

- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**—Your employee assistance program can help you by providing short-term problem solving and counseling services. Many problems can be resolved at EAP but if additional services are needed the EAP will assist you in looking at resources available and help connect you to the right resource
- **Word of mouth**—If you have a friend, family member or coworker who has had a good experience with a mental health professional, it might be helpful to call that provider and ask if he or she can assist you.
- **Your community**—If you do not have insurance, many communities have a range of low-cost or sliding-scale services offered through nonprofit organizations, community health centers or universities.

THE NEXT STEPS

Make a short list of counselors in your area who have been recommended to you. Speak with each of the providers on your list or at least with someone in their offices. Briefly explain your concerns, and don't forget to ask the following questions:

- What is the therapist's education and type of license?
- What is his or her experience and history with your issue?
- Where is the office located?
- What is the therapist's schedule?
- What insurance does the therapist accept, and how is billing done?

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Weigh your decision the same way you would think about hiring someone for a job:

- Do you feel comfortable with your interaction with this person?
- Do you feel like the therapist will be able to help you?
- Was the therapist able to answer your questions to your satisfaction?

Lastly, if you meet with a provider and it doesn't feel like a good fit, keep looking. Not all clients and therapists are a good match, and it is OK for you to make sure you find a provider who will put you at ease.

Kovens, L. (Reviewed 2016). *How to choose a counselor*. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

TEN LITTLE THINGS That Can Make a Big Difference in Your Marriage

A strong, supportive relationship is built from a couple's words and actions. With work, children and other responsibilities, sometimes it is easy to take your spouse for granted or forget to do the things that strengthen the marriage. Here are some little things to do that can have a big payoff for your marriage:

- **Give your spouse a compliment.** Better yet, brag about your spouse to others when your spouse is in earshot. It will boost their self-confidence, and your spouse will want to continue making you happy and proud.
- **Find something to laugh about.** Laughter helps us cope with stress and the pressures of our busy lives. A sense of humor helps marriages survive problems, large and small.
- **Have a shared activity both of you enjoy.** It can be anything from going out to dinner, dancing or gardening. You may need to make time to do things together, but this is a great way of keeping intimacy alive and well.
- **Treat your spouse the way you want to be treated.** Be respectful if you want to be respected. This approach helps establish the fact that both parties have a responsibility in the marriage.
- **Take time to touch.** The value of human touch is amazing. Touching your spouse each day can help you both maintain physical and emotional health.
- **Be willing to compromise.** Give up some of your wants for the sake of what your spouse wants. Identify the situation as a compromise to avoid having unresolved anger or resentment later.
- **Give a smile.** An easy but powerful way to value your spouse is to smile and tell your spouse how you feel.



- **Discuss the things that bother you.** Letting things build up day after day without discussing and resolving them leads to anger and resentment that hurt your marriage. The more quickly something can be addressed and taken care of, the more time you will have for the enjoyable and healthy parts of your relationship.
- **Communication is key.** Without communication, any team is in trouble. It is important to communicate your thoughts, plans, ideas and opinions on a consistent basis. Equally important is communicating your feelings—the joys, sorrows and frustrations we all experience.
- **Chart your course.** Charting a course establishes a shared vision for your marriage. It also can be useful to establish some markers to ensure you are moving toward your goals.

For more information about strengthening marriages and families, visit the Web sites of the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (<http://www.smartmarriages.com/>) or the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (<http://www.okmarriage.org/>).

Reference: University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Alumni Association. (1981, March-April). *UCLA Monthly, Alumni Association News* (p 1).

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (Updated 2009, January 5). 10 little things that can make a big difference in your marriage. In *Safe children and healthy families are a shared responsibility*. Retrieved March 9, 2015, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov>



Flexible Work Arrangements: PROS & CONS

When parents are unable to get flexibility in their child care arrangements, flexibility in their work arrangements can make all the difference. Here are a few of the options you may want to consider in meshing your work schedule with your child's care. Find out if your company offers any of these options. If not, you may decide to convince your boss to start.

FLEXTIME

This may be the most common of all flexible work arrangements, with more than one fourth of full-timers (27 million workers total in 2004, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics) working flexible schedules. For many parents who have children enrolled in day care centers with set hours, it is easier to pick up their children on time (and avoid paying hefty late fees!) if they go into work early and leave early. For example, instead of working from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (and getting stuck in rush hour traffic on the way to the day care center), you may prefer to go in at 7 a.m. and leave at 3 p.m.

This could also take the form of a compressed workweek (such as four 10-hour days, as opposed to five 8-hour days), giving you a full extra day to be with the kids. If you find that you're working long hours anyway, this is a great way to carve out time for yourself.

Pros

- You can set your schedule to match with your child care arrangement.
- You're still getting a lot of "face time" at the office, so you're still very accessible to coworkers.
- You can avoid traveling during peak commute times.
- If you're working the same number of hours, you don't have to take a reduction in pay.
- If your new schedule includes hours in the early morning or evening when the workplace is relatively quiet, you may find that your time there is more productive.

Con

- You'll still be working the same number of hours. If that is a problem, then you might want to consider job sharing or moving to a part-time schedule.

JOB SHARING

Perhaps you have a demanding but satisfying job that requires a 60-hour workweek. You are left with scant time with your child, not to mention that it is next to impossible to find child care that covers those hours.

What if you found someone you work well with, who is just as capable and challenged by the job as you, but shies away from the long hours? If the two of you are able to split the work, it would be less than a full-time job for both of you, freeing up time to be with your child. Your boss gets a two-for-one deal, because you and your job partner are likely to be much more productive and more loyal employees when you aren't overextended.

Pros

- You can free up more time to take care of family and personal needs.
- This may be a better schedule for you if you have children in part-time child care or in school.
- You'll have more energy for your job when you are there.
- You don't have to give up a satisfying job just because of the time demands.

Cons

- In addition to sharing your job responsibilities, you'll be sharing the pay.
- You'll need to have excellent communication with your job-share partner since you'll be sharing the work product. If you can't make that happen, then this is not a good option for you.

TELECOMMUTING

As the world continues to move into an information age, more workers are finding that with the right equipment (computer, fax line, cell phone, Internet access, etc.) they are able to do their jobs from just about anywhere. This technology, combined with workers' needs to spend less time in traffic and more time with their families, has nearly doubled the number of telecommuters in the U.S., according to a 2004 study by the Office of Personnel Management.

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SIX TIPS for College Health and Safety

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5. Binge drinking is defined as having four or more drinks for women or five or more drinks for men over a short period of time. About 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinks. Binge drinking is a factor that increases your chances for risky sexual behavior, unintended pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, car crashes, violence and alcohol poisoning. Get the facts about alcohol use and health and learn what you can do.

6. Substance abuse and smoking are problems among young people. In 2013, around 21% of individuals age 18 to 25 reported use of illicit drugs in the past month. Heroin use more than doubled among this age group in the past decade. Among cigarette smokers, 99% of people first tried smoking by the age of 26. Learn more about the types of commonly misused or abused drugs and call 1-800-662-HELP to get help for substance abuse problems.

If you or a friend is struggling with a health or safety problem, you can:

- Talk to someone you trust for support.
- Visit your college health center, local clinic or hospital.
- Contact the campus or community police if your or someone else's safety is threatened.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Six tips for college health and safety*. Retrieved March 30, 2016, from <http://www.cdc.gov/>



Flexible Work Arrangements: PROS & CONS

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Pros

- Reduced commuting time means more time for family needs.
- More flexibility for picking up kids from child care or staying home with a sick child.
- More focused time for your work without the regular distractions of the office, (unless you're trying to watch your child while you work).
- This is great for people who don't like the workplace environment. You can even work in your pajamas if you want!

Cons

- If you're not a self-directed worker, you may have trouble motivating yourself.
- You'll be giving up "face time" at the office. This isn't necessarily a problem, but you may have to be more deliberate about staying connected with coworkers and managers.
- Some people find they feel isolated working at home alone. Again, it's up to you to find ways to stay connected.

Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2016). *Flexible work arrangements: Pros and cons*. Raleigh, NC: Author.