

# What To Expect When You Go To Counseling

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## What will counseling be like?

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Going to counseling is a lot like going to a regular doctor appointment. Most counselors work in offices that are a lot like a doctor's office. You will fill out information about yourself or your child just like you would at a doctor appointment.

People get ideas about counseling from what they see on TV. TV often shows a person lying on a couch talking to a "shrink." That is **not** what you should expect. You will talk to a counselor face to face and the counselor will treat you like you are a partner in making a plan to help your depression. Most counseling lasts around 8 to 20 visits.

## What kind of things will I be asked to do?

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You will talk with a counselor about what is going on in your life. If it is a child who is depressed, the counselor will talk to the child and the parents. Events in life or a person's reaction to these events can cause a person to become depressed. Hearing your story will help the counselor plan for how to help.

The counselor will ask the person with depression to talk about their thoughts and beliefs. People who have depression start to think negative thoughts. These thoughts affect how they feel. Your counselor will teach you to change what you are thinking about things in your life. When you change your thoughts, your feelings often change too. When both your thoughts and feelings change, the depression may get better.

The counselor will also ask you to talk about behavior. Some behaviors make depression worse. The counselor might ask you to change some of your habits. Habits are behaviors that you do on a regular basis. The counselor might ask a person with depression to eat healthier food, be more active, or change their sleep schedule. Some people feel happier when they learn to ask for help or speak up for themselves. Others may need to learn to relax and not worry so much. Some people get better from depression just by working with a counselor on these things. Counseling can help some people as much as medicine.

Children with depression can learn these things too. The counselor will ask parents to help the child remember to work on their treatment plan.



## What kind of training do counselors have?

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Counselors go to college for 6 years to learn to become counselors. All counselors must take a test after they have finished school. Passing the test shows that a counselor has learned what is needed to be a counselor. A counselor will work with you and with a doctor to make a plan to help you with depression.

## What if counseling doesn't help me?

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Tell your counselor if you are not feeling better. They might suggest that you see a doctor. The doctor can tell you if a medicine for depression will help. Your counselor will also ask if you are following your treatment plan for depression. You might need to adjust your plan or find a way to make it easier to follow.

## What should I do if I have thoughts about suicide?

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People who are depressed sometimes think about suicide. You should always tell someone if you have these thoughts! Your doctor or counselor will know how to help. Suicide is never the answer. There is always a way to feel better.

## What if I don't feel comfortable talking with the counselor?

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Tell the counselor how you feel. You and the counselor might find ways to work together after talking. Your counselor will want you to be honest with them. Counselors are all different just like people all are different. Don't give up! Find a counselor who is a good match for you and work with them until your depression is better. You can call MDwise Customer Service to help you find a counselor that is right for you. You can also talk to your doctor for suggestions.

## Helpful tips for getting over depression:

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- Be patient with yourself or your child. It takes time to recover from depression.
- Try to find things to do that make you feel happy or that make you feel good about yourself.
- Laugh... even though it may seem hard! Watch something funny on TV or see a funny movie. Read the comic page in the newspaper. Ask someone to tell you a silly story.
- Try to avoid making important decisions in life when you are depressed. If you must make a big decision, ask someone you trust to help you.
- Refuse to believe negative thoughts that tell you to blame yourself or that you are a failure. Remind yourself that negative thinking is your depression talking. Work to talk back to the thoughts.
- Avoid drugs or alcohol. Both can make depression worse. They can also cause side effects if you are taking medicine.
- Spend time around family and friends. Ask for support.

Compiled from the following sources:

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info)

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml)