**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is counseling?**

Therapy is an opportunity to discuss/talk about issues that are important to the client, while having a trained objective person (Therapist) help work through not only the current situation but in dealing with similar situations in the future. Therapy can be about one specific problem, or it can be about multiple. Something to mention, is that therapy is a collaborative event; it requires an active role from both the client and the therapist for change to occur.

**Why is counseling beneficial?**

People see a therapist for a wide range of reasons including but not limited to stress management to a specific diagnosis like Major Depressive Disorder or Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Sometimes an event occurs that causes an individual to seek out help, while for others, they may attend therapy because it provides a trained objective person to help them work through some issues they may have been struggling with for years. Counseling can be beneficial because a client may feel a sense of control in their life and have the tools to be able to make better decisions or changes in their life.

**How can counseling help me?**

There are too many benefits of participating in therapy to list! Counselors can provide support, problem solving skills and coping strategies for a wide range of issues. Counselors, being objective, can provide a different or a fresh perspective on a problem that you have been struggling with. Benefits of therapy depend on your commitment and level of readiness. Some benefits can include boosting self-confidence or improving self-esteem, improving communication skills, learning/finding new coping skills, attaining a better understanding of yourself, changing old patterns and developing new ones, or managing your emotional feeling such as sadness, anger or other highly charged emotions you may be feeling.

**What are the different types of counseling offered at your business?**

* Individual – Client has one on one sessions with their therapist to address any concerns and work through and seek positive alternatives.
* Group – With a therapist facilitator, the clients have the opportunity work through and support each other with similar interests. Group counseling enables a client to learn from others’ experiences and allows the client to see that they’re not alone.
* Couples/Family – Helps reduce tension/conflict as well as improve communication skills with in the family unit. Most of our clinicians are trained in the Gottman Method for couples counseling as well as SYMBIS (Save Your Marriage Before it Starts) for premarital counseling.
* All of our clinicians at Restorative Pathways Counseling are faith based clinicians – some have received formal training through seminary to fully address spiritual concerns and issues that you may be struggling with upon request.

**What are the differences between seeing a counselor/therapist, psychologist and psychiatrist?**

As mental health counselors/therapists, the scope of treatment is talk-therapy. Typically therapists have their Master’s degree, and yearly continuing education. While, psychologists also provide counseling services they also provide psychological testing for schools, courts and other entities. Psychologists in Ohio have earned their Doctoral degree. Psychiatrists tend to limit their talk therapy/counseling services and are typically available for medication management. Psychiatrists are physicians that have completed medical school and have completed their residency with a psychiatric specialty. If your therapist feels that you may need medication, they may provide you with a referral to doctors that they recommend. If medication is necessary, typically in these clients, medication and talk therapy are used together. Medication therapy is not a replacement for talk therapy.

**What should people look for in a counselor?**

Look for a professional counselor who is licensed or certified in their area of specialty. For example, if your child is having difficulties in school, talk to their school counselor. In a private practice or mental health setting, counselors should be licensed as a professional counselor by their state. Rehabilitation counselors should hold the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential.

**Do you take insurance? What should I ask my insurance?**

We do accept some insurance. In order to see if we accept your particular insurance, ask your therapist or our office assistant when scheduling your initial appointment. See our document named “Questions to Ask Your Insurance” to find a list of questions to ensure coverage.

**What does the intake session look like?**

The first session will be an initial assessment to discuss the client’s history and needs for treatment. During this first session the client will have the opportunity to see how therapy will work, review office policies, privacy and confidentiality, as well as determine whether or not they are comfortable with the therapist.

\*Side note: It’s vital to have a positive working relationship with your therapist, so it’s recommended that the client and therapist will meet 2-3 times before deciding whether or not the relationship will continue. The therapist will provide the client with referrals of specialists or trusted colleagues if they feel someone else might better be able to work with the client.

10 questions that counselors typically ask: What brings you here? Have you seen a counselor before? What is the problem from your point of view? How does that typically leave you feeling? What makes the problem better? If you had all the power and resources what would you change in your life right now? What do you expect from me and the counseling process? What would it take to make you feel content, happy and satisfied? How are your relationships with your family and friends?

**What do I need to bring?**

Prepare any relevant documents. The more information your therapist has about you, the better they will be able to do their job. Helpful documents might include reports from previous psychological tests or recent hospital discharge summaries. This will be helpful during your intake interview, when the therapist may ask you to fill out forms about your current and past physical and emotional health. By streamlining this part of your visit, you and your therapist will have more opportunity to get to know each other on a person-to-person level.

If you are already taking any medications for mental or physical health, or if you have recently stopped a medication, you will want to come prepared with the following information: name of the drug(s), your dosage, side effects you are experiencing, and contact information of the providing doctor(s).

Write reminder notes.When meeting for the first time, you may have lots of different questions and concerns. In order to address everything you want to know, write some notes reminding you to gather all the information you need. Bringing these to your first session will help you feel less confused and more at ease.

Notes might include the following questions for your therapist:

* + What therapeutic approach do you use?
  + How will we define our goals?
  + Will you expect me to complete assignments to do between sessions?
  + How frequently will we meet?
  + Will our work together be short-term or long-term?
  + Are you willing to collaborate with my other health care providers to treat me more effectively?

**Can I bring someone with me?**

Yes! [Relationships](https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/relationships) are among the most common issues to be discussed in therapy, so it often makes sense to invite significant people in your life to participate in one or more of your sessions. Certainly in [couples therapy](https://www.goodtherapy.org/marriage-counseling.html) or [family therapy](https://www.goodtherapy.org/family-therapy.html), the idea is for people to come to therapy together and have a therapist help them move from conflict to stronger relationships—relationships that allow productive communication and the resolution of conflicts. But, even if you are participating in your own individual therapy, you might find that you would like to bring a friend, family member(s), and/or intimate partner to a session or series of sessions.

**On average, how long does treatment last?**

The average number of sessions is somewhere around six to eight. Some issues can be resolved in one session, some require meetings over a longer term. Sessions are typically 55 minutes in length. In some settings, such as when seeing a school counselor, sessions vary in length.

**What does progress look like?**

When you first start seeing a new therapist, talk to them about how you'll know if you're making progress (both in and outside of your sessions). Then check in with your therapist from time to time. See how you're feeling, take note of any changes, and ask your therapist if he or she notices anything different (since we don't always see shifts in ourselves). Therapy can be a long road to completely achieve all the goals you will set. These check-ins will help you stay motivated and develop short-term goals to work towards.

**What about medication for my problems?**

It is well established that the long-term solution to mental and emotional problems and the pain they cause cannot be solved solely by medication. Instead of just treating the symptom, therapy addresses the cause of our distress and the behavior patterns that curb our progress. You can best achieve sustainable growth and a greater sense of well-being with an integrative approach to wellness. Working with your medical doctor you can determine what's best for you, and in some cases a combination of medication and therapy is the right course of action.

**What do I do in the case of an emergency? (Suicidal thoughts/crisis)**

The national suicide prevention hotline can be reached at 1-800-273-8255. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

Steps to follow if your experience suicidal thoughts or crisis:

**Step #1:** Promise not to do anything right now. Even though you’re in a lot of pain right now, give yourself some distance between thoughts and action. Make a promise to yourself: "I will wait 24 hours and won't do anything drastic during that time." Or, wait a week. Thoughts and actions are two different things—your suicidal thoughts do not have to become a reality. There is no deadline, no one's pushing you to act on these thoughts immediately. Wait. Wait and put some distance between your suicidal thoughts and suicidal action.

**Step #2:** Avoid drugs and alcohol. Suicidal thoughts can become even stronger if you have taken drugs or alcohol. It is important to not use nonprescription drugs or alcohol when you feel hopeless or are thinking about suicide.

**Step #3:** Make your home safe. Remove things you could use to hurt yourself, such as pills, knives, razors, or firearms. If you are unable to do so, go to a place where you can feel safe. If you are thinking of taking an overdose, give your medicines to someone who can return them to you one day at a time as you need them.   
  
**Step #4:** Don’t keep your suicidal thoughts and feelings to yourself. Many of us have found that the first step to coping with suicidal thoughts and feelings is to share them with someone we trust. It may be a family member, friend, therapist, member of the clergy, teacher, family doctor, coach, or an experienced counselor at the end of a helpline. Find someone you trust and let them know how bad things are. Don’t let fear, shame, or embarrassment prevent you from seeking help. And if the first person you reach out to doesn’t seem to understand, try someone else. Just talking about how you got to this point in your life can release a lot of the pressure that’s building up and help you find a way to cope.

**Step #5:** Take hope. People DO get through this. Even people who feel as badly as you are feeling now manage to survive these feelings. Take hope in this. There is a very good chance that you are going to live through these feelings, no matter how much self-loathing, hopelessness, or isolation you are currently experiencing. Just give yourself the time needed and don’t try to go it alone.