

## About Personal Counseling

Personal counseling services at the center are free to students at the college. All services here are confidential--no information about clients is provided to anyone, either outside or within the college, so your counseling here is completely private (except for rare instances involving serious danger to self or others).

### Client information form

When you make your first appointment here, you are asked to complete a client information form. The information you provide on this form is used only for our counseling records. It is never provided to any other office or person. We are required to keep these records by standards of professional counseling practice. These records help us to know whether we have your permission to contact you if we need to reschedule an appointment, to have basic information on file if your counselor is unavailable or if you come back in the future and cannot remember with whom you spoke, to help us evaluate our services, to know how many students are being served, and so forth.

### Intake assessment

The first step in helping you is to determine exactly what kind of counseling you need. Everyone who seeks counseling here receives an intake assessment interview. You will be asked about what brings you here for assistance, about your background, and so forth. Some people have a preference to work with a counselor of a particular age, gender or ethnicity. You will have an opportunity to express your preferences, if any, during your assessment session. While we may not always be able to accommodate your preferences, we will try to do so.

Based on the information you provide, specific recommendations will be made. Often a counseling group here at the center is recommended. Sometimes individual counseling is indicated. Some individual counseling is available here. Usually, students who need more than a few sessions of individual counseling or who need specialized services are referred to low-cost, local counseling clinics or individual professionals.

A referral file for services is maintained based on qualifications, service specialties, fee range, location, etc. Your counselor will suggest specific services for you. See our information sheet on *Choosing the Right Counselor or Therapist for You*.

### Do normal people need counseling?

It is a common misconception to think that only seriously ill or 'crazy' people need counseling help. Studies show that over eighty percent of people can benefit from counseling at some time in their lives. So, it is normal to need counseling when special concerns or difficult feelings arise. Most people have a problem with anxiety, depression, stress, relationships, etc., at some point.

## **What happens in counseling?**

Generally, you will meet with a professional counselor regularly for about forty-five minutes (ninety minutes for groups) at the same time once each week. At these meetings, you will discuss your concerns with the counselor.

The goal of counseling is to learn about our habits and patterns of feeling and behavior and how they cause us problems. We can then learn new habits and patterns which will be more successful for us. Although it seems strange to think that we might not know ourselves completely, experience has shown that many of the problem-causing habits and patterns are things we have done all our life and are so automatic that we don't even think about them as learned or optional behavior.

Counseling provides a special setting in which we can learn about ourselves. This can help us to be more effective in our relationships with others and with ourselves. It takes time, helpful observations and support to recognize and change our ways of living.

## **What happens if I miss a meeting?**

It is important to attend each meeting from beginning to end. Regular meetings are important to the effectiveness of counseling. If you become ill or have a conflicting obligation and must miss an appointment, you should call your counselor as far in advance as possible to reschedule.

## **How can I contact my counselor?**

Call the center receptionist at 718-951-5363. They will connect you or take a message or reschedule your appointment if the counselor is not available. Usually, counselors cannot be interrupted while they are working with someone, but your counselor will return your call.

Note your counselor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Recording of counseling meetings**

Some counselors may ask your permission to record your meetings with them. Usually, this is so that they may review the meeting later in order to understand how to improve their counseling skills and how to help you better. Sometimes they may review the meeting with other members of the staff here in order to get their advice about their work with you. We have found that service is improved by counselors being able to learn from their work here in this way.

All recordings are destroyed within a month. No recording is ever used for any other purpose. No recording is ever made without your written permission, including an explanation of the specific purpose for which it is made. You are not required to give your permission for recordings, but we hope that you will do so in the interest of receiving the best possible service and improving service for others. If you do not give your permission, no change will be made in the service you receive.

**Find us on the Web at [PC.BROOKLYN.CUNY.EDU](http://PC.BROOKLYN.CUNY.EDU)**