

What is Counselling?

Coping with change ...

COUNSELLING allows us to talk about what is happening in our life to someone who will listen. Counsellors don't tell you what to do, and they won't tell other people your story without your saying it's okay. Often we get a bit stuck trying to work out painful things by ourselves. We end up doing things we don't like doing, or being somewhere we don't want to be. What is happening is not what we planned. Talking about things often helps us get things back on track. It helps us make sense of things. It can make it possible for us to change things we don't like in our life.

telling our stories

To cope we often tell stories about what is happening. These stories are a useful way of giving people an idea about what has happened and what we stand for. The stories help us to make decisions. At the time they are very helpful.

But life often moves very fast. We don't have time to deal with everything. Some stories get stretched to cover things we cannot do. Other things become left out, almost forgotten, stored away. This can happen with a lot of the meaningless detail of life. But it can also happen in a crisis as a way to cope with things that are beyond our ability to deal with at the time.

creating new pathways

Memories of sad and painful experiences might be triggered by an emotion, smell or similarities with something new. We can feel these memories as an uneasiness. Occasionally they spiral into other half-buried memories.

Sometimes we are forced to re-open this old stuff – to look into our stories, move beyond our previous comfortable pattern of doing things in ways that are well-known and reliable. Counselling is about creating new pathways for ourselves.

As we get older our lives become closely associated with other people's stories. We get married, have kids,

live alongside people and generally build relationships. These relationships allow us to grow up and be strong within our community.

But sometimes a crisis or tragedy means that we have to learn to do things in a new way. This is not always easy. Sometimes we keep doing things we know are stupid, just because we haven't got any way of doing things differently. We can get locked into a pattern even though we know it is not working.

Changes can be forced on us because of illness, or something like becoming unemployed, through some disaster or just bad luck. New things can be forced upon us too. It can be because of more children, more stress, more complex work, and more unwanted demands. Often the big change can

be to someone else close to us.

Our partner leaves us or becomes a different person - they want something new, they have new priorities. Change can place strains on our relationships. It is a demand that we change to get in step with where they are at.

It can be the new ideas of others that force us to move on.

coping with change

Counselling is designed to help people cope with these changes. This involves getting people to look at things that have happened in their lives. Counselling can involve learning new skills, or getting new information that may help us to make new decisions. It requires some reflection on past events and ways that we did things then - working out what was useful and what was unhelpful. This self-knowledge is essential as we make new plans about what we want to have happen.

Counselling involves us entering a conversation about ourselves. It encourages us to deepen the ways that we sustain ourselves in a complex and dangerous world. It can be hard work. But it is our lives and our story.

It is a good idea to be the powerful person within your own life. It can feel great to just tell our story. Talking energises us. It inspires our hopes, and encourages our creativity. It allows us to move on in ways that don't repeat patterns that are no longer working.

