



## Getting The Most Out Of Your Counseling

### **Define your goals.**

Think about what you would like to get out of counseling. It might be helpful to jot down a list of events, relationship issues, and feelings that you think are contributing to your distress. Take time before each session to consider your expectations for that session. As counseling progresses, longer-term goals may emerge along with some ideas about how to progress toward these goals.

### **Consider how you feel about the counseling relationship.**

Since a good working relationship is vital to successful counseling, you will want to experience a satisfying level of trust and understanding with your counselor. Nonetheless, self-exploration and change involve hard work, and sometimes painful feelings are stirred up in the process of healing. Therefore, it may be unrealistic to expect that you will feel completely comfortable at all times with your counselor. Counselors are trained to pay close attention to these issues and will probably encourage you to discuss these feelings openly. Because counseling is a mutual enterprise, you and your counselor may also make adjustments in your working style to better meet your needs for both encouragement and support.

### **Recognize and express feelings.**

The recognition, acceptance, and expression of feelings pave the way for personal growth and change. Thoughts and feelings are equally important in working through difficulties. Your counselor will work with you to integrate your thoughts and emotions in a balanced way.

### **Be patient with yourself.**

Growth takes time, effort, and patience. All of your coping skills, behavior patterns and self-perceptions have been learned and reinforced over a long period of time. Changing what has become such an integral part of yourself is very difficult and at times slow. By having patience with yourself and accepting and understanding the natural resistance we all feel toward change, you set the foundation for developing and changing in more appropriate and satisfying directions