



What to expect from counselling

Counsellors can help

It can be scary going to see someone for support for the first time. If you're feeling unsure about what it's all about - that's normal - and we are here to help.

Remember getting support is a sign of strength and there's no shame in reaching out. We all need help sometimes.



Why people might go to counselling?

Counselling can be a great way to get support when you're going through tough times. It's about having a yarn or chat with a professional about life's twists and turns and what might help.

Counselling can be useful for lots of things like when you're feeling down, anxious, angry or stressed. Some people might go to counselling to help understand themselves better or to chat about what they want in life. And it can also be helpful for exploring what you're doing well or want to do more of. It's really up to you.

What you discuss in a session

Sessions focus on what you want and need. They are driven by you, what you want to talk about, and anything you need support with. It might be things like:

- *relationship challenges*
- *work/the farm*
- *emotional wellbeing*
- *stress, worries and feeling overwhelmed*
- *grief and loss*

The first session is a great chance for you to ask questions and talk about what you want to work on. If you've been to counselling before, it might be useful to discuss what has and hasn't worked. You can share what's on your mind and see if they're the right 'fit' for you.

Before starting, the Counsellor will tell you a bit about themselves and their role. They'll also:

- *explain confidentiality and your rights*
- *ask if there's anything you need to support you in getting the most out of your work together*

How to prepare for your first session

Feeling nervous or unsure about your first session is completely normal. Lots of people feel this way when they talk to someone for the first time.

It can help to have an idea of what you'd like to get out of counselling. It might be as simple as 'I want to feel happier' or 'I'd like a plan for what to do next'.

But don't stress if you're unsure about this, it's something you and your Counsellor can figure out together.



What to expect from counselling

Questions we might ask you

The Counsellor is going to be interested in you and what's led to you getting support. They'll want to know about anything big that's happened that sticks out to you, and the things that you might worry about. They'll also ask what you do now to support yourself, what your strengths are, and about the positive things going on in your life.

The questions help your Counsellor understand your story, how you'll work together, and what might help. It's not just because they're nosey!

Your Counsellor may also ask about your:

- *home life*
- *family and friendships*
- *cultural influences*
- *family's mental health history*
- *alcohol and other drug use*
- *as well as your strengths, interests and what you're into*

It's important to remember that if you don't want to or don't feel comfortable answering a question, you don't have to. Your Counsellor will also ask if you're using self-harm or having any thoughts about suicide.



Questions you might want to ask

You might have some questions for your Counsellor too.

You could ask what experience they've had helping people with challenges like yours, how long the sessions go for.

You could also ask about how your family will be involved in your care and how they'll work with them.

It's a good idea to write down your questions beforehand or have them in notes on your phone, because it's easy to forget them in the moment.

Your Counsellor might work with you to ensure you have a sense of choice and control over who is included in your care, and who might be helpful.



What to expect from counselling

Keeping it confidential



You might be worried about your family or community finding out that you're getting support. However, we want you to know that your confidentiality is important and health services have processes in place to protect it.

What you share with your Counsellor is confidential and is only shared with others (including family, friends, or a professional) if you are OK with that. You can work out if you think it would be helpful for you and decide what you are comfortable being shared.

There are a few exceptions to confidentiality. Your Counsellor will explain that if they're worried or concerned about your safety or the safety of someone else then they'll need to let someone know. In these cases, they'll only provide necessary information to appropriate services or support people that can protect you or others, like a crisis service or the police.

If this happens, they'll try to talk to you first about what needs to happen and what extra support you need to help you be safe.



Common myths

Myth: A Counsellor will make me talk about things before I'm ready

Fact: You are in charge of what you want to work on and talk about. A Counsellor won't force you to talk about anything before you're ready. They understand that some topics might be difficult to talk about. Counselling is all about you and your needs, you get to decide what you want to share, who you want to share with, and when. Sometimes though, it can be helpful to think about and talk about why you don't want to discuss something. Is it because you don't know them well enough, or is it because they're hard things to talk about?

Myth: You'll lie on a couch and talk about your childhood

Fact: Counselling in Australia isn't like what you see on TV. You don't have to lie on a couch and talk about your childhood. It's all about teamwork with your Counsellor. Together, you'll explore what is going on for you, and find ways to tackle challenges. It might be about helping you do more of the things that already help rather than new things. You'll most likely sit in a comfy chair, or maybe go for a walk on the farm together.

Counselling is down-to-earth and helpful, and your counsellor is there to understand and guide you. No judgement, just support. Your Counsellor is good at deep listening, and you might find they can often help you listen to your own solutions, ones that were always there but you weren't aware of before.

Myth: My problems aren't serious enough for counselling

Fact: Getting support when you need it is important. Don't feel that you need a 'big issue' first. Your feelings and concerns are always important, no matter how big or small they feel. Counselling can also be about wanting things to be even better in your life rather than 'fixing something'. The sessions are all about providing a safe space where you can talk openly. So if you want to work on your mental health and wellbeing, counselling is a great choice for you. Remember, getting help is a sign of strength, and it's OK to reach out for support.