

Before your Appointment - Frequently Asked Questions about Counselling

1. What sort of things can I talk about?

Basically, anything that you feel worried or anxious about, or any concerns about how you are feeling. Sometimes this might be about recent events (such as coming to university/college for the first time, the ending of a relationship, or bereavement) and sometimes it may involve things from your past. Quite often people don't know why they feel unhappy or anxious, and it's OK to come and talk about that too.

Some of the common issues people bring to counselling are:

- difficulties with a partner, friends or family
- study problems such as lack of motivation/concentration
- feeling anxious and/or depressed
- being away from home
- self-harming behaviours
- problems with food, drugs, sex or alcohol

2. What about confidentiality?

We do not tell anyone else, inside or outside the college, that you have been for counselling. It does not go on your records anywhere in the college, and even if someone (e.g. parent, friend, or tutor) were to ask whether you are seeing a counsellor, they will not be given that information without your consent.

The only exceptions to this would be if your counsellor thought you, or someone else, were seriously at risk.

3. How much does it cost?

RVC counselling is provided by the college free of cost to the individual user. If you want to see a counsellor outside the college, we have a list of recommended local counselling agencies and individuals, or you can access one of the professional registers www.bacp.co.uk, www.ukcp.org.uk, www.pschoanalytic-council.org. Counselling is sometimes available free through your GP practice and some voluntary agencies offer counselling for a reduced fee. On average, private counselling/therapy costs between £40-70 per hour.

4. What happens in the initial session?

A session lasts for 50 uninterrupted minutes. It is an opportunity to describe as fully as you can what is troubling you, and work out with the counsellor what might be helpful in terms of your issue and how you are feeling. This would be likely to include what you might want in terms of any further sessions. It also helps if you can raise any questions, reservations or concerns you have about the counselling process early on – your counsellor will be quite used to talking through these sorts of queries.

5. How many sessions will I need?

That depends. Sometimes a few appointments can feel enough and sometimes more than that can be useful. It is for you and your counsellor to discuss between you.

6. What about if I am not sure whether counselling is the right thing for me?

It is OK to come not knowing whether you want to pursue counselling or not; you can talk it over with a counsellor and then decide. Equally, if we think that somewhere else might be a more appropriate source of help (e.g. for money issues, career advice) we will point you in the right direction.

7. How does counselling work?

This is difficult to answer briefly! Perhaps the easiest way to think about it is to realise that **you** are the expert on yourself, and a counsellor is there to ask the right questions to help you work out what you are thinking and feeling, to help you find your way to an understanding of your issue or difficulty that makes sense to you, and to help you find a way forward. It can also be very helpful to have another perspective on yourself and your issues outside the more usual networks of friends or family.

8. What if I can't come for an initial appointment?

We are aware that it is sometimes hard to come for lots of reasons. If you can't make it, do give us a call. If you can't – or don't want to - come, it is very helpful if you can let us know as soon as possible in advance, as there is a high demand for appointments particularly around exam times and before holidays and then we can offer that appointment to another student who may be waiting.

counselling@rvc.ac.uk

9. Where are you?

We are at Camden on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

We are at Hawkshead on Wednesdays from lunchtime until early evenings. The Counsellors are based in the Advice Centre next to the Student and Wellbeing Centre (SAWC). If unsure, ask in reception.

10. What if I need to speak to someone urgently?

You can let our administrator know this when you make contact and we will try to see you as soon as we can.

During office hours (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm) you could drop in to the Advice Centre and speak confidentially with a Student Adviser.

If it is out of office hours or if you feel you can't wait we suggest that you speak to your GP and/or contact other forms of support such as The Samaritans (116 123) London Nightline (0207 631 0101) or Vetlife Helpline (0303 040 2551).

11. What else might help?

- **Family / friends** – letting them know how you are feeling and how they can help
- **Your tutor** - if your difficulties are affecting your ability to work
- **Your GP** - if you are worried about how you are feeling
- **RVC Student Advisers** advice@rvc.ac.uk

We look forward to seeing you!