

# WHAT DO YOU MEAN I NEED COUNSELING?

In last month's Medical Minute I explained what Affiliated Clinical Services, Inc. is. It is a mental health and alcohol/substance abuse clinic with offices in West Bend and Hartford dedicated to serving people in Washington, Dodge, and Ozaukee county and surrounding communities. This article focusses on how to determine if you should consider counseling for yourself or a loved one.

Let's begin by defining when an everyday problems, emotions, or experiences changes from being a little bump in the road to an impassable mountain. Everyone has problems. Down days. Tough experiences. This is a normal part of life and we cope with these times by taking care of ourselves, talking with loved ones, and believing tomorrow is another day.

## Characteristics of "normal" problems:

The situation or our feelings about it tend to last a day to a few days and then we feel better.

We continue normal activities. We may sleep a bit more or less. We may miss a day of work. We may feel unmotivated and unproductive but we take care of basic responsibilities.

We talk with others and feel better.

We know we are feeling and behaving like most people in our situation.

We do not resort to extremes in thought or behavior.

Family and friends are not worried about us.

Most people will have a time in their lives where experiences spiral into something more difficult. This is when we might find counseling to be beneficial.

## Characteristics of serious problems:

We feel sad, angry, depressed and it doesn't go away. It may escalate and we question if life is worth living.

We may use alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling etc. and

it becomes a crutch.

We may be grieving and cannot cope.

We have experienced trauma and it is interfering in our lives.

We isolate, stop doing things we enjoy, find talking with others ineffective. We avoid people and may stop going to school or work.

Others are frustrated with us or avoid us. We can't stop talking or thinking about our problems.

Our thoughts are different. We may be experiencing signs of major mental illness.

These are a few ways to tell if it is time to consider counseling. Therapy is also useful for everyday issues. For example, therapists are helpful in dealing with children's behavior problems or sorting out relationship issues.

Try this questionnaire to decide if counseling is indicated. It will be obvious by the way you answer.

### 1. I am concerned about a behavior, feeling, or something I am doing.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 2. This behavior or feeling has been getting worse in the past weeks.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 3. I have tried stopping this behavior or feeling on my own.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 4. My attempts at stopping this behavior or feeling have failed.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

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Affiliated Clinical Services Inc.  
38 Sell Drive, Hartford WI 53027  
262-673-0301

### 5. I rely on my friends or family to help me with my current troubles.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 6. I am finding it more difficult to cope with things.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 7. I am having trouble concentrating at work/school.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 9. I have talked to my doctor or healthcare professional about the behavior or feeling that's troubling me.

Yes No

### 10. I have talked to my friends or family about the behavior or feeling that's troubling me.

Yes No

### 11. I have read books or the Internet to discover more about the behavior or feeling that's troubling me.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat
Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much

### 12. I've been in therapy before and it's helped.

Never	Yes, but it didn't help
Yes, somewhat	Yes, moderately
Yes, quite a lot	Yes, very much

If you think therapy might be appropriate for you, all you need to do is call Affiliated Clinical Services, Inc at one of their two local offices and they will be happy to get you started. Their excellent staff can help you begin to feel like yourself again.