

WHEN DO I SEEK COUNSELING OR THERAPY?

Helaine Z. Harris

What can therapy do for me? Knowing when to seek therapy or get some counseling is vital. There are many reasons one seeks therapy. Crisis is the most common reason people go to a therapist. Crisis could be any drastic event that suddenly effects us. This could include, but is not limited to: a severe illness, loss of a job, parent or child becomes seriously ill, death of a family member, financial disaster, a major flood, earthquake or fire, etc.

Most people seek help for various forms of depression or anxiety. Depression may surface as a feeling of fatigue, low energy, no appetite or overeating, insomnia or sleeping a lot, low self-esteem, poor concentration, hopelessness, and life has lost meaning.

With excessive anxiety and worry one may feel tense and restless, overwhelmed, fragmented, irritability, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbance, and a pervasive feeling of fear. A person may even experience anxiety or panic attacks.

Recently many people have come to me for help with confusion and a loss of meaning in life, even when not connected to depression or anxiety. Those seeking help while in their late 20's or 30's often feel as though they have done what they're "supposed to" and life still doesn't work for them. "I've gone to college, gotten a good job with growth potential, I'm in a relationship, but I still don't feel good. I can't even make simple decisions any more. What's wrong?"

Or a client comes in who's in their 40's or 50's. "I've made it in life. I have a great job and a high income, a nice family with two kids, and good friends. This is what I've strived for, but now that I'm here, I feel empty. What's going on?"

The loss of meaning in life and the emptiness inside, resulting in confusion and loss of contact with ones self, is one of the biggest ailments in today's society. When we're younger and striving to get ahead, we may not have time to notice the emptiness we feel.

These yearnings and questionings are a sign or a cry for help from the deeper Self that something is missing. An exploration into our unconscious and unknown parts brings us to what is called the soul's journey. This journey to engage ourselves on a deeper level often gives life new meaning through this

search and exploration we may find what nourishes the soul.

This search for Self often becomes necessary because of the need to heal from childhood traumas such as incest or abuse that result in a multitude of addictions and obsessions. One way to perceive addiction is it creates the hole in us through which Spirit (or God) enters.

Our soul calls us Home this way. Although counseling and therapy may fix a few symptoms, that is only part of what is accomplished. Whether we are called to go inside because of crisis, trauma, a loss of meaning in life, or soul hunger, this takes us on the most exciting, rewarding journey of a lifetime. As we engage more parts of our being, we become richer and fuller, more accepting of Self and others, more compassionate to our inner child and all other children, healthier, more vibrant, rejuvenated, and more turned on and excited by life itself.

Any problem, issue, or situation is your soul calling you to re-member who you are. Therein lies the joy and ecstasy you may have searched for, the peaceful stillness you longed for and the love you desire. And thus you come home into a Relationship with yourself, your partner, and all of life. Life is Relationship!

Helaine Z. Harris, MA, MFT, (818) 782-6869