

Counseling

Can counseling assist your recovery?

The time that you spend in treatment is just the beginning of lifelong recovery. A licensed counselor or therapist with experience in addiction treatment can help you address issues that you didn't have time to adequately address during treatment. Dealing with issues that may have contributed to your drinking and other drug use will enhance your recovery.

A counselor can help you with your recovery by

- teaching you to recognize and rechannel urges to use alcohol or other drugs
- encouraging and motivating you to achieve and sustain abstinence
- holding you accountable, discussing any relapses, and strongly discouraging further use
- helping you identify “sticky situations” where you might be tempted to use alcohol or other drugs to cope with problems
- helping you develop new, more effective problem-solving strategies to reduce stress, and helping you deal with anger, frustration, and resentments
- supporting you as you work the Twelve Steps and strongly encouraging participation in meetings
- encouraging you to develop and continue a recovery plan as a lifelong process
- helping you recognize and change problematic attitudes and behaviors that may trigger a relapse
- encouraging you to improve your self-esteem by practicing newly acquired coping skills and problem-solving strategies at home and in the community

Counseling can also help you deal with anxiety, depression, and bipolar or other co-occurring disorders. If you have a co-occurring mental health disorder, seek help and follow your doctor's recommendations, which may include taking medications as prescribed, attending therapy sessions, or seeking more support in your Twelve Step program. Taking care of your mental health disorder will greatly increase your success with sobriety.

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How can you choose a counselor?

If a mental health therapist has been recommended to you as part of your continuing care plan, find one who is a good match for you and who understands addiction recovery.

A good relationship between you and your counselor is necessary for a successful outcome. Your gut feelings are one way to assess this relationship. You should feel that

- Your therapist is sincere and genuine.
- Your therapist responds to your questions in a thoughtful and considerate manner.
- You are treated with respect and taken seriously.
- You have confidence in your therapist's skills and training.
- You are given, and will be given, the opportunity to help determine your own program of therapy.
- You trust and feel at ease with your therapist.

It may be necessary to interview several before you find one you feel comfortable with.

Web resource

National Institute of Mental Health

This federal website provides information on various mental health disorders and current research on treating them.