NOTES ON COUNSELLING

1) What is counselling?

It's a process that helps people explore issues and problems, and express their feelings, with someone who is good at listening and asking useful questions.
In a nutshell, it's helping people listen to themselves – and get out of their own way!

2) What can counselling clients hope for?

- Help to deal with the impact of their emotions about what's happening, and to express emotions safely
- A way through confusion
- To develop personal coping skills and strengths
- To be understood by another person who is on their side
- Increased self-understanding and understanding of others responses
- To become more confident in their lives and make better decisions
- To improve their relationships.

In general, a service that is confidential, professional and based on agreed goals.

3) What sort of problems can counseling help with?

- Anything that is causing stress:
  Typical stress symptoms being worry, lack of concentration, making mistakes, sleep problems, impact on relationships, loss of fun in life.

  If a client mentions that these areas of life are affected by a practical problem they have brought to CAB, then counseling will help them to deal with the impact of their emotions about what's happening and to develop personal coping skills.

- Life crises: relationship break-ups, loss through death or separation, failure in a plan, etc
- Ongoing lack of confidence, motivation, negativity, anxiety, depression, feeling suicidal
- Career decisions
- Conflict management
- Anger management, assertiveness

- Managing life
- Emotional problems – anxiety, depression, etc
- Addictions of all sorts, including alcohol and drug abuse
- Sexual difficulties, gender roles
- Sexual abuse or other trauma
- Phobias

4) What different kinds of counselling are there?

    a. Short-term (1 to 10 sessions approx) and long-term, based on agreement to continue working more and more deeply with personal issues.

       For example:

       Solution-Focused Therapy, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Hypnotherapy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) are usually short-term;

       Psychotherapy is usually long-term (eg psychoanalysis, Gestalt therapy).

    b. Some schools of counselling focus more on feelings and others more on thinking, some more on family history and others more on the present situation. Most counselors use a mixture of approaches, and are known as “eclectic counselors”.

    c. Individual counseling, couple counseling, family counseling and group counseling.

       Anger management or assertiveness is often done in groups.

    d. Some crisis telephone lines offer phone counselling (Lifeline, for suicidal clients) as well as just listening.

5) How does typical counselling session work?

    a. Client and counselor have an agreement: the place, duration of session, cost… and to explore a particular area or problem(s).

    b. The counsellor is highly skilled in directing the client to focus on key points and needs.

    c. Talking is a very important part of counselling.

d. Other techniques include: directed reading, journaling, drawing or physical exercises to help discover or release emotions, visualization /relaxation /hypnosis / mindfulness and self-help tasks to carry out in between sessions.

6) Downsides?

- ***The client wants an instant fix***. Like some medications, counselling can take a while before the effects kick in. If the problem has been in a person's life 20 years or more, it's going to take more than one or two sessions to fix things.
- ***Poor fit***: some counsellors and counselling styles suit some people better than others. It's OK to change counsellors.
- ***Dependency***: can develop if the client sees counsellor as "their only friend" and doesn't deepen their relationship to other people in their life.

7) Cost?

- Currently (2015) $70 to $140 a session - $90 or $100 is a normal fee rate.
- Many counsellors offer a sliding scale based on income, or have one or two "pro bono" cases. It's worth asking.

8) Where to find a counsellor?

- Word of mouth
- NZAC online register
- Online searches

Note: Ask for experience and qualifications – the rate charged may simply reflect the counsellor's living expenses rather than their expertise. Note that different styles of counselling and personalities fit different clients better, so it's OK to ask for a short meet up session to get a feel for the person. You can also search their method online.

9) Free or low cost counselling

- EAP: In some workplaces, the Employer Assisted Programme (EAP) offers 3 free sessions.
- W&I can give a special allowance of $40 to subsidise up to 10 sessions.
- ACC subsidises "Sensitive Claims "(ie Sexual abuse) counseling.
- Specialist organisations (eg WellElder, Skylight) offer low cost options
- Free or low cost counselling is available from
  -some community centres (eg. Newtown);

-community organisations (Wellington Women's Health Collective, Refugees As Survivors, etc.);

-several church organisations run a subsidised (non-religious) counselling service, eg. Catholic Social Services

10) Alternatives to counselling

These are innumerable, and depend on the client's needs…

- using friendship networks for support,
- religious practices
- Personal development courses,
- Meditation / mindfulness training,
- Yoga / physical activity including sport
- Support groups,
- Self-help books,
- Personal coaching, etc