

August 2011

## When is the right time...

A classic question is “Do you think I would benefit from counselling” I do not know anyone who has asked that as an idle question. We all have areas in our psyche, our character and our ego which we would like to understand better but many believe that counselling or psychotherapy is an admission of failure or weakness.

### When is the right time to go and see a Counsellor or Therapist?

Sally Brampton, the highly respected journalist and former editor of Elle magazine had a glamorous life style and to the outside world ‘had it all’. However, depression drove her to pills, alcohol and repeated suicide attempts. After her recovery, she wrote extensively about her experiences. This is an extract from an article she wrote for the Sunday Times in 2009 “*I used to think therapy was indulgent, or even wilfully narcissistic. I certainly didn’t think it was for me. That was before I was in sufficient emotional pain to seek it out. Having since benefited from it enormously, I now think of it as a necessary part of emotional health. Talking to friends may be helpful, but friends are too emotionally attached to be objective. Their desire is to comfort, not to point out uncomfortable truths. Therapy is not comfortable, nor is it magic. It requires brutal emotional honesty and a willingness to take responsibility for our own behaviour*”.

The straightforward difference between Counselling and Psychotherapy is that a Counsellor will help a client over a particular difficult period, emotional trauma, addiction etc whereas a Psychotherapist will focus on a deeper awareness of emotional issues, and helps the client look at and understand the roots to the problem. In the

mind of the public the title Counsellor appears less intrusive and more easily acceptable than the name Psychotherapist might suggest. Therefore, a psychotherapist may call themselves a Counsellor for this reason.

It is important to have a target when going into therapy and it is good to discuss this at the outset with the therapist. A classic question is “How long will this take” for which, of-course there is no accurate answer but it is useful to establish targets such as agreeing to review progress, say, every 12 sessions.

### What should we expect from a therapist?

This is a valid question and I would say these are the basic benefits that should be developing once therapy has started.

1. We learn how to accept and love ourselves for all our faults and weaknesses and that we are no different to everyone else just a different model.
2. We develop more insight towards our own thoughts and emotions so we can understand them more clearly.
3. We learn to recognise and change our irrational beliefs, or the fuzzy focus through which we view our world.
4. We gain more understanding into the causes of emotional disturbances, and how we can operate effectively through these traumatic times.
5. We learn ‘relationship skills’ and how to relate more effectively with those with whom we are closest.
6. We start to recognise and adapt damaging or self-defeating behaviour patterns.

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7. We learn ways to understand and control our behaviour.
8. We learn how to start finding solutions to problems which would have previously 'overpowered' us.

Taken out of the Medilexicon's Medical Dictionary, psychotherapy is *"Treatment of emotional, behavioural, personality, and psychiatric disorders based primarily on verbal or nonverbal communication and interventions with the patient, in contrast to treatments using chemical and physical measures"*.

The most common uses of Psychotherapy are for psychological problems which will most probably have accumulated over a number of years. Therapy can only work once a trusting relationship has been established between the client and the psychotherapist. Treatment will generally be required for at least several months, and may continue for some years. Psychotherapy may be practiced on a one-to-one basis, in pairs, or groups. Personally, I find the most effective way of doing the deep work which is required is on a one to one basis. Generally, sessions should occur in a structured environment at a regular time once a week and will last for approximately one hour.

My practice, Sustainable Empowerment, is immediately on the river just by Hammersmith Bridge affording a wonderful and peaceful overlook of the Thames with trees and fields on the opposite bank. In this safe and calm environment my purpose is to work on the problems of those people who come to see me, to achieve dramatic results, and for them to learn how to effectively, quickly and sustainably overcome their emotional, behavioural and relationship disturbances.

I have been continually impressed with the effectiveness and results from Psychodynamic psychotherapy and with its ability to be used for a wide range of mental health symptoms, including depression, anxiety, panic and stress-related physical ailments. There is new research, published by the American Psychological Association showing that the benefits of this therapy grow after the treatment has ended.

Psychodynamic therapy concentrates on the psychological roots of a client's emotional suffering which creates the opportunity for self-reflection and self-examination.

**The relationship between therapist and client should be seen as a window into trauma, problematic situations and difficult relationship patterns in the client's life.**

When this is done effectively it will not only alleviate the most obvious symptoms but will also help the client to lead a happier and more effective life.

We are continually being told that only newer, 'symptom-focused' treatments such as CBT, Cognitive behaviour therapy or medication have scientific support. I have written previously on the differences between Cognitive Therapy, Behaviour Therapy and my views on the lasting effectiveness of these methods. They have become popular as a 'Short, Sharp Shock' treatment and which I believe, in the long term, can do more harm than good. In a study by Jonathan Shedler, PhD, of the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine. "The actual scientific evidence shows that psychodynamic therapy is highly effective. The benefits are at least as large as those of other psychotherapies, and they do last." Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may be effective for some anxiety disorders or reactive depression, (depression triggered by a difficult event), but for severe depressive disorders and other disorders which will generally be of a deep rooted nature it's pretty useless. Psychodynamic person-centred therapy is far more effective but of-course, it takes time.

**Therapy, and finding the right therapist, will make our lives happier, easier and more comfortable.**

We learn to understand our emotional patterns, some of which are so deep rooted that they have become instinctive, and whilst we may not be able to entirely stop them, we learn that we can at least challenge them.

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Coming to terms with the realisation that we may need help, either in our relationships, with an addiction, phobias, or to just build our self-confidence is the first step on the road to recovery. Counselling is an excellent way to successfully make that journey.

**With the help of a qualified counsellor we begin to heal ourselves and get on with the business of living a fuller, more rewarding and happier life.**



*"Sustainable Empowerment" is a new approach to psychotherapy and counselling developed by Richard Gosling that can help in building a stronger and more loving You.*

*Richard specialises in "Trauma Therapy" and "Crisis Counselling", is a member of the UK Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners and is offering his help and services in West London.*

*For more information on "Sustainable Empowerment" please visit [www.sustainable-empowerment.co.uk](http://www.sustainable-empowerment.co.uk) or get in touch with Richard via the following email address: [richard@sustainable-empowerment.co.uk](mailto:richard@sustainable-empowerment.co.uk)*