

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

Finding Help When It's Needed

from the American Counseling Association

There are occasions when we all need help. At such times we might choose to talk to a spouse, consult a friend, do an Internet search, or perhaps read an appropriate book or article to help get things back on track.

But there are also times when the problems we're facing may be more deep rooted -- problems that could benefit from the assistance of someone with specialized training and experience.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to recognize when professional help is needed. Often, when looking at our problems, we tend to think that these issues will probably resolve themselves, given enough time.

The reality, however, is that serious problems don't just "go away." Rather, they tend to become more serious and lead to complications that can affect our physical health and even lead to life-threatening consequences such as suicide.

Even when we recognize the need for professional help, finding that help can sometimes seem daunting because of the effects of the problems being faced. When someone is depressed, in the midst of a relationship crisis, having trouble with an addiction or struggling with a career decision, he or she often feels personally vulnerable and less capable about being in charge of his or her own life. The person may find that approaching the important decision of selecting a professional counselor is another overwhelming task.

Fortunately, there is help available. One starting place for many people is simply to ask for recommendations from friends. Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness, but one of strength -- a sign that you are taking action for a better life.

Your family physician or local health clinic should be able to make recommendations, and your minister, priest or rabbi may also have suggestions.

A search on the Internet, or in the yellow pages, will find listings of licensed professional counselors in your area and the American Counseling Association website at www.counseling.org has a tab at the top of the home page labeled "Find A Counselor."

Your goal is to locate a professional counselor specializing in your area of need and with whom you would feel comfortable working. Most counselors are glad to talk with you about their expertise and experience, and help you decide if they are a good match for you. But don't give up if the first person isn't for you. Keep looking... you're worth it.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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