

What is a Lay Counselor?

Trained and qualified professional counselors provide support and guidance to people experiencing emotional problems and difficulties that impact on their life. This type of support is available through structured counseling sessions and programs, for which an appointment is required. Lay counseling provides additional support that is not as structured or restrictive, and generally runs alongside professional counseling sessions.

A Different Type of Support

A lay counselor is a trained individual who understands the importance of providing a listening ear, support and guidance and that sometimes this kind of help and understanding cannot be restricted to appointment times only. Whilst a lay counselor has counseling knowledge this person may not work as a therapist or counselor, and has acquired counseling skills as additional vocational experience.

What Lay Counselors Provide

Lay counselors provide support to individuals experiencing emotional issues and problems. The level of training acquired will provide the lay counselor with an understanding of how best to support individuals going through particular difficulties. Their training will not, however, equip them with the professional knowledge to provide the level of counseling guidance required if the individual has medical conditions that complicate their emotional issue.

Situations that present suicidal intention, mania, clinical depression, personality and/or anxiety disorders and schizophrenia must be referred directly to a qualified professional.

Understanding Behaviors

Counseling requires an understanding of emotional issues and problems on many levels. A lay counsellor therefore must be able to demonstrate an understanding of behavior identification, as well as the best way of providing support in each situation. Being able to confidently prioritize issues as they arise allows the lay counsellor to provide continual support over a period of time.

Understanding that individuals experiencing emotional problems should not be identified by personality type and tendencies will enable the lay counselor to provide the level of support most needed.