

## Brief Counseling: What It Is, Who It's For, and How It Works

Have you ever had a concern at home that you kept thinking about at work? How about a work issue that you just couldn't seem to leave at the office? If so, you're not alone — everyone has personal problems from time to time. The good news is that you don't have to face your problems alone. There are a variety of resources that can help you address personal concerns. One of these resources is called *brief counseling*.

### What Exactly Is Brief Counseling?

Brief counseling is also known as problem-focused or short-term counseling. This problem-focused therapy is designed to help you resolve everyday concerns that may be getting in the way of your job or your personal well-being. Brief counseling is generally most effective in addressing daily living and general wellness-oriented concerns. These commonly include relationship problems, stress-related concerns, financial worries, parenting concerns, occupational issues, "phase of life" issues (such as retirement, marriage, new parent, relocation) and grief.

### When Should You Seek Out Brief Counseling?

When you have a physical problem, you talk to your doctor. But who do you talk to when you have an emotional problem, and talking to a friend or a relative isn't enough? That's when brief counseling may help.

### A Typical Session

The main goal of brief counseling is to help you resolve your personal concerns as quickly and easily as possible. Each session with a counselor usually lasts 45 to 50 minutes. To make the most of your time together, your counselor may do one or more of the following:

- Help you clarify the problem and explore what occurred that prompted you to seek counseling. This ensures that the total concern is being addressed.
- Help you identify options. Together you and the counselor will explore alternatives for addressing your concerns. Counselors provide an objective point of view and can offer suggestions that you may not have considered.
- Work with you to develop a plan that outlines your concerns, your objectives and a strategy for accomplishing your goals in a brief counseling format.
- Give you homework assignments that help you work out your concerns. Examples might include breathing exercises to manage stress, setting aside 15 minutes at the end of each day for quality time with your partner to address relationship issues, or establishing a behavior contract with your child.
- Suggest specific changes you can work on to resolve the issue. A possibility might include keeping a to-do list as a strategy for improving your time management skills.

## Planning Ahead for Your Sessions

There are several easy steps you can take to prepare for a brief counseling session. Start by thinking about why you decided to ask for help at this particular time. Consider when the problem began, and try to recall any times when you've experienced similar problems in the past. If you have had similar problems, consider how you've tried to cope.

Next, think about what you would like to have happen as a result of your counseling sessions (such as feeling happier or improving an important relationship). That way when you see your counselor, you can be as clear as possible about your needs. Most important, keep your appointment. Consider it an investment in yourself.

## Resources Are Available – Call your Magellan EAP at 1-877-704-5698

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.MagellanHealth.com](http://www.MagellanHealth.com). Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.