

Useful questions to ask a Counsellor you may be thinking of visiting.

So that you have the best chance possible of receiving a quality service from a counsellor, you may wish to have information about them and their work. Below are some of the questions you could ask at the initial assessment:

Are you a member of a governing body?

It is good practice for every counsellor to belong to a professional body that can offer services, support and further training. There are many different governing bodies. ACC is uniquely Christian; however you may want to ask which body the counsellor belongs to.

What training have you undertaken in order to be able to work as a counsellor?

People often do a series of courses to become competent in their work. They may have done an introduction, a certificate course and then proceeded onto a diploma. Following the diploma, counsellors are considered good enough to counsel, but there are higher qualifications and continuous professional development which counsellors attend.

Are you accredited?

Accreditation ensures a high standard of both training and experience. This means that the counsellor will have a wide range of skills and knowledge to be able to help you. They will understand many major issues which occur in people's lives, e.g. depression, addiction, abuse, among others.

Do you make a charge?

Counsellors who have a private practice will usually charge a fee. Some counselling agencies may ask for a donation or a fixed fee. There are no pricing rules. Some services are free.

How often will I need to attend?

Initially you may need to see a counsellor on a weekly basis and then less frequently. However the counsellor will have their own ideas and will have found what works best in their experience.

What happens if I am unhappy about something in the counselling relationship or sessions?

Your first option is to speak to the counsellor about the issue. However your counsellor should advise you about how to complain either to the counselling agency in which they work or to their governing body if they are in private practice. Normally they will offer you a counselling contract and some of the above may be in that document.

Can I request a male/female counsellor?

Within counselling centres there is often a mix of both men and women and you are entitled to ask for whichever gender of person you prefer. It may delay your appointment a little if there is no availability. However the centre will try to accommodate your needs.

Will the sessions be completely confidential?

Counsellors should be able to advise you about confidentiality as there are some issues which may need to be passed on to another agency.