

Increase your personal power thru counselling

A Saskatchewan church-run "counselling" agency tells pregnant women who are thinking of terminating their pregnancy thru abortion that they should not. This is not counselling. Counsellors do not tell people what they should or should not do.

There are plenty of people willing to give advise, often without you asking. Gardeners, mechanics, teachers, parents, ministers, bar tenders, and ex-mothers-in-law often give advise and some of it is very good advise. But it is all based on their experiences and their understandings. You are a unique individual. You have your own needs, wants, drives, abilities, emotions and history. No one else can fit into your shoes exactly. Counsellors know that the best answers for you lie within your self.

Suppose that you come to me with a problem and I give you some advise. It will either work to your satisfaction or it will not. If it works you will likely think that I am a great counsellor, and the next time you have a problem you will come to see me again. If it does not work then you will likely think that I am a poor counsellor and you will go to someone else. Either way you are not empowered. You have not learned that the best answers are already inside you.

Good counsellors will help you to find your own "best answers". The first step is to know yourself. The counsellor may suggest giving you tests to measure your needs, wants, drives, abilities and/or emotions so that you have a better understanding of how you rate compared to others or compared to your own goals. We may also want to look at your history to see how your prior experiences have affected your thinking and your feeling.

Once you have a good understanding of your self you are ready to look at those around you including family, community and society. How are these various levels of social organization affecting you? What are their motivations? How can they help? How might they hinder? A good counsellor will help you to gain insight into how you are affected by those around you.

What do you want? What problems do you have on which you wish to work, and how will you know when you have successfully dealt with those problems? A good counsellor will help you to define your problems based on your own self needs, and will help you to put your goals into words.

To reach your goals you will need a step-by-step plan. Even at this point counselling is not about giving advise about how to reach your goals. Counselling is about helping you to see choices, and helping you to predict the likely results of each choice. In the end, you are responsible for developing your own plan.

Sometimes the most difficult step is implementing your own plan. Counsellors will provide support providing the plan does not involve intentionally harming someone else. Because counsellors recognize that every individual is unique and that every situation is unique, we are not judgemental. You, as a human being, have the right to dignity, respect and support from

your counsellor.

Either your plan will work, or it will not work. If it works then you will have the skills to resolve similar situations without the help of a counsellor. If it does not work, well, that is good too because you now have more experience with which to make a better plan.

If you want to come to me for advise, I can probably give you advise in our first session. Real counselling takes longer. When you see a counsellor, explain your expectations, and then work out with the counsellor the steps that will likely be needed in your situation. Contract with your counsellor how many sessions this will likely take, with the option of reviewing your progress and re-defining your contract before the last session.