It’s Time to Talk about counselling and psychotherapy

Tuesday 3 February, 2015

Thursday 5 February 2015 is Time to Talk Day, when people across the UK are encouraged to take five minutes out of their day to have a conversation about mental health.

With a 2014 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) survey suggesting that 28% of people in the UK have consulted a counsellor or psychotherapist, many conversations are likely to touch on the benefits of counselling.

Responding to last year's survey results, Andrew Reeves, Chair of BACP, said:

"The significant increase in the number of people consulting a counsellor or psychotherapist is evidence that people are seeing more and more value in these extremely effective interventions.

"Seeing a counsellor or psychotherapist is increasingly considered an ordinary, everyday activity which many people choose to do in order to improve their mental wellbeing."

It's good to talk

There are periods in many people's lives when they feel depressed, anxious or overwhelmed. These feelings are extremely common and nothing to be scared or ashamed of, but that doesn't mean you have to put up with them.

It's good to talk. Open up to friends, colleagues, your family or your partner. Tell someone how you are feeling and you may be surprised at the positive effect that this can have on your outlook.

Talking about mental health doesn't need to be difficult and can make a big difference. Below are some frequently asked questions about counselling and psychotherapy. Why not use these as a starting point for your own conversation about mental health?

What are counselling and psychotherapy?

Counselling and psychotherapy offer you a safe, confidential place to talk about your life and anything that may be confusing, painful or uncomfortable. It allows you to talk with someone who is trained to listen attentively and to help you improve things.

You should expect one or a series of confidential appointments of up to an hour in length in a suitable professional setting. The process should provide you with the opportunity to make sense of your individual circumstances, have contact with a counsellor who will help identify the choices for change, feel supported during the process of change and help you to reach a point where you are better equipped to cope with the future.

What should I look for in a counsellor or psychotherapist?

Look for a counsellor who is a registered member of a professional association, such as BACP.

BACP's Register has been accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (a government body) which means that it meets their high standards in respect of governance, standard-setting, education and training, management, complaints and information. BACP members are bound by a highly regarded Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy and subject to their Professional Conduct Procedure.

How do I know what type of counselling or psychotherapy will be best for me?

Although there are many different types of therapy available, research suggests that the relationship with your counsellor is more important than the method they use. Your chosen counsellor will be able to talk to you about their particular method or approach.

Some types of therapy may be particularly suited to certain situations, for example, group therapy can be particularly useful in helping families work through their problems together with a counsellor who is specially trained in this area.

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How do I find a counsellor or psychotherapist?

Your GP can refer you for talking treatment that is free on the NHS. This will usually be a short course of counselling from the GP surgery's counselling service. If this isn't available at the surgery, your GP can refer you to a local counsellor or psychotherapist for NHS treatment.

If you are in education you may be able to access counselling through your school, college or university. If you are in employment many workplaces offer a counselling service either in-house or as part of an employee assistance scheme. Additionally, there may be counselling available in your area through a local community scheme or volunteer project.

If you decide to access counselling privately, BACP's public website www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk has a 'find a therapist' directory which will help you find a private counsellor in your local area. It also contains a wealth of information for anyone considering counselling including information sheets, videos and links to recent research.

It's good to talk – invest five minutes of your time in a conversation about mental health on Time to Talk Day.

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