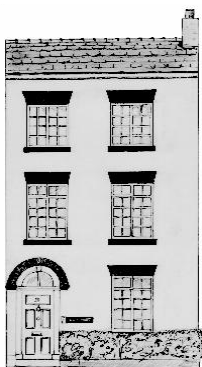


Because I felt different about myself my responses in given situations were different and instead of spiralling downwards I felt a spiralling upwards, gaining more of a connection with my life rather than diminishing control and helplessness.

From a point of desperation and despair counselling supported me in unpicking the stresses in my life, helped me to be more clear about what was important to me. I came to realise that recognising that I needed help and asking for it is a sign of strength not weakness, we can't always sort out our problems alone. I learned a lot about myself. I also found that when I did confide in close colleagues, friends and family I was not stigmatised but respected for asking for help. They could see that the counselling was benefiting me. It took a lot of courage to go for counselling but I'm really glad I did.



The Hope Street Centre
10 Hope Street, Sandbach
Cheshire, CW11 1BA
01270-764003
www.hopestreetcentre.co.uk

Centre Director

Maurice Tomkinson

Psychosynthesis Counselling, Psychotherapy,
Coaching, Smoking Cessation

Counsellors and Psychotherapists

Jane Hammond

Psychotherapy, Transactional Analysis

Joy Hazlehurst

Counselling (adults, young people and children) ,
Relationship Counselling
Triple P Positive Parenting Programme.

Mike Johnson

Counselling (adults and young people)

Allan Morris

Person Centred Counselling and Gestalt

Kathryn Sim

Counselling and Counselling Supervision

Mohamed Sohawon

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, EMDR

Anne Stokes

Psychosynthesis Counselling and Psychotherapy,
alcohol and addictions recovery.

Pat Wells

Integrative Counselling and CBT

The Hope Street Centre



An experience of counselling

An Experience of Counselling

Counselling is something that is often mentioned in the media, usually in connection with major disasters, accidents or traumatic events. Many readers may have wondered if counselling might be helpful for them, but been anxious about what is involved.

What follows is one person's first experience of counselling.....

At the time I was well and truly stuck in a rut. I was teaching full-time and had been working long hours, often resentfully, for a long time, especially since the birth of my son 6 years previously. I felt pulled in all directions, as if I wasn't doing justice to family or work, and what about me. I had no time left over for me. Added to this picture we had a family bereavement and my parents were selling up and moving away.

I found myself crying on the way to work and on the way home, crying some evenings. I was lucky to have a husband that I could talk to, who would often try to help me make sense of how I was feeling but I found whether thinking out loud or on my own my thoughts had well-worn tracks which they travelled relentlessly, passing the same stations and tying me in the same knots of confusion.

About this time the occupational health department evaluated my stress levels. I

had to answer a bank of questions on the computer about many aspects of my life, eating habits, my digestion, how I was sleeping etc. The computer assessed my answers and I received a booklet summarising my stress and how I was coping with it. I scored extremely high on all measurements.

Counselling was the recommended route of treatment. I must admit I didn't think much of the idea, I wondered what good that could possibly do, I'd talked plenty before and got nowhere. I felt as if I'd failed because I couldn't cope without outside help. Surely I should be able to sort out my own problems. I certainly wasn't going to tell family, friends or colleagues where I was going because they would also see my need for counselling as a weakness.

How wrong I was! At the first session my counsellor put me completely at ease: what would be discussed in the sessions was absolutely confidential and would not even be discussed with her colleagues. I felt comfortable and safe very quickly as some of my misapprehensions were laid to rest. I would not be told solutions, would not be judged for anything I revealed, nor could any revelations harm any one.

The counsellor was an unbiased, uninvolved listening ear. My sessions were an hour long, and it was an hour for me, an hour to unload burdens, for my thoughts to ramble uncensored.

Whenever I'd tried to talk to people before they'd had some involvement in my life, their feelings came into play, they had formed opinions, had interests to protect. I had felt I had to censor what I said to be acceptable to them. Then they would try to help with advice which irritated and confused.

The counselling sessions were like a breath of fresh air, like opening a window on my life. I looked forward to them. Here was someone who listened and empathised in a different way, who didn't try to offer solutions or interrupt, but reflected my thoughts clearly back to me so that I could hear them as if for the first time. I found that some of the well-worn thought patterns took new diversions, that I looked at my life from a fresh perspective and began to recognise some of the feelings that I'd been bottling up, that it was ok to have these feelings.

Counselling gave me the space to come to a way of expressing them. With some issues this opportunity was enough to resolve them, others took longer to work through. The sessions helped me re-evaluate my life and to value my feelings and myself enough to make changes so my life would work better for me. I had always seen issues in black and white, all or nothing, continue at work or give it up, continue with a relationship or finish it, counselling brought me to consider the third option of continuing with something and making changes within it.