

‘You don’t have to be crazy to go to therapy’

Therapy is just SO self indulgent. Ancient man didn’t need shrinks to survive

Carrie Bradshaw

Ancient man only lived till 30.

Miranda Hobbs

Sex and the City

When our tooth hurts we go to the dentist. We get muscular pain so we seek out a physiotherapist or masseuse. If we have a physical illness we head off to the doctor. We take care of our hair with regular and sometimes costly visits to the salon and when our skin is looking a little dull we book in for a beauty treatment. But what about when we feel overwhelmed, confused, fragile, angry, sad, frustrated, vulnerable? What do **you** do? Do you reach for the chocolate or the wine? Do you take yourself away from what is bothering you so you don’t have to think about it? Do you offload onto your family and friends? All these might work in the short term but the heady affects of alcohol and caffeine wear off, you still have to go back to your problem eventually and your family and friends often well meaningly just tell you what you want to hear.

So why are we able to willingly seek treatment for our physical and external symptoms but when it comes to our emotional health and having a better understanding of our own patterns of behaviour, there is often a huge hurdle in seeking help? We wouldn’t go to work with a broken front tooth but we will front up there day after day juggling the emotions and challenges of a difficult relationship, or the loss of a loved one, the stress of major changes in your life or just a general confusion or frustration about where you are at.

The thought of seeking professional help in the form of counselling or therapy puts many people immediately on the defensive. Despite how far we’ve come in terms of personal development, there still seems to be a stigma attached to seeking this kind of help. Many people are still attached to the idea that it is self indulgent or a sign of weakness. But it is far from a sign of weakness. It takes strength to stay in that place of discomfort and admit that you want to understand yourself better and in doing that you might need to verbalise your fears and concerns and questions. And that you might need to accept someone’s help on your journey. So why not seek that help from someone who is experienced at doing that, just as you insist on a dentist or a physiotherapist or a hairdresser who knows exactly what they are doing.

In seeking counselling there are so many more options now. You don’t need to lie down on a couch and talk to a detached therapist who is all the while analysing and interpreting what you say and preparing themselves to tell you what they think you should do. These days we have practitioners available to us who use a wide range of processes and approaches. The key is to find a person and a style that you connect with in order to gain the most benefit from your sessions. We all carry the challenges of life in different ways and when the time comes to seek help in meeting those challenges it is important to feel that you can do it in a safe and supportive space.

For some people the therapeutic session can be an enormous relief, as they feel it is one space where they can freely just focus on themselves, talk about how they really

feel and what they really think without guilt or fear of judgement. And someone is listening. Just to be *heard* without feeling indulgent and selfish or interpreted, or feeling as though you have to be careful of the others' reaction can be very freeing and may be the important first step in taking care of your emotional health and well being. If you have the strength to push through the resistance to starting you may just discover many things about yourself and your experiences as you navigate your way through to some greater understanding.

But a visit to a therapist does not promise a miracle 'feel better cure'. It takes work and persistence and the reality is that sometimes you can feel worse before you feel better. But if you are taking so much care with the outside isn't it worth also taking care of your emotional health and well being? It's something you carry with you every day that you can't wash off at the end like make up because *wherever you go, there you are*.