

DEFINITION OF COUNSELLING

BACKGROUND

The College of Counselling has developed a definition of counselling to clarify for members of the College and for the wider community what the College of Counselling means by the term “counselling”.

The following definition is the result of that process.



DEFINITION OF COUNSELLING

Professional counselling is a safe and confidential* collaboration between qualified counsellors and clients to promote mental health and wellbeing, enhance self-understanding, and resolve identified concerns. Clients are active participants in the counselling process at every stage.

Counsellors work with children, young people, adults, couples, families and groups.

Counselling may be short term, long term, or over a lifetime, according to clients' needs.

Counsellors are fully present with their clients, using empathy and deep listening to establish positive working relationships. Counselling is effective when clients feel safe, understood, respected, and accepted without judgement.

Counselling is a profession with a strong evidence base. Counsellors use empirically supported interventions and specialised interpersonal skills to facilitate change and empower clients.

Counsellors are trained in a range of modalities to work with clients from diverse backgrounds.

Counselling can be broad or focused. Clients may explore: aspects of identity, spirituality, relationships with self and others, past experiences, parenting, grief and loss, trauma, domestic violence, child abuse, use of alcohol and other substances, depression, anxiety, and other experiences.

Changes facilitated by counselling include: change in perspective, new insight, new ways of thinking about situations, new awareness of feelings, enhanced capacity to tolerate and regulate feelings, new actions or behaviours, and new decisions about life.

PACFA registered counsellors have completed an undergraduate or postgraduate counselling qualification. They are expected to participate in ongoing professional development and supervision, including their own counselling, to stay current with developments in their profession and to ensure safe, ethical practice.

*Confidentiality is limited when there are risks to the safety of the client or others.