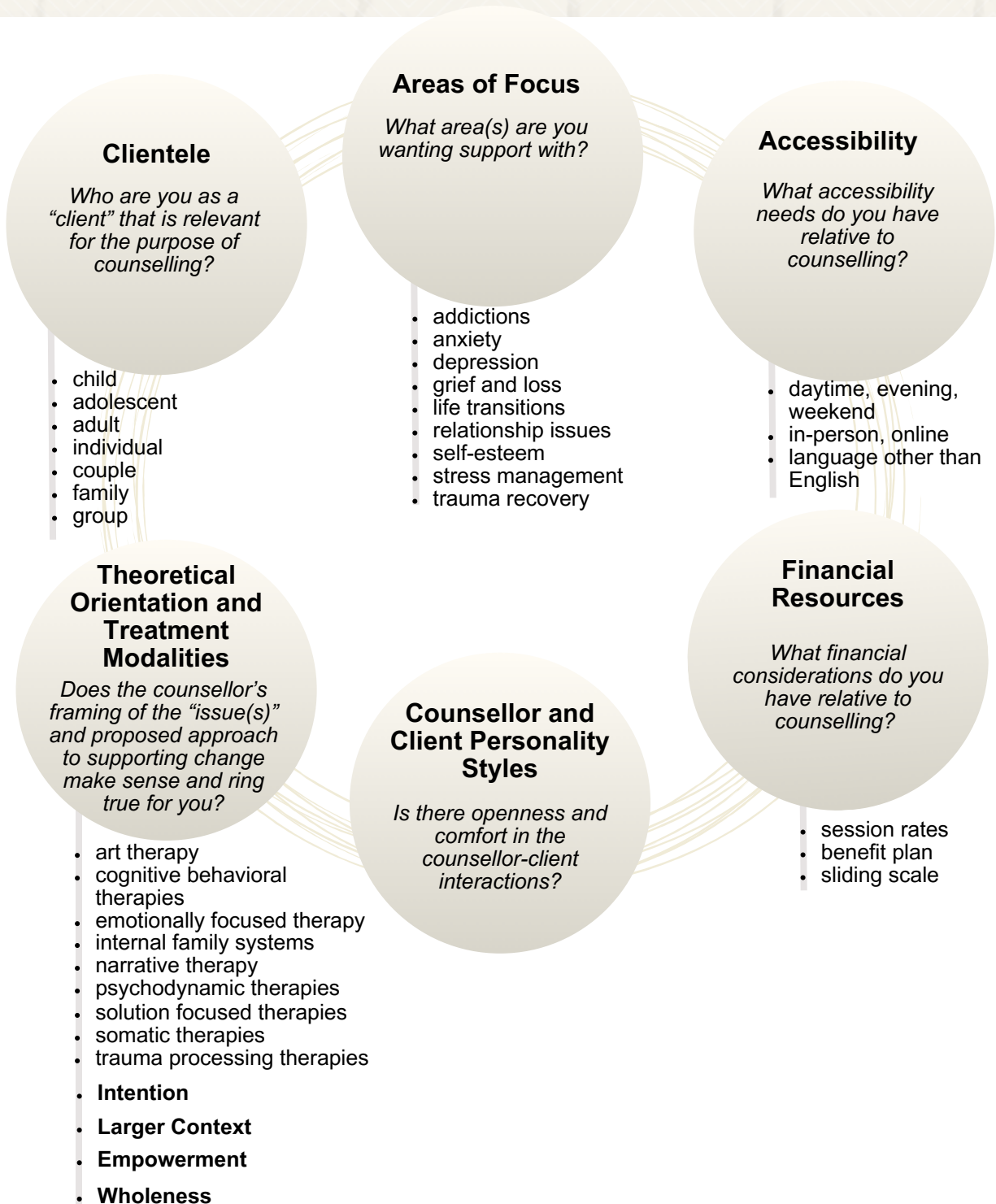


FINDING THE RIGHT COUNSELLING "FIT"



Areas of Counselling “Fit”

There is no such thing as a perfect fit, but the right counselling ‘fit’ goes a long way to help counselling process and progress.

There are lots of things to consider when looking for a counsellor who is both capable and comfortable. These are some of the more important.

Some of them you will be able to sort through by reading information on a website. Many of them you won’t be able to know for sure without talking to a potential counsellor or actually trialing one or two sessions with them.

Area of Focus

What area(s) are you wanting support with?

Counselling can be focused in many different areas. It’s important to consider the area(s) of focus that you want support with and then find a counsellor that has training and experience supporting people in that/those area(s) e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, addictions, life transitions, grief and loss, self-esteem, relationship issues, trauma.

With regard to trauma, counsellors who are “trauma informed” understand the impacts of trauma and how to provide counselling without retraumatizing. This is not the same as being trained to facilitate recovery from trauma. Trauma recovery counselling requires specialized training with different levels a) recovery for basic trauma or PTSD, and b) working with complex trauma which has more severe and global symptoms and impacts.

Clientele

Who are you as a “client” that is relevant for the purpose of counselling?

Counsellors work with different clientele. It’s important to find a counsellor that has experience working with the clientele that you identify with that is relevant for the purpose of counselling.

- Age may be relevant e.g., child, adolescent, adult, senior.
- Grouping may be relevant e.g., individual, couple, family. Intersectional identification may be relevant e.g., new immigrants, 2SLGBTQI+.

Accessibility

What accessibility needs do you have relative to counselling?

There are several aspects of accessibility to consider including:

- availability of the counsellor compared to your schedule e.g., daytime, evening, weekend;
- mode of sessions e.g., in-person, online;
- language of the session if you need a language other than English.

Financial Resources

What financial considerations do you have relative to counselling?

There are several financial considerations to think about:

- fairness of session costs compared to counsellor credentials (training and experience) and the suggested rate by professional colleges.
- session costs compared to what you can afford
- whether session costs based on counsellor credentials would be covered under any benefit plan that you might have.
- whether the counsellor has a sliding fee scale to accommodate different incomes and life circumstances.

Counsellor and Client Personality Styles

Is there openness and comfort in the counsellor-client interactions?

We all have a different way of relating to others. While all counsellors understand the importance of positive regard, rapport and relating with empathy, there are many other variabilities in how they relate that may or may not feel like a fit. It's important to find someone that you feel relatively comfortable with. This does not mean there is no discomfort, since counselling inevitably invites us to explore some hard and often messy places. But are we comfortable even in the discomfort because the counsellor's presence and way of interacting feels safe: there is a space that allows us to be forthcoming even when we are feeling vulnerable; there is openness to what they are saying and asking; there is an invitation for our feedback and willingness to adjust to meet our needs.

Theoretical Orientation and Treatment Modalities

Does the counsellor's framing of the "issue(s)" and proposed approach to supporting change make sense and ring true for you?

There are hundreds of different theoretical orientations and treatment modalities. So many, that it can be very confusing to sort through.

- A **theoretical orientation** is essentially a way to see and understand the "issue" that informs how to approach shifting that issue. For example, one theoretical orientation might see an "issue" as primarily rooted in an individual's thoughts, another in their emotions, another in how the individual is constructing their reality, yet another as a reflection of the dynamics happening between people, or as a response to the social structures in society.
- A **treatment modality** is essentially a particular solution or way of solving the "issue" stemming from the theoretical orientation.

Intention

Does the intention of the approach match what I want and need: exploration? support? symptom management? skill development? solving forward? processing? recovery?

Different counsellors and different approaches have different intentions or goals relative to the "issue(s)".

- Some approaches like Gestalt therapy are heavily focused on exploring. Some approaches are focused on helping the client manage an issue e.g., strategies to deal with anxiety.
- Some approaches are solution focused. They are forward looking and don't spend much if any time dealing with the past or what may be contributing. They believe making consistent change in a different direction in and of itself starts to solve the issue.
- Some therapies are focused on skill development.
- Some approaches are focused on processing and recovery. They generally involve more sessions because they take the time to figure out and shift the underlying issues.

Larger Context

Does the approach consider larger context that is relevant to the “issue(s)” and areas of focus e.g., inter-generational trauma, cultural expectations, intersectionality?

Different counsellors and different approaches have more or less consideration for the larger context that may have contributed or may be influencing the “issue” e.g., intersectionality and social location, racism, inter-generational trauma, bullying in the workplace.

If your situation involves larger context, you want to make sure to find a counsellor that works in a way that not only considers this additional complexity but can weave it into the therapeutic process.

Empowerment

How important is empowerment for you relative to the issue(s) for counselling?

Empowerment is the process of becoming more capable and more confident, especially in taking responsibility for, controlling and influencing one’s life and claiming one’s rights. While almost all approaches lead to some empowerment, different approaches place much more emphasis on it.

- Some approaches outline the goals and steps of therapy.
- Other approaches regard the client as having their own knowledge, wisdom and solutions and the counselling process seeks to facilitate this unfolding.

Wholeness

Does the approach support my wholeness and incorporate other things that are important to me e.g., spirituality?

Different counsellors and different approaches relate to wholeness differently, so it’s important to give some thought to whether or not and how wholeness might be relevant for you.

Wholeness can mean wanting to: be less fragmented, ensure that important aspects of your identity are valued and reflected in the therapeutic exchange regarding things like spirituality or culture, make sure that other potentially contributing things are explored as part of counselling e.g., sleep issues, eating habits, etc.