



## Getting the Most From Counseling --

Pam Feldman, LPC

Associated Counseling Professionals

12818 Augusta Ave.

Omaha, Nebraska 68144-3733

voice 402-334-1122

fax 402-334-8171

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Life is hectic enough, but then you get hit from left field by some curveball. The worry, the stress—it gets overwhelming enough that you decide to seek counseling. Good for you!

Now, let's be honest. Is one hour a week, spilling your guts and getting some profoundly sage advice really going to make it all go away? (Hmm...odd thing to be reading in a counseling office newsletter. Some people use that as an argument not to go to counseling) The fact is that good counseling requires more than just showing up. There's more to it than that.

Once you decide to take that big step and make an appointment, acknowledge that the first step always sets the direction. You are now on a path toward doing something about it. It means that you truly believe that somehow, even if you are not sure how, life will get better and you are in charge of a big part of making that happen. Also, you have now chosen someone to help you along the way.

### **Here are some ideas to enhance your counseling experience:**

Get a notebook or journal so that you can write about your feelings, goals, notes from your session, etc.

Take a few minutes before your session to review what has been discussed in the past sessions, homework, goals and progress. You may want to give yourself a little extra drive time so you won't feel rushed. Close your eyes and breathe—after you park the car, that is.

Between sessions, try to implement new ideas, write down any insights or thoughts you want to remember. Keep track of what works and what doesn't. Build an agenda for the next session. Do your homework.

Support your changes with a healthy lifestyle—eat well, exercise and relax. Really make it a priority to do whatever you can to improve each day. Give yourself credit for the little improvements and for the efforts you are making.

Reach out to others and let them know if you need some help. When you can, contribute to making a positive influence on your environment.

Try something new and different. Changes happen when you view things in new ways and open yourself up to new ideas and experiences.

As you read this article, think for a moment about where you are. Is it comfortable? Do you have adequate space, ventilation, light? Are you in any danger? Is there anything at all that is urgent? Right at this moment, you can rest in the knowledge that you are reasonably safe and comfortable, that you are not in a dire situation. In fact, if you stop reading this right now and just relax for a few more minutes, the entire universe will continue on without a glitch. NOOOO, just let that cell phone ring.

So much of the time, we rush around in a state of urgency. There are more things to do than time to do them. And yet, there are moments, perhaps even whole minutes, when we are really free to relax. We may have forgotten how.

The main impediment to calmness and serenity is our own busy thinking. Even once we are on our way to wherever we have to go, we remain stuck in our thoughts and consequently, the stress that our thoughts induce. Simple ideas for adding relaxation and awareness to your day include:

1. Breathe in fully, expanding your lungs. Exhale and completely empty your lungs.
2. When stopped at traffic lights, take a few full, deep breaths.
3. Say self-calming things such as, "I am fine right now. Or, "I don't need to rush."
4. At meals, make eye-contact with your family members or dinner partners. Savor your food. Put your fork down occasionally.
5. Save multi-tasking for times when it is necessary. Notice when you really can do just one thing at a time and enjoy it fully.

**Pam is a Licensed Professional Counselor with twenty years of experience in private practice. Pam deals in marriage, family and individual therapy, adolescents and adults, depression, anxiety, stress, eating disorders and self-esteem issues. Her hobbies include reading, playing tennis, doing yoga and enjoying friends and family.**

Pam sees clients by appointment by calling 334-1122.

