

# Resistance to Counselling

*Your child in crisis may resist looking for or accepting help.*

It may be comforting to know that a teenager who is experiencing emotional or mental health problems will often turn to family members or friends for help and support.

There are some, though, who will not look for help, thinking they may be able to solve their problems on their own. But when your child's problems become unmanageable and they won't look or accept help, what do you do?

It might help you, as a parent, to understand why your child is resisting getting the help they need. Some reasons include:

- They may be denying they are suicidal or not recognize they have a problem.
- They know of friends who have not had good experiences with counselling.
- They may not understand how therapy works - the process, goals and desired outcomes of counselling.
- They may be worried about their privacy and having confidentiality maintained.
- They may feel shame and stigma around mental health issues.
- They may fear they will be blamed for their problems.
- Their negative thoughts may be making it impossible to see that positive change can happen.

Adolescence is a chaotic time and even though your child is struggling to move toward independence, he/she will need your guidance and support more than you know. Sometimes issues become too difficult to work out within the family and you may need to reach out for help. If your child resists going outside for help there are many things you can do as a parent to show the benefits of getting help.

**Examine your attitude**... toward mental illness, suicide and looking for help. Ask yourself, "Do I value counselling?"; "Do I show my child that reaching out for help is a good thing?"

**Model help-seeking behaviours** - If your child sees you reaching out for help with your problems they will see outside support as a way to help them cope too.

**Research community services** - Look for agencies and resources that offer counselling and support for suicide prevention, emotional and mental disorders or substance abuse.

**Talk with your child** ... about her feelings and getting counselling. Ask her what she thinks will happen in a counselling session, what she might gain from getting help. Use this time to address any misconceptions she might have.

**Review some goals of counselling** - these might include enhancing problem-solving and coping skills, learning how to express feelings, and developing positive self-image and self-esteem. You might explain that the counsellor will help her to find her own solutions and identify her strengths.

**Respect your child's privacy** - as a parent you are going to be concerned and try to get details about what is being discussed in counselling. You can show your concern and support by asking how the counselling is going. Let your child decide the level of detail that he reveals to you. Your child also needs to know that a counsellor has a legal obligation to notify you if they speak about harming themselves or others.

**Find the 'right' outside help** - finding a counsellor who 'feels' right to your child may take some time and effort. Look for someone who specializes in adolescent mental health. Other sources of help include your family doctor, a social worker, school guidance counsellor, a member of the clergy.

## **Safety Tip**

***Do not deny or ignore signs of emotional or mental distress. If your child is physically ill, you take them to the doctor. Do the same for mental health issues.***