

How Do I Know if My Child or Family Needs Counseling?

By Jennifer Sholund, Grants Coordinator

The decision to seek counseling can be a confusing and difficult one. Maybe it's our preconceived ideas about what "counseling" is. Or maybe we're afraid of what getting help may say about us or our parenting abilities. Let's clear the air on that, shall we?

What kind of families receive counseling? Rich families. Poor families. Middle-income families. Christian families. Jewish families. Atheistic families. Families with straight-A kids in basketball. Families with kids who struggle to make C's. Families with two parents. Families with one parent. Families with stay-at-home moms. Families in California. Families in Virginia. Families in Indiana. **Families in your neighborhood.**

Whether people talk about it or not, they're getting help. And it doesn't mean they're not "normal." In fact, when you consider that about 1 in 5 has sought counseling at some time or another, it seems really normal!

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, the question is how to know if your child or family needs counseling. Here are a few things to think through:

1. How have the solutions you've tried been working? Are things staying the same or getting worse? It may be time to talk to a therapist who's worked with families who have similar issues and find out what's worked for them.
2. Have you had people suggest counseling for your family, like a trusted friend, pastor, or someone from your child's school? That may be confirmation of what you were already thinking or perhaps they're seeing something you don't or can't.
3. Are drugs or alcohol playing a role in your family's struggles? These issues can take hold fast and hard in a person's life—and they're bigger than we are. Let someone who has experience in this area help your family sort out where you're at and what kind of help is available.
4. Is there any physical aggression or fears of physical aggression in your home or child's life? Are you concerned that someone in your home may hurt *themselves*? This is bigger than you, too. Ignoring it or thinking it will get better on its own can put you or your child in danger. Please reach out for help today.

Some final thoughts ... if you are still wrestling with the question of whether or not to seek counseling, the answer is probably, "yes." Something—the burden you're carrying, the leading

of the Holy Spirit, the needs of your child—has led you this far. You owe it to yourself and to your family to at least make a phone call to learn what help and support are available.

Other Resources

- *Christ Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth* by James MacDonald