



How can counselling help you?

Being told that you have Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis (Inflammatory Bowel Disease) can be a traumatic experience. Suffering with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), or caring for a sufferer can cause emotional difficulties. Illness can bring all sorts of feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, and guilt which may be painful to you and those nearest to you.

These are all circumstances in which it may be helpful to talk with a skilled counsellor, who is used to hearing emotional distress, and will not judge or become emotionally involved in your situation. Counsellors are trained not to give advice or tell you what to do, but to listen to you, and help you make sense of your feelings. They can offer you support and encouragement in trying to untangle the problems, and examine your interpretation of your illness and its impact on your life.

NACC and specialist counselling for IBD

Between 1997 and 2001 NACC undertook a project into providing specialist counselling for IBD. Some qualified and experienced counsellors were given additional training by NACC on the emotional and physical effects of IBD so that they could be available to counsel people with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis (UC).

The Project has now finished, but some of the Counsellors still offer specialist counselling for IBD either through the NHS or privately.

Counsellors are available in the following areas:

Cambridgeshire: Huntingdon
Essex: Colchester and Theydon Bois
Hertfordshire: Barnet and Hatfield
London: Barbican and Barnes
Wales: Brecon
West Sussex: Worthing

Dr Gillian Thomas, NACC Counselling Adviser, also works as an IBD specialist counsellor in the Reading area.

If you would like further details about one of these counsellors, please contact the NACC Information line on 0845 130 2233.

How to find a counsellor, if there is not a specialist IBD counsellor in your area

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) will send a list of trained and accredited counsellors with information about the kind of counselling they provide, (see 'What does counselling involve?' below). BACP will give you more information about counselling and how to choose a counsellor. All counsellors registered with BACP have agreed to practise according to a 'Code of Ethics and Practice', and they have a complaints procedure. The counsellors also receive regular supervision of their counselling work.

Some GPs' surgeries provide a counselling service, so it is worth asking your doctor.

What does counselling involve?

There are many different kinds of counselling. Counselling can be one-to-one, in groups or with couples. Besides talking, it can use art, music, play or other forms of creativity.

Counselling is always confidential and done in private. Some charge is usually made. Arrangements about the frequency of sessions and the number of sessions will depend on the problems you bring, and will need to be agreed with the counsellor.

Making contact with a counsellor

The first step will be for you to make contact with a counsellor, probably by telephone. You can explain something of your reasons for seeking counselling, so that you and the counsellor can ascertain whether they might be able to help you. It is important that you have confidence in any counsellor you might choose. Feel free to ask about the counsellor's professional background, the length of sessions and costs and where the counselling will take place. As charges vary according to the place where the counsellor is working, it will be necessary for you to discuss the fee with the counsellors. If you agree to have an exploratory meeting you need to know whether you will be charged for this. The first meeting is usually without any obligation to continue into a counselling relationship.

The first meeting with a counsellor

In the first meeting you have an opportunity to decide whether it is worth while to enter into a counselling relationship with this counsellor. You will learn what arrangements the counsellor proposes, the number of sessions, the frequency, the cost, the arrangements for cancellation and the agreement about confidentiality. It is important to be clear about what you want and what the counsellor is offering. If you feel any hesitation about the counsellor, you are under no obligation and perfectly at liberty to say that you do not wish to continue with him or her and try another one.

Information about the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP can be contacted at:

BACP House
15 St John's Business Park
Lutterworth
Leics
LE17 4HB
Tel: 0870 443 5252
Fax: 0870 443 5161
e-mail: bacp@bacp.co.uk
website: www.bacp.co.uk

Please let them know the geographical area for which you wish to receive the list of counsellors and they will send them. This information is also available on the website. If you request it they can also send you a fact sheet, 'Choosing a Counsellor' with more information on counselling and how to choose a counsellor, which is also available to download from their website.

NACC-in-Contact

An alternative to formal counselling is to talk to one of our trained supportive listeners, 'Contacts'. You can ring the NACC-in-Contact Support Line on:

0845 130 3344 weekdays 1.00pm to 3.30pm and 6.30pm to 9.00pm.
(Calls are charged at a local rate on most telephones.)

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NACC would like to acknowledge that the BACP leaflet 'Counselling and You' has been a useful source of information for this leaflet.

This document has been prepared by NACC as general information on the subject and is not intended to replace specific advice from your own doctor.

The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease (NACC) is a voluntary Association, established in 1979, which has 30,000 members and 70 Groups throughout the United Kingdom.

Membership of the Association costs £12 for the first year and £10 subsequently. Additional donations to help the work of the Association are always welcomed.