

How do you know if you'd benefit from counseling?

By Brittni Fudge, MA, NCC, LPCC

Brittni owns Kindred Counseling, PLLC, where she provides counseling for moms in all stages of motherhood. Brittni's first role is a mother of three children under age seven, and is also a mental health therapist, Love & Logic facilitator, parent coach, and former school counselor. Brittni is on a mission to support mothers in their mental health so they can be fully present with their littles.

Counseling can feel like a big step, and it is! It's a brave way to love yourself and support yourself. If you're a mama, it's truly one of the best ways to love your children by showing them how to value themselves and by being able to be more present.

We all experience times of sadness, loneliness, anger, frustration, stress, and grief. So how do you know if what you're going through is part of the normal ups and downs of life or when it's time to seek professional help?

Here are a few signs that you may benefit from seeing a counselor:

- You're yelling at your kids all the time
 - If you're yelling at your kids over the smallest infractions and find yourself regretting your reactions, seeing a therapist can help you get clear on your intentions and values while helping you navigate your response to stress in a way that doesn't keep you up at night.
- You're numbing your feelings
 - Growing up in a culture that generally frowns at a lot of talk about tough emotions means we learn how to numb our feelings. Many adults try to quiet their thoughts and emotions with alcohol, drugs, shopping, sex, food, or even excessive social media use without real connection. If you find yourself turning to these vices more often than not, it's time to address the situation and deal with it.
- Your glass is half empty most of the time
 - If you're feeling down most of the time, chances are it's time to talk to someone. It's normal to have bad days, but if your bad days outnumber your good days, you deserve some support to turn that around. Talking to a therapist can help you feel better by getting things off your chest, gain coping skills, and learning some new tools for living the good life.
- You mentally beat yourself up
 - Many of us can hold it together in social situations and even with our own families, but on the inside we are beating ourselves up over every little misstep. A lifetime of beating yourself up can contribute to perfectionism, anxiety, and depression. As writer Anne Lamott says, "My mind is a neighborhood I try not to go into alone,"

and there's a lot of truth to this for many people. If taking a look at your inner world sounds too hard to do, take a therapist a long for the ride. Their support and gentle feedback might be just what you need to quiet the negative self-talk in your head.

- It's everyone else's fault
 - If you find that you blame everyone else for all your problems, it may be time to shift your perspective a bit. If you feel like life keeps happening to you, that you have no control over your life, or that you're getting screwed by others all the time, that is what therapists call a "external locus of control," and research studies have shown that people who have an external locus of control are more at risk for depression, low self-esteem, and even physical health problems. Going to counseling can help you feel more control of your own life as you navigate your inner world with the support of a counselor. Together, we can help you respond to stress in a healthier way, so that you bounce back from setbacks faster.
- Everything is smooth sailing right now
 - It may seem pointless and backwards to see a counselor when all is well in life, but when you're less stressed, you're more receptive to working with a counselor and may be able to make positive changes, whereas often when someone comes to a counselor in crisis, they're sometimes too anxious to try new ways of thinking. Seeing a counselor on an ongoing basis can help the minor irritations, unhealthy habits, and stressful situations from becoming more serious problems.