

## A Letter to Teens ...

Hey! This letter is just for you.

If you're reading this, it is possible that you're having a hard time or that something is hurting in your life. Something is not working. You feel stuck. It is also possible that your Mom or Dad is forcing you to look at my website. I get it. No matter how you got here, I'm glad you're here.

I think this thing called COUNSELING can be pretty scary and confusing. There are a lot of myths about counseling, right? Like ... you have to lay on a couch. Like Robin Williams in "Goodwill Hunting". Or that you'll be forced to talk to an adult that is your grandma's age, smells like mold, and couldn't possibly get your world. Or that it's for crazy people. It's boring. Therapists are going to tell you what to do. Therapists respond to everything with, "And how does that make you feel?" The biggest myth about counseling that I want to debunk is this: therapists won't understand you. Not really.

I get it. A lot of times it can feel like people don't get us, or really try to understand us. But as a therapist, I really do want to understand what is going on in your life.

You're at such an awesome age: you're figuring out who you want to be, what's important to you, and what you want to do. But sometimes there is SO MUCH going on that it can all feel pretty overwhelming. Maybe nerves get the best of you before a test, or you're feeling a lot of pressure to succeed. Or you feel like you're on the outside of a clique, or being excluded. Or that you're surrounded by people, but you feel really lonely. Or maybe you've been a target of cyber bullying. Or others are pressuring you to engage in sexual activity, or to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Or you don't know how to stop what feels like constant fighting at home. Or you don't like what you see when you look in the mirror, and your self-esteem is so fragile that it is only as high as who you're comparing yourself to in that moment. Or you broke up with a boyfriend or girlfriend for the first time and really, really miss them. Or you're scared about the future. Maybe you feel angry, anxious, or sad all the time, and you don't know why, and that's really scary. Maybe you feel like you're asking for help, but nobody is hearing you and every time you try to ask for help, you feel like adults don't get it and you don't know how to make them understand. If any of these things sound familiar, counseling could be a place for you.

Can I tell you what COUNSELING IS?

- 1 It is 50 minutes devoted totally to you, where you can talk about anything, and I mean ANYTHING going on in your life.
- 2 It is a safe place, where there isn't any judgment. I think sometimes we're afraid to tell friends and family what's REALLY GOING ON because we're afraid of what they'll think about us.
- 3 It is confidential. CONFIDENTIALITY is the idea that what you say in the room, stays in the room (outside some specific issues regarding safety, etc.). It can be hard with friends at school, right? What if they tell somebody? What if it gets out?

Would it make a difference if you knew that you had a safe, non-judgmental, confidential place to talk about the things going on in your life?

A lot of times, our relationships with self, friends, and family have a lot to do with how we feel. For example, you may want to feel closer to Mom or Dad but your discussions always end in fighting. Or you try to ask for help, but it feels like you're often misunderstood. You're not alone in that. Communicating with self, friends, and family can be really difficult. That's where I come in. I'm here to help translate what you're saying so that you do feel SEEN, HEARD and UNDERSTOOD in your relationships. Even if it's something going on with yourself, school, or friends, wouldn't it feel better if your family was in on it? Understood it? Had your back?

Whatever you're going through, counseling can be a place where you don't have to do it on your own or handle it by yourself. As a therapist, I'd love to step into that scary or confusing place with you and figure out what hurts or what isn't working, and hold on to hope together that you and your family can connect in new ways.

