

The ALC Balm of Gilead provides support groups to assist survivors of sexual abuse; we are not a counseling service. We can assist you in finding a counselor in your area that is best suited to your needs.

I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.
—Psalm 17:6

WHY SEE A CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR

Both secular and Christian counselors share the same desire: to help people overcome problems and to find healing, contentment, joy, and meaning in their lives. The main distinction between Christian and secular counseling is that the Christian counselor measures him/herself against the standards of God and His Word, and uses the Bible as the main source of guiding someone to a life of wholeness.

Pray for God's direction and guidance when seeking a counselor. What a counselor believes affects all they are and do. Always remember that you can learn and grow in a counseling relationship, but redemption only comes in your relationship with Christ.

This is a short list of roles within the field of counseling: pastoral, lay, and professional counselors (licensed social workers); marriage and family therapists; licensed clinical psychologists; and board certified psychiatrists.

IS THE BIBLE THE SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR'S GUIDANCE?

While Christian counselors may use skills or tools from secular materials (May we add that there are many good tools out there!), they recognize the Bible to be the final authority. Jesus Christ must be the foundation! The Bible has much to say regarding human nature, suffering, marriage, parenting, relationships, etc. Feel free to ask about their faith.

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...

—2 Peter 1:3

WHO SHOULD SEE A COUNSELOR?

Generally speaking, a person who always or often feels sad or angry, or who abuses substances or food to cope; someone suffering from a great loss or a trauma such as abuse. These can all be indicators that one could benefit from counseling.

The most fundamental decision in seeking a counselor is the resolve to find help. This is the greatest step toward recovery. A counselor can help you sort out your experience and walk with you in your journey toward healing. Counseling provides a safe place, support, encouragement, and a reminder of the truth of healing.

IS COUNSELING NECESSARY? WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM IT?

Counseling may not be necessary, but it could be very helpful. Only you can answer as to whether counseling is necessary for you. Talk to your pastor, spouse, or a trusted friend, and ask them if they see anything in you (marriage, family, life circumstances, etc.) that may be helped by going for counseling.

There may be a stigma in seeking professional help. It can be viewed in a negative light, even when the counselor is a Christian. One has to see these counselors as a gift from God to bring His healing presence in your life. Keep an open mind about what should happen and where the focus must be in counseling. Letting the professional guide you toward attainable realistic goals can be a big part of one's growth and recovery.

Talk to someone who has gone for counseling; a client's perspective is very important. Ask someone who regularly refers to counselors, such as the Balm of Gilead, a pastor or physician. A good professional reputation is important.

Along with counseling, a support group is beneficial. The ALC Balm of Gilead Sexual Abuse Support Group is a safe place where the people are trustworthy and believe the survivor's story. Within a support group we learn to see what has changed within us because of the sexual abuse. Restoration can only come through a deeper relationship with Christ through His Word.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

—Jeremiah 17:14

WHY SHOULD I TALK ABOUT MY ABUSE?

Working through the trauma and healing from childhood sexual abuse is not for the faint of heart. As one survivor put it, “If I never talk about the abuse, I will never heal from it. If I never heal from it, my anger will consume my life and I will lose everything that I love.” No one can force you to talk about your abuse: the choice is yours. But a life of isolation and pain may be too high a price to pay for keeping silent. Freedom and joy can be obtained!

The right counselor will journey with you to identify ways that your life speaks of the trauma of your past, explore areas that look healed, and search beneath the scar tissue. It is a painful and productive process to find even the tiniest cracks that can eventually make their way to the very core of your being.

A support group is a safe and encouraging place where the other people who attend can understand what you are feeling and going through. By sharing with one another we build strong and healthy relationships because they are grounded in Christ and His Word.

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

—Deuteronomy 31:6

HOW CAN I TRUST MY COUNSELOR?

It takes a great deal of courage to trust the details of one’s personal life with a total stranger. Don’t be discouraged if you need to meet with several

professionals before finding someone you can work with. Counseling is long and difficult. Make sure you feel respected and safe with a patient and caring counselor.

The counselor has the privilege to hear the stories of lives that have been damaged and should hold that honor in the highest regard. Our prayer is that God would continually help us to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).” Each session must be entrusted to the One who is ultimately the Counselor, asking Him to “grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour; that we fail not man—nor Thee!” May this be the prayer of every person who serves in this high calling, so that we would be trustworthy servants of the ones, and the One, we serve!

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten...

—Joel 2:25

Sources:

- The American Association of Christian Counselors website (<http://www.aacc.net/>)
- Choose Help website. (<http://choosehelp.com>)
- Focus on the Family website. (<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/>)
- Harry E. Fosdick. “God of Grace and God of Glory.” 1930.
- Langberg, Diane Mandt. *On The Threshold of Hope*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999.

This Counseling Information Pamphlet was created by the ALC Balm of Gilead to assist those seeking information about counseling. This pamphlet contains general information about sexual abuse and counseling. The information is not instruction and should not be treated as such.

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A ministry dedicated to sexual abuse recovery.

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America
Balm of Gilead

(360) 610-7250
Monday – Friday 9 am to 5 pm EST

Email: info@alcbalmofgilead.com
www.alcbalmofgilead.com

Counseling Information

Our Mission Statement:

Because of Christ’s gracious love for us, the ALC Balm of Gilead exists to bring awareness, encouragement, and support to men and women whose lives have been altered by sexual abuse.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

—Psalm 46:1