



A GUIDE FOR NEW CLIENTS

Know the Difference. Trust the Process.

What to Expect from Neuroscience Informed Christian
Counseling®

Something Needs to Change

You're reading this for one of two reasons.

Either something in your life has gotten heavy enough that you're finally looking into counseling, and you want to know what you'd actually be signing up for. Or you've already taken the step, you've got a first session on the calendar, and you'd like to walk in knowing what to expect.

Both are good reasons. Both put you ahead of most people, who wait years longer than they should because they aren't sure what counseling is, whether it works, or whether it will fit with their faith.

So here's what this guide will do for you. It will help you **know the difference** between the kinds of help available to you, and between the kinds of therapy, because they are not all the same and the differences matter enormously. And it will help you **trust the process**, by showing you exactly what Neuroscience Informed Christian Counseling® looks like, why it works, and how to get the most out of it.

A quick word about tone before we begin. We're going to talk to you plainly, like a friend who happens to know a lot about this. We won't oversell. We won't hide the parts that feel strange at first. And we won't pretend counseling is magic. It isn't. It's something better than magic: it's cooperation with the way you were designed to heal.

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed."

PSALM 34:18

Let's start with a question almost nobody asks before they book a counselor: what kind of help do you actually need?

PART ONE

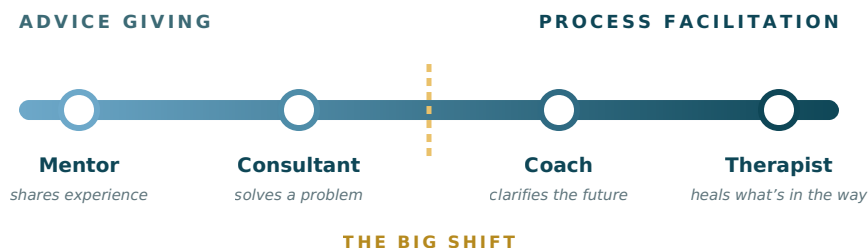
Know the Difference

Not all help is the same. Not all therapy is the same. Before you choose, it's worth understanding what you're actually choosing between.

Mentor, Consultant, Coach, Therapist

Almost every helping relationship in your life runs on the same fuel: conversation. No pills, no equipment, no procedures. Just two people talking. Which is exactly why it's so easy to assume they're all basically the same thing.

They're not. They sit on a spectrum, and where a helper sits determines what you'll get from them.



On the Advice Side

Mentors are usually volunteers, usually older than you, with more miles on the road you're trying to travel. A spiritual mentor shares their walk with Jesus. A marriage mentor shares what forty years of marriage taught them. A professional mentor shows you how the industry actually works. The gift of a mentor is that you get to stand on their shoulders: learn from their mistakes without repeating them, borrow their hard-won wisdom, skip a few years of trial and error.

Consultants offer advice too, but they're hired, they're focused on a specific task or problem, and they're drawing on training rather than just experience. A lactation consultant helps you learn to breastfeed. A business consultant helps you fix your cash flow. There's a consultant for nearly everything, and the deal is simple: you have a problem, they have expertise, and they tell you what to do.

Both are wonderful. Both are built on one thing: **someone who knows more than you tells you what they know.**

The Big Shift

Then something changes.

When you move from mentoring and consulting to coaching and therapy, you cross a line that most people don't see coming. On the far side of that line, **the helper mostly stops giving advice.**

This frustrates people at first. We know, because we hear it every week. You come in with a problem, you explain it clearly, you wait for the expert to tell you what to do, and instead the expert asks you a question. Then another. It can feel like they're withholding.

They're not withholding. They're doing something harder and more valuable, and the next section explains why.

Why a Good Therapist Rarely Tells You What to Do

Here's the honest truth about advice: it works great for problems that live outside you.

If your car makes a noise, a mechanic should tell you what's wrong. If your business is losing money, a consultant should tell you why. If you want to learn to bake bread, a mentor should hand you the recipe. External problems, external solutions, and advice is the fastest route from one to the other.

But the reasons you're considering counseling almost certainly don't live outside you. They live in how you feel, how you react, what you fear, what you can't seem to stop doing or start doing. And for problems that live inside a person, advice has a terrible track record.

You already know this. Think about the last time someone gave you genuinely good advice about your anxiety, your marriage, your temper, your grief. You probably agreed with it. You probably tried it. And you probably found yourself, a few weeks later, right back where you started, now with a fresh layer of shame for not being able to do the thing you knew you should do.

Knowing what to do was never your problem. Most people who come to us could write a decent self-help book. What they can't do is live it. Something underneath keeps overriding what they know.

What Coaches and Therapists Do Instead

Instead of handing you answers, a good coach or therapist leads you in a **process of self-discovery**. They create a relationship safe enough for real, honest, gut-level conversation, and in that safety you begin to find things you didn't know were there. You discover why the pattern runs. You feel what's underneath it. And when the underneath changes, the pattern changes with it, without white-knuckling.

If a therapist simply told you what to do, they would shortchange you twice. First, they'd skip the discovery that actually produces change. Second, they'd teach you to depend on them for every future challenge, when the whole point is to build the muscle in you.

So when your counselor answers your question with a question, know this: they aren't being coy. They're refusing to take from you the one thing that will actually help.

The Five Levels of Conversation

If counseling runs on conversation, it's worth asking what kind. Because not all talking is created equal.

A helpful way to picture it: conversation has five levels, and most of us spend nearly our whole lives on the top three.



Adapted from John Powell, Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am? (1969). See references.

Level 5 • Small Talk. "Hey, how's it going?" "Good, you?" The social lubricant of strangers and hallways. Necessary, pleasant, and revealing nothing.

Level 4 • Reporting. "Looks like rain." "Did you catch the game?" "I heard the Johnsons are moving." Facts and information. Still nothing of you in it.

Level 3 • Opinions. "I love that restaurant." "I'd never live in a big city." "I think the new pastor is doing a great job." This is the first level where you reveal something of yourself, and for a lot of people, it's the deepest conversation ever gets. Opinions expose you to disagreement, which is why many of us stop here.

Level 2 • Feelings. This is where real vulnerability begins. Not what you think about something, but how it lands in you. "When she said that, I felt small." "I'm scared this won't get better." "I want to be close to him and I don't know how." Some people call this the gut level. It's where you begin to actually understand yourself, and where others begin to know what moves you.

Level 1 • Being Truly Met. The rarest level. A moment when you've shared something real and the other person doesn't just hear it, they get it. You feel felt. There's a closeness in that moment most people experience a handful of times in a lifetime, and it changes something in you every time it happens.

All five levels could show up in any relationship, but rarely do. What makes counseling different is that it **deliberately spends its time at Levels 2 and 1**, because that's the only depth at which real self-discovery and lasting change happen. Your counselor is trained to lead you there and to make it safe enough to stay.

If that sounds exposing, it's because it is. It's also where the healing is.

The Window

Here's another picture, and it explains a great deal about why you might feel stuck.

Imagine everything about you sorted into a window with four panes.



Adapted from the classic Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955).

OUT IN THE OPEN. What you know about yourself and everyone around you can see too. The you at the neighborhood barbecue.

MY BLIND SPOTS. What others see in you that you don't see yet. Everyone has them. Your best friend could probably name three right now.

MY SECRETS. What you know but have never told a soul. The struggles, memories, fears, and longings you keep locked away.

ONLY GOD KNOWS. A pane hidden even from you: wounds you don't remember, gaps you can't perceive, patterns whose roots you've never seen.

Everyone has all four panes. But here's what matters: **the dividing lines slide.** For some people the Open pane is enormous and the others are small. For others, the Open pane is tiny, and they're carrying huge blind spots, a vault of secrets, and a fourth pane full of things driving their moods and choices that neither they nor anyone around them understands.

And there's a pattern we see over and over. **The smaller the Open pane, the lonelier the person, and the more trouble they have, inside and in their relationships.** Not because they're bad. Because nobody can love what they can't see, including you.

Coaching and counseling share the same big aim: grow the Open pane. Shrink the blind spots. Bring the secrets into the light, where they lose their power. And, most importantly, discover what's hiding in the Only God Knows pane, because that's usually where the thing you can't fix is coming from.

Coaching or Therapy?

So if both coaching and therapy avoid advice, go deep, and grow the Open pane, what's the difference? Which one do you need?

They differ in **what they're looking at and what they assume about you.**

Coaching looks forward. A good coach works with your thoughts, feelings, and goals in the present to help you get clear about the future you want, map the steps to get there, and hold you accountable to taking them. It's a powerful thing. But notice the assumption underneath it: coaching assumes you have the capacity to do what you decide to do. That nothing significant in your development or your story will get in the way once you're clear about the goal.

For some people, that's true. For most of us, it isn't.

Therapy looks at what's in the way. Most of us carry two kinds of injury from growing up in a broken world. **Wounds**, from things that should not have happened but did. And **gaps**, from things we needed and never received. Those wounds and gaps affect our very capacity to connect, to stand on our own, to face reality, to handle emotion, and to trust God. And when those capacities are compromised, we find ourselves in the most frustrating place a human can be:

*"I know exactly what I need to do.
I just can't seem to do it."*

If that sentence has ever been true of you, you already know the feeling that follows it. Shame. Discouragement. A stuckness that no amount of good advice, good intentions, or good sermons seems to touch.

That's not a coaching problem. That's a therapy problem. Therapy heals the wounds and fills the gaps so that you finally have the capacity to do what you already know you should do. And once those capacities are in place, things like coaching, mentoring, and consulting suddenly start working, because now there's something in you that can receive them.

So here's a simple test. If your struggle is mainly about clarity and follow-through, and you've never felt chronically stuck, coaching may be perfect. If you've been trying to change something for a long time and the trying itself has become exhausting, you're in the right place.

NOT ALL THERAPY IS THE SAME

Whack-a-Mole or Healing?

Now we need to tell you something that most people considering counseling have no idea about, and it may be the most important thing in this guide.

Not all therapy does the same thing. Some therapy is designed to manage symptoms. Some therapy is designed to heal what's causing them. Both are legitimate. Both have research behind them. And they produce very different lives.

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Builds a competing pathway

The old wound stays intact. You learn to out-muscle it.

Top-down

Works through your thinking brain: evaluate, challenge, choose.

Tools you practice

Success depends on how faithfully you use the techniques.

Symptom is the problem

Anxiety is a malfunction to be reduced.

Ongoing maintenance

Relief lasts as long as the effort does.

TRANSFORMATION

Rewrites the old pathway

The wound itself is healed. Nothing left to out-muscle.

Bottom-up

Works through your feeling body first, where the emotional brain actually lives.

Relationship as the instrument

Your counselor's attuned presence does what no worksheet can.

Symptom is a message

Anxiety is a part of you protecting a wound. We listen.

Permanent

Once the cause is gone, the symptom has no reason to return.

Symptom Management: Useful First Aid

If you've heard of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Exposure Therapy, mindfulness practices, or Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, you've heard of the symptom-management family. These approaches teach you tools: box breathing when panic rises, feet on the floor and counting backward when you dissociate, catching and reframing a catastrophic thought, doing the opposite of what the depression wants, weighted blankets, exercise routines, sleep hygiene.

These tools work. They've been proven to reduce how intense symptoms feel, and when symptoms are so severe you can barely function, they can be exactly what you need first. We use some of them ourselves when a client is in crisis. Think of them as **excellent first aid**.

But first aid is not surgery, and here's the part nobody tells you. These approaches work by what neuroscience calls **competitive neuroplasticity**: you build a new neural pathway that competes with the old symptomatic one. The old pathway is still there, fully intact. You've just learned to out-muscle

it. Which means the new pathway has to be maintained through ongoing effort, and when you're exhausted, sick, grieving, or blindsided, the old one tends to win again.

That's the whack-a-mole. You get good at hitting symptoms as they pop up. They keep popping up.

Transformation: Healing the Source

The other family works differently at the level of the brain itself. Approaches like Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy (AEDP), Attachment-Focused EMDR (AF-EMDR), Internal Family Systems (IFS), and Neuroscience Informed Christian Counseling® belong to what's called the **interpersonal neurobiology and memory reconsolidation** family.

Instead of building a competing pathway, these approaches use a process the brain already has, called **memory reconsolidation**. In plain terms: when an old emotional learning is activated and, at the same moment, you have an experience that contradicts it, the brain briefly unlocks that old learning and rewrites it. The wound isn't out-muscled. It's healed. And once the thing generating the symptom is gone, the symptom simply stops, without maintenance, because the reason for it no longer exists.

Four differences make this concrete:

Suppressing versus rewriting. Symptom management builds a new road beside the old one. Transformation repaves the old road.

Top-down versus bottom-up. Symptom management works primarily through your thinking brain: evaluate the thought, challenge it, choose a behavior. Transformation works through your feeling body first, because in high-stress moments your emotional brain overpowers your thinking brain every time, and no amount of logic wins that fight.

Tools versus relationship. In symptom management, success mostly depends on how faithfully you practice the techniques. In transformation, the relationship with your counselor is itself the instrument. Their calm, attuned presence does something to your nervous system that no worksheet can.

Symptom as problem versus symptom as message. Symptom management treats your anxiety, anger, or numbness as a malfunction to be reduced. Transformation treats it as a coherent message from a part of you that learned something painful and is still protecting you. Instead of fighting it, we get curious about it, and it turns out the symptom knows exactly where the wound is.

If You've Tried Therapy Before

We'll say this plainly, because you may need to hear it.

If you've done CBT, or DBT, or some other skills-based counseling, and you got some relief but you're still fundamentally stuck, **the problem was not you**. You didn't fail. You weren't uncommitted. You were given first aid for something that needed healing, and first aid did exactly what first aid does. It helped for a while.

You're not broken. You were on the wrong side of the divide.

This is why we practice Neuroscience Informed Christian Counseling. Not because symptom tools are bad. Because you deserve more than a lifetime of managing yourself.

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

ROMANS 12:2

BOTH BOOK AND BODY

Is This Really Christian? Is This Really Science?

You saw "Neuroscience" in the name, and you saw "Christian" in the name, and you probably came to us because you want both. You want counseling that takes the Bible seriously and takes the brain seriously, and you've had trouble finding it.

So let's address the worry underneath, because we've heard every version of it.

Is this just secular psychology dressed up in Christian language?

Is this New Age or Eastern religion dressed up in Christian language?

Is this just a Bible study with no real science behind it?

Will my counselor actually share my faith, or just politely tolerate it?

All four questions are really one question: **Am I going to get both, and is either one going to be watered down?**

You're going to get both. Neither will be watered down. Here's why that's not a marketing promise but a matter of conviction.

One Author, One Designer

Our foundational belief is this: **the Author of Scripture and the Designer of the nervous system are the same person. Jesus.**

That single conviction settles the whole question. If Jesus wrote the Bible and Jesus designed your brain, then accurate observations about how the brain works are observations of His design, and rightly interpreted Scripture and rightly interpreted science cannot contradict each other. When they seem to, someone has interpreted something wrong, and we go back to work.

So we do something very deliberate. We keep the **evidence-based observations** about the nervous system, the ones that have been tested and replicated, and we set aside the **secular interpretations** that researchers often layer on top of them. Then we ground what's left in its actual source, direction, and purpose: God. In practice, that means we apply neuroscience as interpreted through the lens of the Bible, not the other way around.

That's why nothing in NICC asks you to empty your mind, contact a "higher self," or borrow from another religion. When we use imagination in session, it's Spirit-led imagination, the same faculty you use to picture the prodigal's father running down the road, directed toward Jesus. When we teach you to listen to your body, we're teaching you to listen to something God designed and Scripture takes seriously. Every technique either serves the God of the Bible or it doesn't make the cut.

And the Science Is Real Science

We also won't pretend this is a Bible study with a few brain words sprinkled in. The neuroscience in NICC is the same neuroscience that underlies AEDP, AF-EMDR, and IFS: interpersonal neurobiology, polyvagal theory, attachment research, memory reconsolidation. The references at the back of this guide are real researchers doing real work. NICC stands on their observations. It simply refuses to stand on their philosophy.

Your Counselor's Faith

Every NICC counselor at MyCounselor.Online is a mental health professional and a practicing Christian who shares your faith. Not a professional who is "open to spirituality." A brother or sister in Christ who prays, who reads the same Scripture you do, and who will bring Jesus into the room not as a courtesy but because they can't imagine doing this work without Him.

You can talk about your church, your pastor, your doubts, and your marriage honestly. You will not be told to just pray harder. You will not be told your faith is the problem. And you will not have your convictions quietly worked around.

Both book and body. All the way down.

THE BIG PICTURE

How God Designed You to Grow

Before we describe what happens in a session, you need the map underneath it. Here's how we understand you.

Before You Were, God Knew You

Before your mother ever suspected you existed, God knew you. He designed you, on purpose, for this world and His Kingdom, and He prepared good things for your one particular life before time began.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

EPHESIANS 2:10

That perfect picture of who you were created to become is what we call your **True Self**: you, fully grown up in Christ, reflecting God's glory in a way no one else ever could.

Your Soul DNA

God encoded that design into you. Just as your body carries physical DNA holding the blueprint for your biological development, your soul carries what we call **Soul DNA**: a God-authored spiritual blueprint holding your identity, gifts, capacities, and calling. You were never a blank slate. You arrived loaded.

The Thrive-Drive

And He didn't just give you a blueprint. He gave you an engine. There is an innate drive in you, the very breath of God animating body and soul, pulling you toward maturing into the fullness of who you were created to be. We call it the **Thrive-Drive**, and you can feel it working right now, in the simple fact that you're reading this instead of settling for how things are.

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

Wounds and Gaps

Here's how it was supposed to go. Just as your body needs nutritious food to grow into its DNA's design, your soul needs nutrition: **life-giving experiences** with other people that feed it and let it mature. Being delighted in. Being comforted. Being seen and known and kept safe.

In a perfect world you'd have received all of it. You didn't grow up in a perfect world.

When life-giving experiences you needed never came, they left **gaps**: capacities that never got the chance to develop. When life-robbing experiences happened, things that should never have happened but did, they left **wounds** that distort and block your growth.

The False Self

Wounds and gaps together produce a survival-based version of you. It's resourceful, it worked hard to keep you safe, and it cannot make you truly happy. We call it the **False Self**. Most of the symptoms that brought you here are the False Self doing its job: protecting a wound, compensating for a gap, keeping you alive in a world that hurt you.

Which is why we don't attack your symptoms. We listen to them. They know where the wound is.

The Aim

The aim of NICC is simple to state and takes real work to do: **facilitate life-giving experiences that heal your wounds and fill your gaps**, so the False Self is transformed and your True Self matures. The result is what we call **True Happiness**: the abundant life Jesus promised, marked by enduring peace, joy, hope, and satisfaction, in this life and the life to come.

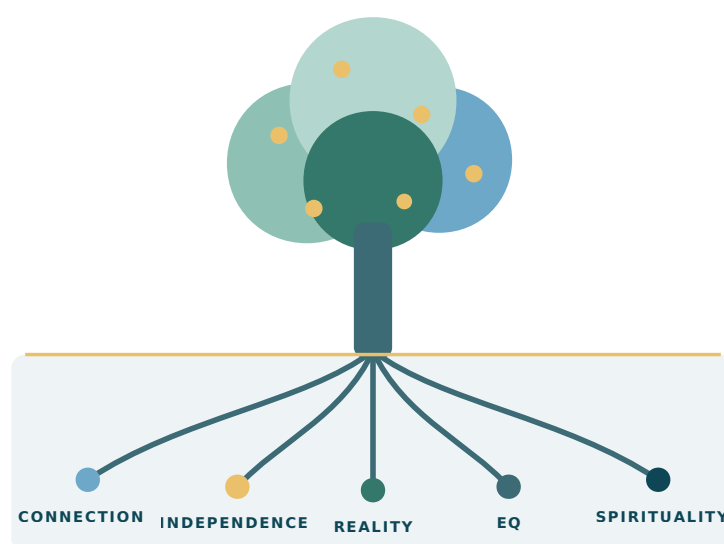
"My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."

JOHN 10:10

THE ROOTS OF YOUR LIFE

The Five Areas Where We Grow

Those life-giving experiences mature you in five specific areas. Think of them as the root system of your life: when the roots are healthy and fed, the fruit above ground takes care of itself.



● CONNECTION

Your capacity to form secure attachments and healthy, safe, vulnerable relationships. To give and receive love. To bear one another's burdens and to rejoice and mourn with others.

● INDEPENDENCE

Your capacity to have an identity and agency separate from other people, and the practical life skills to navigate adulthood without excessive dependence. Psychologists call this differentiation and individuation. We call it being your own person.

● REALITY

Your capacity to perceive and accept the world as it is, not as you wish it were. To hold realistic expectations for yourself and others, and to grieve and accept it when the world and the people in it don't match your hopes.

● **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)**

Your capacity to recognize what you feel, regulate it, let it run its course, understand what it means and what it's asking you to do, put it into words, use it to make wise decisions, calm down with the help of others, accurately read what others are feeling, and let that shape how you relate. It's a lot. It's also learnable.

● **SPIRITUALITY**

Your capacity to have a real, interactive, loving relationship with the Creator of the universe, and through that relationship to understand yourself, your purpose, your meaning, and your hope for the life to come.

As you read those, some probably felt sturdy and some felt tender. That's useful. But hold your self-assessment loosely. What we think we need to work on is very often different from what we actually need, and the Holy Spirit and your own nervous system know the difference. Which brings us to Part Two.

PART TWO

Trust the Process

What a session actually looks like, why your counselor may not be who you pictured, and how to walk into your first hour ready.

Slowing Down and Listening

Here's where we tell you what NICC counseling is actually like, and we're going to be honest: **it's probably not what you're picturing.**

Two convictions drive everything that happens in the room.

First, **emotion is the engine of change, and relationship is the mechanism.** You don't change by thinking harder. You change by feeling something real in the presence of someone safe.

Second, **your nervous system, empowered by the Thrive-Drive and the Holy Spirit, already knows what needs to heal and in what order.** Our job isn't to figure that out for you. It's to help you listen.

What We Won't Do First

We won't start with a long history. We won't spend three sessions cataloging your symptoms. We won't hand you a personality test.

What We'll Do Instead

From very early on, your counselor will teach you to **attune**: to slow down, turn your attention inward, and notice what's happening in your body and emotions right now, in this moment. Then to share that, out loud, and let it lead.

That probably sounds strange. It is strange, at first. But here's what's underneath it. Emotions live in the body before they live in words. The tightness in your chest, the heat in your face, the sudden heaviness, the lump in your throat: these are your nervous system speaking, and it is far wiser than your thinking mind gives it credit for. When you learn to listen to it instead of overriding it, it leads you to exactly the memory, the relationship, the belief, the wound that needs attention. Every time. In the right order.

So we trust it. **We trust the process, even when it leads somewhere unexpected**, which it almost always does. Remember the Only God Knows pane.

Welcoming Everything

You'll also notice your counselor treats your symptoms differently than you expect. Instead of trying to make your anxiety go away, they'll get curious about it. What's it protecting? When did it first show up? What does it need? The symptom you came to eliminate turns out to be a part of you that's been carrying something for a very long time, and when it finally gets heard, it can finally rest.

Sometimes healing happens directly, in the relationship with your counselor, when you have an experience with them that your nervous system has been waiting your whole life to have. Sometimes it happens through **imagery**: Spirit-led use of your imagination to revisit a memory with Jesus present, and to receive there what you needed and never got. Both rewire the brain. Both are grounded in Scripture and in science.

When the Dots Don't Connect

There will be sessions where you can't see the connection between what you came in for and what you're working on. You came for your marriage; you find yourself talking about your father. You came for anxiety; you find yourself grieving something you thought you'd made peace with.

This is not a detour. The wounds and gaps in the Only God Knows pane affect your mood, your health, your thinking, and your choices in ways that aren't visible from the surface. **God has wired tremendous wisdom into your nervous system.** It wants to heal, the way your skin wants to heal when you get a cut and starts the work before you've even found a bandage. Learning to slow down and follow it will take you to the right things in the right order.

Trust the process.

DOES IT WORK?

The Numbers

We'd rather show you than tell you.

93.6%

of 1,211 clients achieved their goals for counseling

One-year outcome study of NICC at MyCounselor.Online. See references.

That's not just a satisfaction survey. That's people who arrived with a specific thing they wanted to be different and left with it different.

We share that number because you need a reason to trust a process that will feel unfamiliar, and because the alternative to trying is staying where you are. The odds are very good that this can help you too.

NOT WHO YOU PICTURED

What If My Counselor Is Different From Me?

Now for the conversation our Matching Specialists have almost every day, and we'd rather have it with you now than after you've been matched.

You may have a picture of who your counselor should be. Probably someone like you, or someone like the wise older person you wish you'd had. And there's a real chance the counselor we recommend won't match that picture. So let's say the worries out loud.

“She’s half my age. She’s barely out of school. How could she understand thirty years of marriage?”

“I’m a man. I’m not comfortable talking to a woman about this.” Or the reverse.

“He’s single with no kids. I’ve got four teenagers and a grandbaby. He has no idea.”

“I’m white and my counselor is Asian.” Or Black. Or any other difference you didn’t expect.

We hear these, and we don’t dismiss them. They come from a reasonable assumption: that a counselor helps you by drawing on shared life experience. If that were how counseling worked, you’d be right to want a match in age, gender, life stage, and background.

But that’s how **mentoring** works. It isn’t how NICC works.

Why It Doesn’t Work the Way You Think

Your counselor isn’t going to give you advice based on having lived your life. Your counselor is going to lead you in a process that cooperates with how **Jesus designed the nervous system** to heal and mature. That design is the same in a sixty-year-old grandfather and a twenty-eight-year-old counselor. It’s the same across genders. It’s the same across races and cultures and life stages, because we were all made by the same hands.

The counselor doesn’t need to have lived your life. They need to know how to lead a process that works with how every human life is built. And that’s exactly what their training is.

Here’s the pattern we see, and we see it constantly. A client comes in skeptical about the match. They sit through one session. And somewhere in that hour, something happens: they feel genuinely heard, they feel safe, and they realize this person can actually help them. After that, the age and the gender and the background simply stop mattering, because what they actually wanted was never a mirror. It was help.

What Actually Matters in a Match

None of this means fit is irrelevant. It means fit is about different things than you might think. Our Matching Specialists focus on three:

1 Availability

Who can actually meet with you on the days and at the times you’re free? A perfect counselor you can never see helps nobody.

2 Training for your need

Who has the specific expertise for what you’re bringing: marriage, trauma, anxiety, grief, a struggling teenager, sexual issues, faith questions? This matters far more than biography.

3 The connection you feel once you’ve met

Not the one you predict from a photo and a bio. The one you experience after sitting with them for a session.

And If It Isn’t Working

You can change counselors at any time, for any reason. No justification required.

We also back your first session with a **risk-free guarantee**. If it doesn't feel like the right fit, we'll cover the cost of that session and match you with someone else. And if you decide online counseling simply isn't for you, we'll refund your payment.

But here's the number worth knowing. Only about **one percent** of clients ever ask for a rematch. Because once people actually sit with their counselor, they feel safe, connected, and confident this person can help. And that, it turns out, is all anyone really wanted.

THE PRACTICAL STUFF

How It Works

**45 to 50
Minutes**
PER SESSION

**Every Other
Week**
WEEKLY WHEN NEEDED

100% Online
VIDEO, FROM ANYWHERE
PRIVATE

Free Matching
15 TO 20 MINUTE
MEETING

Sessions run 45 to 50 minutes. Long enough for real work. Short enough to fit a lunch break.

Most clients meet every other week, twice in a four-week cycle. When a situation is urgent or intense, weekly sessions are available. Your counselor will assess where you are in your first session and recommend a cadence. You'll adjust together as you go.

Everything is online, by video. You'll connect over Zoom from any private location with internet, on your phone or computer. Kitchen table after the kids are down. Parked car on a lunch break. Home office with the door shut. Wherever you can be honest, you can do this. No commute, no waiting room, no running into someone from church in the parking lot.

The Matching Meeting

Before you ever start counseling, we take time to hear your story and match you thoughtfully.

Your **free 15 to 20 minute Matching Meeting** is a short conversation with a real person on our team who listens to what you're looking for, answers your questions, and helps you find a counselor who fits your needs. It isn't therapy yet. It's personal guidance, from someone who knows every counselor on our team, to help you take the next step with confidence.

If the counselor we recommend sounds like a good fit, your Matching Specialist can get you set up and schedule your first appointment right then.

The Investment

We don't list prices in this guide because they change over time, and because we'd rather you think of this the way it actually functions: as an investment in yourself, your marriage, your kids, and your future, with a return that compounds for the rest of your life. Your Matching Specialist will walk you through current options and answer every question about cost, payment, and what's possible for your situation.

TRY IT RISK-FREE

Starting counseling is a meaningful decision, and we want you to feel confident taking that first step. If your first session doesn't feel like the right fit, we'll cover the cost and match you with a different counselor. If you decide online counseling isn't for you, we'll refund your payment. You get to try the real experience without worrying you'll be stuck if it isn't right.

SESSION ONE

What to Expect in Your First Session

Here's the shape of your first hour, so nothing surprises you.

1 A quick greeting and introduction

Human first. A few minutes to settle in and let your counselor become a person rather than a name on a screen.

2 Walking through the informed consent

Your counselor will review the document you signed, answer any questions, and make sure you understand confidentiality and how this all works. Ask anything. This is your time.

3 A short experiential demonstration

Before you get into your story, your counselor will show you what we mean by slowing down, attuning to your nervous system, and sharing what's happening right now. It'll take a few minutes. It's the single best way to understand what this work is, because it's nearly impossible to explain and surprisingly easy to try.

4 Understanding what you're hoping for

Then you'll talk together about why you came, what you want to be different, and set some initial goals. Your counselor will be listening underneath the goals for the capacities that need to grow.

5 Returning to the process

For the rest of the session you'll go back to listening: noticing what your nervous system brings forward, getting curious about it, following where it leads, and having new experiences that begin healing wounds and filling gaps. Your counselor stays with you the whole way, keeping it safe, helping you stay regulated so you're never overwhelmed, leading the process, and helping you make sense of what happens.

6 Wrapping up

Reflecting together on what the session was like, what you're taking with you, and planning for next time.

What Will Frustrate You, and What Will Change You

Let's be direct about expectations, because they determine almost everything.

If You Come Expecting This, You'll Be Frustrated

If you walk in expecting your counselor to give you advice. To tell you what to do. To be the judge of who's right and who's wrong in a conflict you're having. To send you home with three things to practice. To teach you a skill by the end of the hour. If that's the picture in your head, you're going to leave the first session disappointed, because that's not what this is, and it's not what would help you.

People who come for advice and don't get it often quit early and conclude counseling doesn't work. Counseling worked fine. It just wasn't the thing they were measuring.

If You Come Like This, Hold On

But if you come **open**. If you meet your counselor honestly and authentically. If you let them lead you into an experience unlike anything you've had before, and you stay with it through the part where it feels new and weird. If you trust the process.

Then there is a very high probability that this will not only get you what you came for. It will give you things you didn't know were possible.

That's not us being dramatic. That's what Jesus wants for you. Not just the good you knew to ask for. A life of abundance you didn't even know to hope for.

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."

EPHESIANS 3:20

A Few Honest Questions

Whether you're still deciding or you've already booked, take five minutes with these. If you're deciding, they'll help you decide. If you've already decided, they'll remind you why.

Write in the space below, or in a journal if you want more room. This is between you and God.

1 WHAT MADE YOU START LOOKING NOW?

Something shifted. Something became heavier, or a door opened, or you simply ran out of ways to pretend it was fine. What was it?

2 WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT REALITY COSTING YOU?

Not in the abstract. In your marriage. With your kids. In your sleep, your health, your work, your faith, your friendships. What is this taking from you, and from the people you love, every week it continues?

3 WHAT HAVE YOU ALREADY TRIED, AND HOW DID IT WORK?

Prayer, willpower, books, sermons, a previous counselor, a small group, just waiting it out. Be honest about what helped, what didn't, and what you're tired of trying.

4 WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE DIFFERENT?

If this genuinely worked, what would an ordinary Tuesday look like six months from now? What would you feel walking into your house? What would the people closest to you notice?

5 WHAT HAPPENS IF NOTHING CHANGES?

Play it forward. A year. Five years. Same patterns, same pain, same distance. What does that cost you? What does it cost them?

6 WHY WAIT ANY LONGER?

You've read this far. Something in you is saying yes. The Thrive-Drive is real, and you're feeling it. What would it take to act on it today?

If you've already scheduled your first session: look at what you just did. You didn't wait. You didn't settle. You took a step most people put off for years, and you took it on behalf of everyone who loves you. That's not weakness. That's the bravest kind of strength there is.

If you haven't scheduled yet: the step is smaller than it feels. A free, twenty-minute conversation with a real person who wants to help. That's it. That's all the next step is.

A WORD FROM THE FOUNDERS

From Josh and Cassie



We want to tell you something about how MyCounselor.Online came to be.

Years ago, Jesus put it in our hearts to build a place where people could find counseling that took both the Bible and the brain seriously, that was actually accessible, and that actually worked. We started it with a very specific person in mind.

You.

Not a demographic. Not a market. A person carrying something heavy, wondering whether anyone could help, half-afraid the answer was no. Someone who wanted to bring their whole self, their faith and their pain and their hope, and be met by someone who understood all three.

We didn't know your name. But He did. He saw you, and He went ahead of you, and He made a way. Every counselor we've trained, every process we've built, every hour we've poured into this was for the moment you're in right now.

So we're so glad you're here. We believe in what's ahead for you, because we've watched it happen for thousands of people who sat where you're sitting.

We're cheering you on.

Josh & Cassie

Josh Spurlock, MA, LPC, CST, NCC · Cassie Spurlock
Founders, MyCounselor.Online



YOUR NEXT STEP

Your Next Step Is a Conversation

You don't have to decide about counseling today. You just have to decide about a conversation.

Schedule your free Matching Meeting. Fifteen to twenty minutes. A real person who listens to what you're looking for, answers your questions, and helps you find a counselor who fits. No pressure, no commitment, no therapy yet. Just guidance for your next step.

Schedule My Free Matching Meeting

mycounselor.online/getmatched



"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'"

MATTHEW 11:28

*You don't have to **carry it alone.***

References & Further Reading

For readers, pastors, and family members who want to look deeper at the research and clinical models referenced in this guide.

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