



MSF Counselling Careline

Frequently Asked Questions

What is counselling and how might it help me?

Counselling is a type of talking therapy. It involves talking to a counsellor about your problems. Counsellors are trained to listen sympathetically and can help a person deal with any negative thoughts, feelings and anxieties.

Counselling can be a positive way of addressing any unresolved issues you may have and can help you to understand your problems better. It can also give someone a better understanding of other people's points of view. Counselling attempts to provide people with the skills needed to deal with their issues to enable them to function at home and in the workplace more effectively.

When might I need counselling?

There are many reasons why you might benefit from counselling. Feelings of depression, anxiety and stress are very common and can arise for a variety of reasons such as bereavement, redundancy, money and debt problems, relationships, family breakdown or illness. Whatever the reason for these feelings in many instances counselling may provide some relief.

What is the new *MSF Counselling Careline* service?

A 24-hour telephone counselling helpline and up to a further six face-to-face or telephone counselling sessions to help people with these issues.

Who can access the *MSF Counselling Careline*?

Freemasons, their wives, widows, partners and dependent children are all eligible. Dependent children need to have an ongoing financially or physically dependency upon a Freemason to be eligible. Please note that simply being the child of a Freemason will not qualify someone for support from the *MSF Counselling Careline*.

How can I access the *MSF Counselling Careline*? What is the *Careline* phone number?

You should call the Masonic Samaritan Fund on **020 7404 1550** where our staff will establish your Masonic eligibility, take some basic personal details and provide you with the freephone helpline number and a MSF reference number or transfer you directly to the helpline, whichever you prefer.

Almoners and family members should encourage people in need to call us directly.

Will I need to tell MSF staff about my personal issues?

No. MSF staff will only establish Masonic and/or dependency eligibility and explain what you can expect from the service. **MSF staff are not trained or qualified counsellors** and will not encourage you to discuss your personal situation.

How much will it cost me to use the *MSF Counselling Careline*?

The *MSF Counselling Careline* service is **free to all eligible users**. This includes the cost of the initial telephone assessment with a counsellor and up to a maximum of six additional face-to-face or telephone counselling sessions. Although it is not anticipated more than six sessions will be required, if additional sessions are recommended by the counsellor, requests will be considered on an individual basis and an assessment of the applicant's finances may be required. However, it is not anticipated that many people will require more than six sessions.

Will I need to complete an application form?

No. Most people will not need to complete an application form, we will simply capture some personal contact details over the telephone and confirm your eligibility to access the service. However, if additional sessions of therapy are recommended by a therapist it may be necessary for us to assess your financial situation due to the additional costs of therapy which will require an application form to be completed.

Will I need to get a referral from my GP or a consultant?

No. We know that the majority of people with depression or anxiety wait more than six months from referral to assessment on the NHS. We also know that many people will not approach their GP, either for fear of being prescribed medication or a general reluctance to speak to their GP about these issues. You can access the *MSF Counselling Careline* without prior referral and any follow-up counselling will be provided much sooner than NHS counselling in most instances.

How long will I have to wait to visit a counsellor?

Following the initial telephone assessment face-to-face counselling can be arranged within five working days, within 15 miles of where you live or work. For those who prefer telephone counselling the distance factor will not be an issue but will still take up to five working days to arrange.

Why would some people use 'telephone' counselling instead of face-to-face counselling?

For some people it won't be practical to attend face-to-face counselling sessions because of work, family or caring commitments. In these instances up to six telephone counselling sessions can be arranged with a qualified counsellor at a time that is convenient. The type of support you receive will be the same simply over the telephone.

What professional experience do the counsellors have?

All counsellors have a minimum of five years post-qualification supervised counselling experience and be fully BACP, BPS or UKCP¹ accredited.

Who is providing the *MSF Counselling Careline*; will I be speaking to Masonic Samaritan Fund staff?

No. The *MSF Counselling Careline* is managed by a dedicated helpline provider who offers 24 hour high quality counselling support to people in need. The Fund considered a number of providers and have partnered with one which we feel understands the needs of the Masonic community and matches our charitable aims and principles. **Masonic Samaritan Fund staff will not be advising or counselling people on their personal issues.**

¹ British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, British Psychological Society, UK Council for Psychotherapy.

What are the operating hours of the *MSF Counselling Careline*?

The helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, you will need to contact the Fund during office hours (Mon/Thurs 9 to 5, Fri 9 to 4) in the first instance to confirm Masonic eligibility and be given the helpline number and a reference number. You can then access the service at a time that is convenient to you to speak to a counsellor in confidence.

Can the *MSF Counselling Careline* help people with psychiatric problems?

No. The *MSF Counselling Careline* is intended to help people with psychological issues and the type of talking therapy offered would not be appropriate for people with psychiatric conditions. Psychiatric conditions are medical problems, usually treated with medication under the supervision of a NHS multi-disciplinary mental health team. Any interventions required by someone with psychiatric problems would need to be provided as part of their wider care plan. Offering counselling support in these instances could be harmful to the individual.

However, the *MSF Counselling Careline* will not turn away any caller so if you are unsure whether you may be able to get help contact the Fund and we will put you through to a counsellor who can make an assessment of your needs and advise on what the best form of support is.

Can the *MSF Counselling Careline* help people with drug and alcohol dependency issues or eating disorders?

Counselling is a very effective intervention for those with dependency issues or eating disorders, and the *MSF Counselling Careline* will provide support to anyone affected directly or indirectly by such conditions. However, the nature of this kind of issue is often complex, and in many cases can take some time to resolve completely; longer than the six sessions of short term therapy offered through this service. In these instances the Masonic Samaritan Fund will consider whether specialist longer term counselling is something that we can help with, or provide a clinical referral for someone to engage with dedicated external resources, such as through the NHS or other charitable sources.

What if I require specialist or long-term support?

The vast majority of callers will be able to be helped with short-term counselling, but there may be some people who require more specialist intervention. In these instances the Fund will consider whether these forms of support can be offered giving consideration to the costs and length of the treatment proposed. In these instances it is likely that an application form would need to be completed to allow the Fund to consider the request.

Do all calls to the *MSF Counselling Careline* result in someone getting counselling?

No. Occasionally the initial telephone call to the counsellor will be enough to help someone manage their issues and to cope with the problems they are dealing with. Not everyone will require follow-up counselling. The telephone counsellors will be able to offer advice on what other areas of support are available to someone, either through the NHS, their local authority or other charities or support groups.

Will my Lodge or Province find out about me accessing the helpline or requesting help?

No. It is vital that you know that your call to the Fund and the *MSF Counselling Careline* is entirely confidential. We will ask for some basic contact information which we may use in the future to ask you how useful you found the service, but we will not share your personal details in any way with your Lodge, Province or anyone else.

How should I approach a family member or loved one who I think may benefit from counselling?

Someone who is experiencing distress will often be feeling anxious, frightened or agitated. However, they may put on a brave face in public or feel that it not normal to talk about their feelings. These people may be more likely to reject the idea of counselling support. To help you raise the issue you could:

- Approach gently, quietly and privately to enquire about their wellbeing.
- Provide reassurance that you want to help and you are not judging them.
- Leave them with the information about the *MSF Counselling Careline* and the privacy to speak confidentially with our professionals.

What can I do if someone I know will not seek help?

Some people, even when experiencing distress, may not ask for help and even reject any suggestion of help. Although you may be concerned, pressing them may make matters worse. You could try to:

- Encourage them to call the *MSF Counselling Careline*. Professional counsellors are skilled at helping someone recognise the benefit of having support.
- Reassure them that counselling starts with an informal discussion with a professional at the *MSF Counselling Careline*. There is no obligation to undergo further treatment and, it can be arranged at a time and place that suits them.
- Keep them focused on the positive aspects of their life and everyday activities rather than their distress. When they are ready to talk, leave them with this information and the privacy to speak confidentially with a professional.

Where can I find our more information about mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress and other problems?

The following charities may be able to help you:

Mind – telephone 0300 123 3393 or visit their website at www.mind.org.uk.

Rethink Mental Illness – telephone 0300 5000 927 or visit their website at www.rethink.org

If you have any other questions about the *MSF Counselling Careline* please contact the Masonic Samaritan Fund on 020 7404 1550 or email info@msfund.org.uk.