Myths and Facts about Counseling

1. **MYTH:** Counseling is only for people with serious emotional problems.

   **FACT:** Seeing a counselor does not mean that you are mentally ill or "crazy." In addition to addressing more serious emotional problems, counseling can help with:

   - life transitions
   - adjusting to new surroundings
   - difficulty juggling school, work, family, and other responsibilities
   - academic problems, difficulty in test-taking and/or test anxiety
   - struggles with self-esteem, communication, or assertiveness
   - relationship problems

2. **MYTH:** Seeking counseling is a sign of weakness.

   **FACT:** It takes courage to explore sensitive feelings and painful experiences. Individuals who enter counseling are taking a first step in resolving their difficulties.

3. **MYTH:** Going to counseling means that I'm helpless.

   **FACT:** Going to counseling is a way of taking control and helping yourself. Talking to a counselor is a great way to examine your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to make changes to improve your quality of life.

4. **MYTH:** If I go for counseling, the faculty or administration will hear about it.

   **FACT:** The things you discuss with your counselor and the contents of your counseling record are subject to strict legal and ethical standards of confidentiality and privacy. This means that counselors will not release any information, or even the fact that they have met with you, to anyone (including friends, your parents, partner/spouse, professors, or school administration) without your permission. There are, however, a few limits on confidentiality. These are described in Confidentiality and reviewed during the first appointment.

5. **MYTH:** The fact that I've had counseling may hurt me in job, residency or graduate school applications.

   **FACT:** Counseling records are kept separately from academic records and are protected by law. As described in Confidentiality, release of any information is permitted only after a student provides written consent, or in certain legal situations involving a subpoena or court order.

6. **MYTH:** If I go to the Counseling Center, they're just going to give me a pill.

   **FACT:** Medication is not our front-line approach to helping you. If your counselor thinks that medication may be helpful, they will talk to you about it. If you want to explore this option
further, your counselor will refer you to one of our psychiatrist who can provide more assessment and, if appropriate, medication.

7. **MYTH:** The counselor cannot understand me unless s/he has had similar experiences or is of the same background.

   **FACT:** Individual reactions to the same event or experience vary widely, but basic human emotions are the same across individuals and cultures. Counselors are trained to be sensitive to and respectful of individual differences, including specific concerns of students with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

8. **MYTH:** The counselor will tell me how to "fix" my problems.

   **FACT:** Counseling is not a quick cure for your problems. The counselor is there to help you explore your feelings, thoughts, and concerns; to examine your options; and to assist you in achieving the goals you have set.

9. **MYTH:** Counseling doesn't work.

   **FACT:** There is a large body of research that documents the benefits of counseling and therapy. Even if you have had an unsuccessful counseling experience in the past, it may be worth trying again.

10. **MYTH:** Change will happen quickly.

    **FACT:** Important changes often take time and energy in order to occur. Although many people feel some relief and improved mood after only a couple of sessions, counseling will not provide a quick fix to your problems. Counseling can help you work toward meaningful life change over the long term, in addition to helping you manage current difficulties more effectively.

Adapted from: [http://www.upstate.edu/currentstudents/support/scc/myths.php](http://www.upstate.edu/currentstudents/support/scc/myths.php)