

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLNESS

I'm often asked what "Holistic Counselling" is and in fact, it's probably the question that I'm asked both first and most often by people. A lot of the uncertainty around Holistic Counselling derives, I believe, from confusion around the word 'holistic' itself. So I'm here placing the question "What is Holistic Counselling?" under the spotlight so to speak - in the hope that when you reach the end of this article, what Holistic Counselling is, as well as what it isn't - might be much clearer to you.

The word *holistic* is itself derived from the word *holism*; a noun from the Greek *hólos* meaning "whole, complete", plus *ism*; a noun suffix with English, French, Latin & Greek origins meaning "a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory". The term *holistic* therefore can be defined as : 'relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts'. Remember this, as we will be revisiting this definition a little further along.

So, in order to understand what Holistic Counselling is, it's important firstly, to understand that the word *holistic* in its purest form, is simply an 'umbrella term'; used to cover a broad category of things or which in other words, can be applied to all manner of phenomena. We can apply *holistic* that is, to an individual or to any kind of family system, to a single bee or to an entire bee colony, to one idea or to a vast mind map. A holistic approach sees every "Whole" in clear focus.

Many sectors of our lives are now shaped by this idea of a *holistic* approach, as displayed in corporate management or education systems for example. None though have adopted the *holistic* idea more passionately perhaps, than the body of our complimentary and alternative medicine (CAM) health sector. CAM medical systems; mind-body interventions; biologically-based treatments; manipulative and body-based methods; and energy therapies are now widely available to all.

Thinking that such CAM practices are in and of themselves somehow more *holistic* and therefore a better alternative to our traditional Western medical practices however, would be a mistake. Far from being the rightful intellectual property of one paradigm or the other, the term *holistic* as defined above can be successfully applied to both traditional and CAM practices. All General Practitioners practice holistically, within their paradigm of conventional scientific medicine.

So let us now return to the question What is Holistic Counselling? The simplest answer, as reflected in the broad definition of *holistic* above, is that it will vary according to the Counsellor you choose in conjunction with their chosen area/s of expertise. That is, Counsellors may specialise in specific areas such as Relationships, Drug & Alcohol or Grief & Loss Counselling and hone their expertise in particular modalities, like Narrative, Dialectical Behaviour or Art Therapies.

In my practice I offer General Counselling, meaning that I choose to work across a broad range of areas and challenges. Whether your challenge is immediate (ie. a bullying work colleague, the loss of a loved one) or a long-term pattern (repeatedly being bullied, prolonged debilitating grief), I focus clearly on the identified 'whole' in order to assist you to find and arrive at a healing solution. Person-centered (Rogerian) Therapy and Transpersonal Therapy are my two main modalities.

In summary, Holistic Counselling, as I see and practice it, is a dynamic interrelational activity intended to maximise your Wellness. Holistic Counselling accounts for your inner and outer physical, mental/emotional, social and (if applicable) spiritual dimensions. The Counselling process unfolds gently, through respect for your intellect and personal capacities or in other words, who and how you are being in the world.

Quite simply, your Wellness matters. Achieving and maintaining an optimum level of wellness is essential to living a high quality life. Wellness matters because what we do and how we feel relates directly to our well-being, which in turn affects our actions and emotions. It's a circular and repeating process therefore important to achieving optimal wellness, to subdue stress, reduce our risk of disease and make sure as well as extend, our beneficial positive relationships with others.

wellness / noun/ well.ness

"...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

- The World Health Organization

"a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential."

- The National Wellness Institute