

HOW TO BUILD A CAREER AS A COUNSELLOR

FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO
KNOW ABOUT HOW AND WHY A
CAREER IN COUNSELLING COULD BE
FOR YOU



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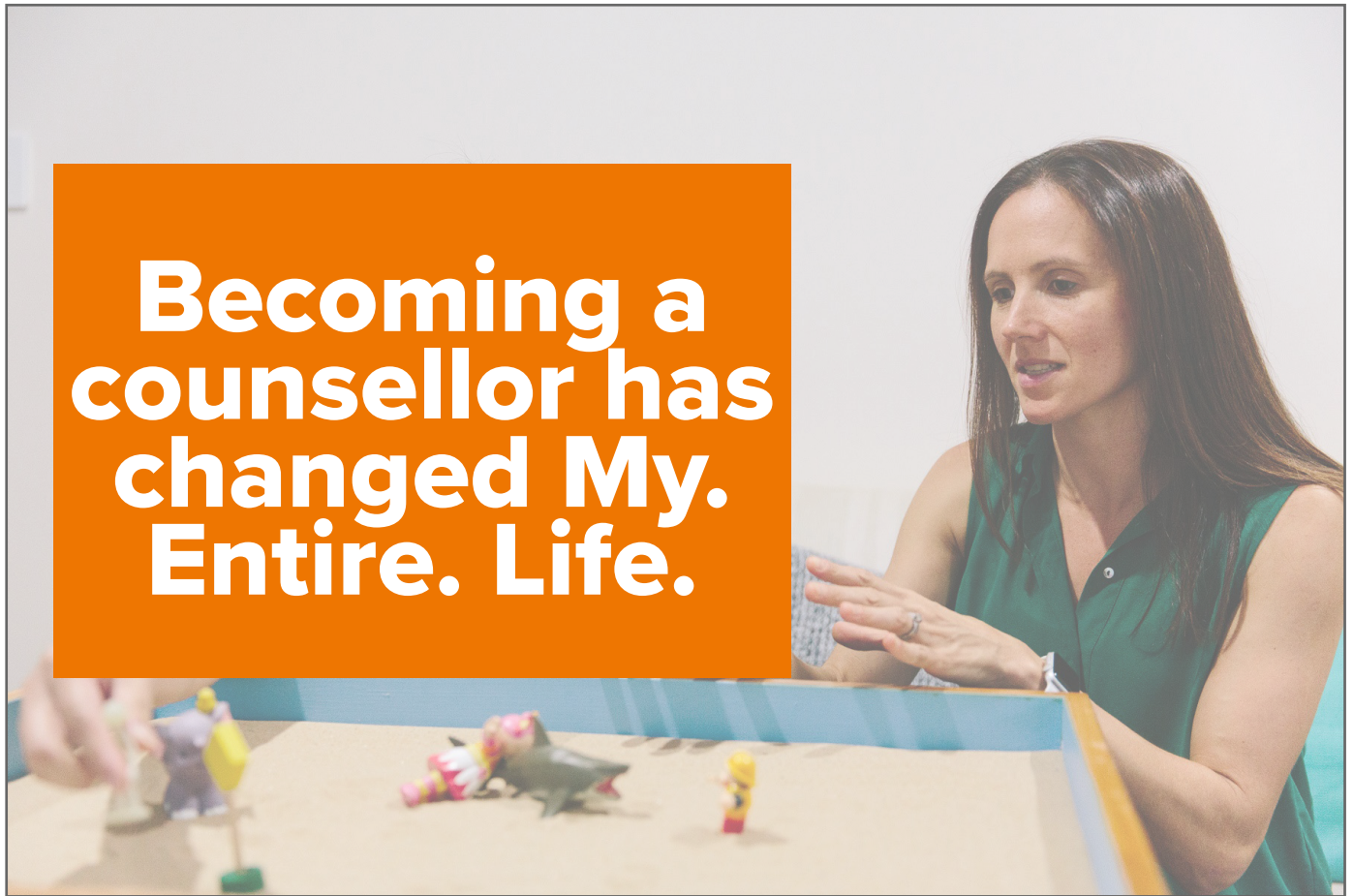
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**Becoming a
counsellor has
changed My.
Entire. Life.**





WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO BECOME A COUNSELLOR?

When I first tell people that I'm a counsellor I tend to get a lot of the same kinds of questions. Isn't that hard? How do you not take on people's stuff? How do you listen to people for so long?

And my answers? Well yes it is hard. Sometimes I do take on people's stuff. Sometimes I do get distracted. Sometimes it is quite draining. Sometimes I don't feel like listening to people.

Yet...it is also a privilege. It is rewarding. I have to work hard on my own stuff (which is also rewarding) so that I don't take on other people's stuff. I've learnt (or am still learning?) how to listen, how to stay grounded, how to stay present so I can be with people for long periods of time.

So...the hard and the good both sound...hard? Tell me again why you're a counsellor?

At the very beginning of the Masters of Counselling at Morling College, students are asked to answer and reflect on the reasons for becoming a counsellor. Crago and Gardner (A Safe Place to Change, 2019) suggest that some of the most common answers include:

- Wanting to help others
- Wanting a career that is meaningful
- Being told that they are a good listener or good at giving advice to others
- Wanting to give back to a profession that helped them during a hard time

I had a little search back through my own notes (yes I still have them over 15 years later...) when I first began my studies as a counsellor. I found some of these classic answers in my own notes:

“I want to heal people’s hearts”, “Others tell me that I’m a good listener”.

My own reasons for becoming a counsellor were very genuine, as are other people that I have met and continue to meet particularly on the early counselling journey. Yet, when students are asked to reflect on those initial reasons for becoming a counsellor, they are also (uncomfortably) asked to reflect on perhaps the hidden motives or agendas to becoming a counsellor.

Wait, hang on a second...hidden agendas? I’m here for a genuine reason, I’m not hiding anything, you say!

I get it, I’m not saying there’s a deliberate hidden agenda going on here. However Crago and Gardner (2019) suggest that “rarely do would-be counsellors present a wish to solve their own problems as a reason for becoming a counsellor. Yet at a deeper level, a wish to understand ourselves more fully...is probably what motivates most of us”.

Personally, this was an incredibly uncomfortable thought for me at first. However over years of my study, challenges from lecturers and supervisors and continuing to reflect as a professional counsellor, I have become more aware of some of these previously subconscious ‘deeper levels’ of motivation to become a counsellor.

Some of these include how good it feels to feel needed by others, to feel like others depend on me for something that they can't do for themselves, to feel like I can make an impact on other people's lives. (For any of my clients reading this, I feel very vulnerable right now and hope that I am learning to let go of these...)

This resonates with Crago and Gardner's list of suggestions of what some of the most common 'hidden agendas' may be:

- Enjoying the feeling of being needed
- Enjoying working people out and telling them about the observations
- Enjoying feeling like listening to people and helping people is something that I'm good at
- Wanting to be just like the therapist that they encountered during a difficult time

These reasons and potentially many others are often less often spoken of, or may not even be within our conscious awareness. However, the good news is that none of them are a barrier to becoming a counsellor!

Of course the known and original reasons for becoming a counsellor are still great and are often what motivate to start as well as keep going in such a career. However, learning to become great at self reflection, understanding yourself, your deeper needs and how to resolve those in a healthy way are actually an asset to becoming a really effective counsellor. I would even go so far as to say that these skills are more important than any of the motivations (conscious or not yet conscious) that drive the initial decision to start on the counselling journey.

And so, if you think you can brave some inner work (because my friend, this is what will happen, whether you want to or not), how do you actually get started to become a counsellor?

WHAT DOES A PATHWAY TO BEING A COUNSELLOR LOOK LIKE?

What courses are required and do I need work experience?

For me, it all started when someone simply said to me “I think you should try counselling. I think you’d be a great listener.”

Wow. Small statement. Big impact. Life changer.

I commenced studying part-time (whilst still working as a physiotherapist) and after 5 years completed the Graduate Diploma in Counselling at Morling College. At the time, this also involved an internship where I completed 40 hours of face to face counselling. I did not feel God’s prompting to go into counselling as a career, however. I felt that it was helpful as a life skill and wasn’t convinced that I wanted to continue as a professional counsellor .

Since my initial period of study, Morling has revamped their courses, providing three distinct levels of study, ranging from a Graduate Certificate through to a Masters of Counselling level, providing students with opportunities for personal and professional development, as well as the high level skills required to practice as professional counsellors.

Flexible study options are also available, including face to face classes in a weekly, semi-intensive or intensive format, online as well as mixed delivery (online and face to face) options.

Prior to entering the Counselling courses, Morling requires that students demonstrate prior study at a Bachelor or Graduate Diploma level. A special entry pathway is also available that takes into account other life experience beyond academic study so if this option applies to you make sure you enquire about it. An interview is also required, allowing prospective students the opportunity to demonstrate the personal attributes required to become a developing and competent counsellor.

For a succinct version on what is on offer through Morling College, here is my best summary of the counselling courses available, what is involved and what you might expect at the end of study (for more detailed information on entry requirements and course details, visit the Counselling Course information at <https://www.morling.edu.au/course/counselling/>):

Graduate Certificate in Counselling

This may be completed full time over 6 months or part time over 1 year. This course provides the foundational skills and knowledge in counselling, assisting students in their current vocational, volunteer or personal roles. There is no work experience included at this level of study. Students may go on to continue studying the Graduate Diploma/Masters levels.

Graduate Diploma in Counselling

This may be completed full time over 1 year or part-time up to 5 years. This course builds on counselling knowledge and skills, enabling students to use their skills within their vocation as well as find employment as a counsellor. This course does not include work experience and may also be considered as the first half of the Masters program.

Masters in Counselling

This may be completed full time over 2 years or part-time up to 6 years. The Masters in Counselling provides students with the high level skills, knowledge and experience to be registered as a professional counsellor. The Masters level includes a practicum component involving 50 hours of face to face counselling, enabling registration as a counselor with a professional counselling body.

After finishing the Graduate Diploma and deciding that I was never going to study again, God had his way of working on me to the point where, 5 years later, I enrolled in the Masters. I was able to use my Graduate Diploma as Recognised Prior Learning and studied part time again. I completed my internship in my final year of study and went on to work in private practice as a counsellor.



WHAT CAREER PROGRESSION COULD BE AVAILABLE AFTER ACHIEVING THIS GOAL?

So you've decided what course you want to study, where you want to study. You've put in the hours and come out as a qualified counsellor! Congratulations! Now what? How do you build your career as a counsellor?

If your plan is to work as a professional counsellor, there are a number of options available

regarding settings to work in, such as:

- Private practice
- Government or non-government agencies
- Schools
- Child and adolescent services
- Family and relationship centres

(Adapted from 'Graduates.. where to next?', CCAA Professional Development, November 2017).

Each setting has their own set of criteria and experience required to work there. If whilst as a student you have an idea of where you would like to work after graduation, consider applying for a position in that field. There is often a greater chance that as a graduate you may have a chance to continue working there, or at least have gained the experience in your chosen field that may be attractive to a prospective employer.

As you build your experience and hours as a working counsellor, the professional registration bodies acknowledge increasing levels of counselling experience, allowing counsellors to be recognised by their clients and colleagues at a more experienced level. It is required that all counsellors also attend ongoing regular supervision and professional development courses and workshops, ensuring that skills and knowledge are continually built upon so that counsellors are providing the highest level of service to clients.

Other options available as you build your career and experience include:

- Becoming a supervisor for other counsellors
- Becoming a teacher/lecturer. This is a great way to invest in the next generation as well as keep on top of your own skills.
- Becoming a manager/supervisor in an agency or school setting



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**Counselling opens
up your eyes to
see the world in a
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Ever again.**

”

WHAT IS THE LIFE OF A COUNSELLOR LIKE?

This is such an interesting question. In short, becoming a counsellor has changed My. Entire. Life.

Personally, I counsel part-time, I teach part-time, and now I blog part-time. I also mother full-time! I like the variety that each of these roles provide, challenging me in different ways, keeping me on my toes and providing the space to continue in this profession for (hopefully!) a very long time to come.

Initially, working as a counsellor is quite challenging mentally, physically, emotionally and so very quickly I had to dive deeper into the art of self-care. I discovered that in order to be an effective and present counsellor, I needed to look after myself. I need to keep boundaries around how

many clients I see, how much time I leave between seeing clients, how often I take holidays. I need to have a space where I can transition from work to home so I can then be present at home (for me it involves watching clips of comedy shows!).

I also realised that my personal life affects my professional life and vice-versa. I need to keep personal boundaries and take time out at home, protecting the time that I need to not only look after myself, but also so that I can look after the people at home that are important to me. If I'm looking after my personal life, I can be more present in my professional life. If I am looking after the boundaries in my professional life, then I am also more present in my personal life.

The other thing that happens when you become a counsellor is that (well, for me at least), I feel like I carry 'counsellor me' with me wherever I go. Counselling opens up your eyes to see the world in a way that you can never unsee. Ever again.

It doesn't mean that I counsel everyone that I talk to (and I don't, and you shouldn't be doing this either!). However it does mean that I see the world in a different way now. I can't help but use some counselling skills in my every day because that's who I've become. Counselling has changed and continues to change who I am as a person. And so for this reason I see being a counsellor now as a lifestyle, as a calling, as something much more than a job or profession.



IN CLOSING

So, if after reading through this, you are still interested in becoming and building a career as a counsellor, I encourage you to start the search today. Consider where you might be headed, what the life of a counsellor might mean to you, what amount and level of study you can carry, which course is right for you.... and then take the leap! It's totally worth it.

**TAKE THE NEXT STEP WITH
MORLING COLLEGE.**

**GET IN TOUCH TO FIND OUT HOW
WE CAN HELP YOU BUILD YOUR
LIFE SERVING GOD**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE BY CLICKING BELOW:

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