

Counseling versus Psychotherapy

Counseling and psychotherapy are often used as synonyms, yet I consider them related but distinct forms in which whole-person healing can be facilitated by a mental health professional.

I use **counseling** to refer to shorter-term consultation on issues where most of the relevant input is easily brought to consciousness. When an important decision needs to be made in one's personal or professional life, sessions of counseling can **clarify the deeper values** that are at stake, and can **provide a framework** in which what seems overwhelming can be managed by providing containment and structure to the process.

On the other hand, I use **psychotherapy** to refer to longer-term work that occurs at deeper levels of personality where much of the material is beyond easy conscious access.

The two are certainly not mutually exclusive. At times what begins as a straightforward counseling issue, reveals deeper, resistant patterns of character that you may or may not decide you are ready to engage. Other times, more immediate counseling work addressed to current symptoms (e.g. indecisiveness, procrastination) can go on at the same time as more depth psychotherapy is being done. After an initial period of assessment (3-6 sessions), I can generally present what I perceive to be both short-term counseling goals as well as any deeper therapeutic issues that could be engaged.

In both forms of work, what is essential is a relationship of respect, support, and deep honesty.