



YOUR FIRST COUNSELING SESSION

A little preparation. Room to be yourself.

Starting counseling can bring up a mix of feelings—relief, uncertainty, hope, or nervousness. You don't need to have everything figured out before you arrive. Your first session is a chance to meet your counselor, share what brought you here, and begin exploring what support could look like.

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

Complete any paperwork the office sends you, and ask us if you're unsure what's needed. If you're using insurance, have your insurance information available and check your mental health benefits. You're welcome to jot down a few thoughts or questions, but preparing notes is optional. You can come as you are.

WHAT WE'LL TALK ABOUT

Your counselor may ask about what's happening in your life, concerns you'd like help with, and experiences that help them understand you. Together, you can begin identifying what you'd like to work toward.

You don't have to tell your whole story in one appointment. It's okay to say, "I'm not sure where to start," or "I'm not ready to talk about that yet."

Your counselor will also explain how counseling works, including privacy and its limits. Please ask questions whenever something feels unclear.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Counseling is a collaboration. You can share what feels helpful, what feels uncomfortable, and what you need from the experience.

Some questions you might ask:

- How do you usually work with concerns like mine?
- How will we decide what to focus on?
- How often might we meet?
- What information stays private, and when might it need to be shared?

You deserve to understand your care and take part in decisions about it.

AFTER YOUR SESSION

You might feel relieved, tired, emotional, or unsure how you feel. There isn't one right reaction. Give yourself a little room to reflect. You don't need to leave with every answer—or decide immediately whether the session "worked." Building comfort and trust can take time. If something didn't feel right, you're welcome to bring it up with your counselor.

QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN?

Contact Hinman Counseling Services with questions about paperwork, scheduling, accessibility needs, or payment.

We're happy to help you feel prepared for your first visit.

You don't need the perfect words to begin.