

Have you been wondering if online counseling can work for you?

by the American Counseling Association

From groceries to diamond jewelry, you can have practically anything delivered via the Internet today. That list includes not just merchandise, but personal services as well, including online counseling help, or "cybercounseling" as it's sometimes called.

It's a service a lot of people are using. For someone suffering from a fear of crowds or going outdoors, or who's ill and housebound, online counseling can be a great alternative. But, due to its ease and convenience, a lot of people are taking advantage of such online services. It's important to remem-

ber, however, that it's not right for every person or every problem, and it always lacks the face-to-face interaction that can sometimes help in communicating.

Many highly qualified counseling professionals now offer very effective help via online counseling, but you need to check out any counselor before starting work with them. It takes little effort or expense to create a website and call yourself a "counselor," despite lacking appropriate credentials or training.

Professional organizations, such as the American Counseling Association, have established ethical standards for cybercounseling that provide on-

line counselors with clear guidelines to protect consumers working with them.

These standards require that counselors should offer complete and honest disclosure about themselves and their services. An online counselor should make it easy to find out what degrees are held and in what fields, what licenses and certifications are held, and professional organizations in which the person participates (such as the American Counseling Association or the American Psychological Association).

De-stress any disagreements with your boss

by the American Counseling Association

In any work situation it's inevitable that there will be times when you'll have differences with someone higher up the food chain. Too often we react to such situations emotionally, find ourselves feeling stressed and then end up wishing we had handled things differently.

Rather than second guessing yourself, we'd suggest trying a logical approach to disagreements that may not always get you what you want, but that can reduce stress and leave you happier with how you handled things.

Start by accepting that you can't change your boss, or anyone else. If your problems are growing out of the type of person he or she is, or how he or she works as a business person, accept that this is simply the way things are. Don't waste time and increase your stress by trying to change what can't be changed.

Does the counselor specialize and have experience and expertise in the area where you are seeking help?

Where is the counselor located? There are now cases in courts asking whether it's legal for someone to be offering counseling services in a state where he or she is not licensed.

Answering such questions still does not guarantee the quality of the services being provided. A legitimate professional will offer a trial period, without requiring an expensive, long-term commitment, so you

can judge if the services offered are helpful for you.

A professional counselor, following the ACA ethical guidelines, will inform a client early in the relationship if cybercounseling is not the correct approach, and should suggest alternatives better suited to the problem.

Online counseling can be a valuable resource for many people, but it does have its limitations. Ask questions and evaluate carefully to make sure it's the best way to get the help you need.

Next, decide whether to deal with the problem now or later. There's no right answer. Maybe tackling it now will make you look argumentative, but waiting might lead to bigger problems.

You also need to decide whether to deal with the differences directly or indirectly. Talking with the boss in the right way, at the right time, can sometimes be effective. But there are also times when talking to a friend might give you a better perspective on the situation.

Once you've made those decisions, begin a logical, problem-solving approach to the disagreement. Start by deciding how important the disagreement is. Don't let emotions make you waste a mountain of energy on a molehill-sized problem.

Next, consider all the possible courses of action. Most sit-

uations have many possible solutions. Be realistic in evaluating how each might work and what outcomes might be achieved.

When you've decided on the best alternative, take action to implement it. Your final move then is to step back and evaluate the outcome.

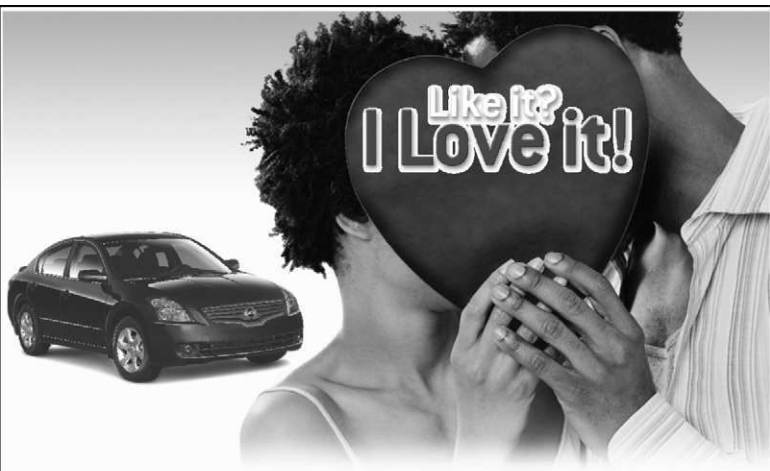
You may end up finding that things still aren't quite right and you need to go back through the process again, trying a different alternative.

There's no guarantee that every problem is fixable or that your boss will always agree with your solutions. Rather, it's important to remember that your final objective is not to change your boss, just to feel good about how you've handled the situation. Taking a logical, considered approach to disagreements can mean less stress and a better work environment.

Col. Co. Republicans set meeting

Columbia County Republicans' monthly meet-up will be held Friday, February 27, 7:00 p.m., at Mr. Joe's Coffee Cafe, 555 South Columbia River

Highway in St. Helens. Everyone is welcome to this informal gathering. Come early and order food if desired.



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