

Counselling Program *Guiding the path to wellness and well-being*

Despite awareness and medical advances, HIV/AIDS is a disease that still comes draped in stigma and fear. Addiction, mental illness, multiple diseases, homelessness, poverty, limited support networks and isolation add to the psychological burden for many who come to Dr. Peter Centre West End.

Our Counselling Program helps each person live with dignity and strength. Counselling promotes essential psychological well-being and contributes to wellness for approximately 300 participants in the Day Health Program and 50 residents each year.

Counsellors develop therapeutic relationships, using professional skills, engagement and intervention. Guided by theory and sound ethical practice, they help individuals to:

- manage problem situations and learn new positive behaviours;
- express emotion and thoughts appropriately and develop unrecognized resources;
- express issues such as loss, relationships, self-esteem, planning for healthy living, changing health status, and self-care;
- express concerns about death and dying;
- access an essential opportunity to listen and to be heard.

“It’s been a help, a big help. I can talk freely about it [HIV] without looking over my shoulder. Whatever we are, whatever we do, we’re all here. We’re together. We make the best out of it.”
- Gareth, participant since 2003

Options in Anxious Times

A common concern of many of our clients is embarking on a new relationship, particularly with someone who doesn’t know they live with HIV/AIDS. Counselling Coordinator Tony Cave says it’s important to get a clear understanding of an individual’s worries, legitimize them, and work through the person’s options.

“How do they tell the person they’re interested in? What place do they choose? How do they set it up? Who is the person? Why do they want to get involved? Is there an opportunity to talk about HIV/AIDS in general to first get a sense of the person’s thoughts and feelings about the illness? There are a number of levels to prepare them for.”

Cave says trust is crucial to the therapeutic relationship.

“We live with the participants and residents every day,” he explains. “They see us interacting all day long. There is a lot of opportunity to see how people think and respond to things before we ever get to a counselling session. We have a philosophy of acceptance – there is something very healing about that.”



Counselling sessions are structured to support each participant's needs and can include individual, spontaneous, group and one-on-one sessions as well as regular out trips to promote inclusion and social interaction.

Supporting a Civil Society

At the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation, we're helping to rebuild lives shattered by HIV/AIDS, addiction, mental illness, poverty and discrimination because of gender and sexual orientation. The innovative, comprehensive model of care at Dr. Peter Centre West End is improving people's health, helping people find strength in the face of an incurable illness, and inspiring health care providers around the world.

The **Counselling Program** provides an important component of care for the people we serve. Each year we require support from our community of caring donors for this initiative.

We hope you will share the vision and join the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation in making a tangible and lasting contribution to improve the health and lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information on supporting the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and its Counselling Program, please contact:

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