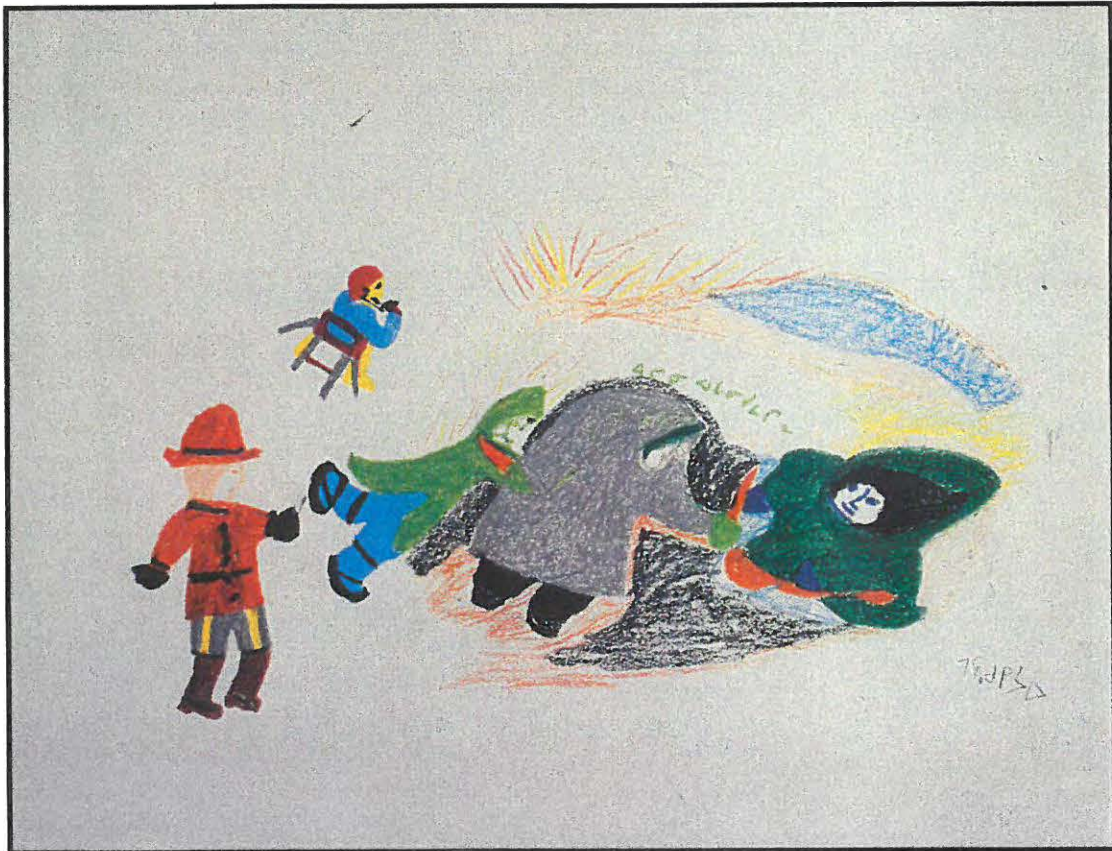


CLΔ°δ^c

TAIMAINNUT



An Introduction
to Basic Counselling Skills

Artwork

Myrah Kukiiyaut Arngna'naaq, Baker Lake: Cover

Ruth Anatusii, Baker Lake: Page 4

Dinah Andersen, Happy Valley—Goose Bay, Labrador: Page 10

Rhoda Karetak, Rankin Inlet: Page 12

Leah Pootogook, Pond Inlet: Page 13

Vickie Grey, Kuujjuak: Page 21

Jeannie Ziska, Rankin Inlet: Page 23

Anonymous: Page 25

Oqqi Taqtu, Arctic Bay: Page 26



cknowledgements

Funding for this publication was provided by Indian and Inuit Affairs Canada, Yellowknife Office. This publication also received financial support through *Community*, a collaborative residency project organized by the Visual Arts programs at the Banff Centre, from The Canada Council, Jean A. Chalmers Fund, and the Department of Communications, Cultural Initiatives Program.

We wish to acknowledge the work of Jennifer Rigby, who prepared the first draft of this booklet, and Ruby Arngna'naaq, who consulted with a wide variety of Inuit and non-Inuit women and then prepared the final text. On behalf of Pauktuutit, we thank the many people who contributed ideas and who commented on the various drafts. Linda Archibald edited the English version, Simona Arnatsiaq-Barnes translated the text into Inuktitut syllabics, layout and design is the work of Phillip Bird, and David Boulton coordinated the printing.

We would especially like to thank the women who participated in the *Community Residency* at the Banff Centre for the Arts for making their artwork available for use in this booklet. Photographs of the art are by Douglas Smith.

Pauktuutit
Inuit Women's Association of Canada
804-200 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 1L5
TEL (613) 238-3977
FAX (613) 238-1787

August 1993



Table of Contents

Foreword	iv
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Counsellors and Counselling	2
2.1 Types of Counsellors	2
2.2 Counselling	3
2.3 Helping People Make Choices	5
3.0 Counselling Terminology	6
4.0 Basic Counselling Skills	9
4.1 Counsellors: Be Aware	13
5.0 Examples of Counselling Situations	15
5.1 Situation #1	15
5.2 Situation #2	18
6.0 Self-Help and Counselling Groups	22
7.0 Limits	24
8.0 Refreshing Activities	26



Foreword

As the national organization representing Inuit women, Pauktuutit is guided by concerns raised by Inuit women. For many years, issues related to violence and abuse in families and communities have dominated discussions at our annual general meetings. These discussions have highlighted the need for more community-based resources to support people struggling with family violence and related problems on a day-to-day basis.

Pauktuutit's annual general meetings have also produced resolutions calling for changes in the way social services and the courts deal with the aftermath of violence and abuse. As an organization, we have come to recognize that work is required on many levels — from the most personal to the highly political. It is essential that we speak out and “break the silence,” but this is only one of many things we can do. We must work to stop the violence and abuse, and we must take time to heal ourselves. We can also reach out to others who are in need of support and understanding.

The tremendous need for counselling and support services in our communities cannot be met by existing resources. We need more counsellors, especially Inuit counsellors, and we need access to training at the community level. While there is some training available in the north through organizations and government departments, the need for counselling services is felt so emphatically that the only real way to meet it is for Northerners to respond to each other.

This booklet does not replace training and education. Rather, we hope it will assist women and men of all ages who find themselves involved in the lives of friends and family and who sometimes wish they had guidance in dealing with the problems that inevitably arise.

Martha Flaherty
President
Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association



Introduction

Many Northerners are counselling and doing it very well. There are women and men in every community in the north to whom people turn for support and understanding. These counsellors and caregivers are meeting a very important need in their communities, and we hope this booklet will encourage them to continue.

There are also people who would like to be more involved in helping friends and family members during hard times, but are not sure what to do or say. This booklet provides information on counselling skills and some examples of counselling situations. We hope this will encourage people to start counselling.

We use the terms “caregiver” and “counsellor” throughout this handbook to refer to people who counsel. A caregiver can be anyone — a friend, family member, neighbour, teacher, elder — anyone who cares enough to listen and offer support. Also, anyone can be a counsellor, although some are paid counsellors while others are volunteers.

Southern counsellors have traditionally been trained as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and ministers. They are paid professionals whose job is to listen, to give guidance, and to administer treatments to those who come to them for help.

As Inuit and northern lifestyles changed, human problems seemed to explode as fast as the population grew. These problems resulted in an increased demand for professional counselling services — a demand which has been very hard to meet. Professional counsellors serving the north today are over-booked and overworked. Many are from a different cultural and linguistic background and they may have a different understanding of problems and solutions. In some of the smaller communities, there are no counselling services at all. The lack of comfortable resources and the overall lack of formal counselling services means that people are beginning to turn to each other for support and understanding — people helping people.

This handbook should be a useful resource for anyone involved in the important work of counselling and caregiving.



Counsellors and Counselling

2.1 Types of Counsellors

Counsellors may or may not be professional and may or may not be paid to counsel. They simply listen, understand, support, and sometimes they offer guidance.

The first Inuit counsellors were the traditional counsellors: **an elder, a grandparent, a parent or guardian, a hunter, an aunt, or a peer**. Another type of counsellor, from a more recent time, was the **missionary**.

As the lives of Northerners began to change, social workers took on the role of counsellor, along with some members of the medical and teaching professions. Interpreters have always played a very important role in counselling.

A by-product of the changes which have overtaken northern life is the creation of issue-specific counselling positions: **drug and alcohol workers, community health representatives, shelter workers, and school counsellors**.

Today, when monies for support services, counselling, and therapy are in short supply, people are turning back to **their own**. Northerners are realizing that to receive effective counselling and support, they must turn back to “them that know them best” — older people, cousins, friends, and peers.

This does not mean that pastors, social workers, medical professionals, and psychologists are being phased out — they are still counselling and supporting those who come to them — it is just that the need has increased beyond their time, resources, and ability to respond. It also helps that some of these professions are now being occupied by Northerners themselves.

Caregiver-counsellors

Caregiver-counsellors play an important and vital role in the family and the community. We all need someone to talk to. At some points in our lives we need help and support, while at other times we are able to support and help others. Caregiver-counsellors are ordinary people leading ordinary lives. Anyone can be a caregiver-counsellor.

REFLECTION

We have all talked to 'someone' about a problem.
Why did you choose that particular person to talk to?
What was it about the person that you liked?
What was it that made you feel that he or she understood?
What was it that made you go back to talk to the same person?

A caregiver-counsellor is someone who listens to another's problems and sometimes helps them make choices. **Together** it is sometimes easier to work towards solving a problem.

Problems have not, and will not, wait for professionals to fly-in, nor for a certain time of the day. Community-based counsellors can become the key to the healing of our communities. At the same time, they increase available resources in the community and form the basis of a support system of people helping each other face the problems of living in the modern world.

2.2 Counselling

Before I come to you for help, I think:

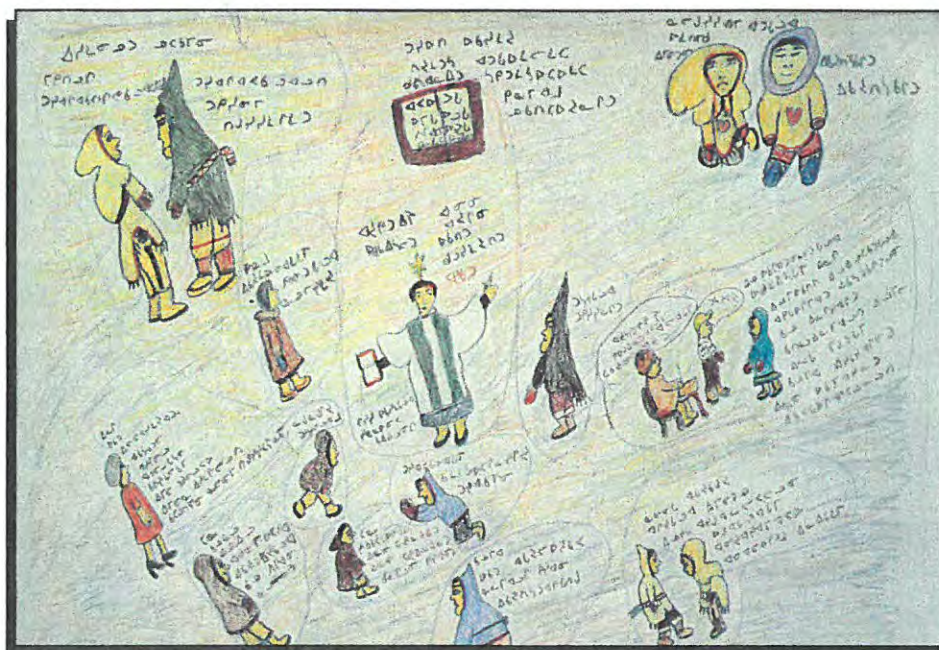
*I need someone to talk to, honestly,
and
this person just might honour me and help me.*

You may be an elder faced with problems you never had to deal with before. You are feeling confused about these changes in lifestyle and the problems that come from these changes.

Who would you feel comfortable talking to?

You may be a young person, feeling confused by your own life but knowing you cannot go to an older Inuk, and you are not comfortable going to a professional counsellor from another culture.

Who would you feel comfortable talking to?



A person seeking help has some very basic and important needs. He or she needs to talk to someone who will:

1. listen and let them know they are listening;
2. take what they are saying seriously and believe them;
3. show empathy and understanding;
4. not judge them;
5. understand that they are having a hard time expressing themselves because they are confused and nervous;
6. be patient and not rush them;
7. keep what they are saying confidential;
8. trust them;
9. help them understand why all these things are happening, because they might think they are the problem.

Being approached by someone in need is not always easy. Sometimes you don't choose to be a counsellor, but are placed in the situation when someone comes to talk with you about a problem. Remember, the most important thing you can do for a person who wants to talk is to listen. You will probably not be able to make another person's problems disappear, but if you listen respectfully and take what they are saying seriously, you have taken a positive step in caregiving.

2.3 Helping People Make Choices

After you have listened to someone talk about their problem, you may get to the point where the person is ready to look at making some changes. During the talking process, people often think of themselves as helpless victims without the power to make choices. It may take weeks or months before a person is ready to even think that there are choices in their life. You, as the caregiver, can assist by showing that there are choices.

The following are a few examples of things you might say to help people identify choices in their lives:

What you are trying to do as a caregiver.	One way to say it.
Trying to get the person to come up with some choices or options. You assist as a counsellor in presenting the idea of choice.	“What are some things you could do?”
Helping the person choose what to do.	“What do you think is the best way to solve the problem?”
Talking about what might happen once the person has made a choice.	“What do you think will happen if you do that?”
Talking about the other options.	“What do you think will happen if you do the other things?”
Checking to see if the person is ready to go ahead with the choices.	“How do you feel about trying this out?”
Arranging to see the person again.	“When can we talk again?”



Counselling Terminology

The English language is so complicated that we thought it necessary to explain and describe some the words commonly used by counsellors when they write or speak about counselling.

- Anxiety**
- A feeling of fear that something is going to happen to us, but we don't know what it is;
 - people with problems they feel are beyond their ability to deal with can have anxiety attacks (a sudden shortness of breath which feels like a heart attack);
 - anxiety can also cause sleeplessness and nervousness.
- Caregiver**
- A non-professional who cares — usually a friend, relative; not paid;
 - anyone who takes time to listen to another with understanding.
- Confidential**
- Private; not to be passed on to other people;
 - secret information, often just between very best friends, or between a counsellor and the client.
- Circumstance**
- An experience, custom, incident, fact, or condition;
 - elements of a situation, including information about family background, culture;
 - people are complex individuals with a variety of life circumstances.
- Depression**
- Being sick with sadness for a long time;
 - signs of depression include: no interest in anything, little energy, sleeping a lot or not being able to sleep, or keeping frantically busy and never stopping.
- Denial**
- Refusing to accept an action, situation, or state of being;
 - examples include not admitting to a drinking problem or to the death of someone close, or not believing that a particular problem exists.
- Empathy**
- This is the ability to really understand what another person has experienced and how they are feeling about it. **Sympathy**, on the other hand, is feeling sorry for someone.

- Grief**
- A feeling of deep hurt and loss. It usually follows the loss of someone close — the end of a relationship, a death — or the loss of something very important.
 - A person in grief may feel helplessly hurt, shocked, angry, and sometimes, guilty;
 - it is all right to show one's grief — accepting your emotions (not denying them) is a step towards healing that hurt.
- Guilt**
- Guilt results from having done something wrong.
 - If you commit a crime, or break school rules, you are guilty and may be punished. However, many people feel guilty about things they have no control over, or situations where they have done nothing wrong — a working mother sometimes feels guilty about not being home with her children, even though she is working to provide them with food and shelter.
- Hostility**
- A feeling of severe anger at someone or something. A hostile person is someone who never really has a kind word for anyone. Often, the person is hurting and has been hurting for a long time, maybe because of the way they were treated as a child.
- Isolation**
- The fact of being alone;
 - a feeling of being totally alone, even when surrounded by others. Sometimes we feel like we are the only “bad” person, or the only one that bad things happen to.
- Paraphrasing**
- Repeating what has already been said without changing the meaning of the words. Paraphrasing is a good way of checking to make sure that one has heard and understood what another is saying.
- Peers**
- Friends, people of same age, same cultural background.
- Peer Counselling**
- A way of counselling based on the fact that the counsellor and the person seeking help are equals, or peers.
- Rejection**
- A feeling of being turned down — for example, not getting a job you wanted very badly, or the attention or love you wanted; sometimes we are not rejected, but feel that we are, and sometimes we reject someone because we are just too busy, not because we intend to.

- Self-image**
- How a person sees themselves, often compared to others;
 - someone with a negative self-image might believe they are ugly, or stupid; a person with a positive self-image would believe in their own ability to do something, even though they do not yet have the skills.
- Stress**
- Being under a lot of pressure. Stress can be good or bad. A bad feeling that everything has gone out of control can create physical problem like headaches, ulcers, pains, and heart attacks. Stress can result from feeling the weight of long hours, an unhealthy family life, joblessness. Even good things can become stressful — a wedding, a new job, moving, ending or beginning a new relationship.
- Shame**
- A feeling of having done something wrong; — a deeply embarrassing feeling of never being good enough compared to others;
 - the problem with shame is that it often becomes the identity of a victim of abuse — they start to believe they are shameful people, rather than victims of abuse.

Difference Between *Guilt* and *Shame*

Guilt is about what you did, while shame is what others put on you. You feel guilty because of what you did, but you can feel shame even if you did nothing.

Examples:

- I. A person who has stolen something is guilty of robbery. The robber may or may not feel ashamed of the act, but the fact is, that person is guilty. Others close to him may be ashamed because he stole.
- II. People sometimes feel shame because of the way they dress or because they are poor, but they are definitely not guilty of having done anything wrong.
- III. Abused people often feel shamed because of what has happened to them. They start to believe that they are guilty of having done something wrong, but they are guilty of nothing **because what happened is not their fault**. The abuser is guilty of the shameful act.



Basic Counselling Skills

Listening Well

A willingness to listen is one of the most important skills a caregiver can develop. A person seeking help wants to be heard. We often think we have heard the same story before — the trick is learning to listen until the person has stopped talking. Remember, everyone is different and no two circumstances are exactly the same **because everyone is an individual.**

There are ways of indicating that you have heard correctly and ways of helping the person focus on what they are telling you:

Paraphrasing is repeating what you think you heard without changing the meaning of what was said.

Clarifying is a way of making sure you have understood. People in crisis are often confused and they may talk about many events and feelings. It is okay to say: “I’m confused about what you said...” or “I think you said (or are feeling)...” If you heard incorrectly, the person will let you know. This also helps the person clarify their own feelings and their own thoughts.

Confidentiality

This is listening to circumstances and feelings without gossiping about them. People who share their stories of pain and hurt, sometimes for the first time, do not want someone gossiping about them. Respecting private information develops trust and confidence between the two of you.

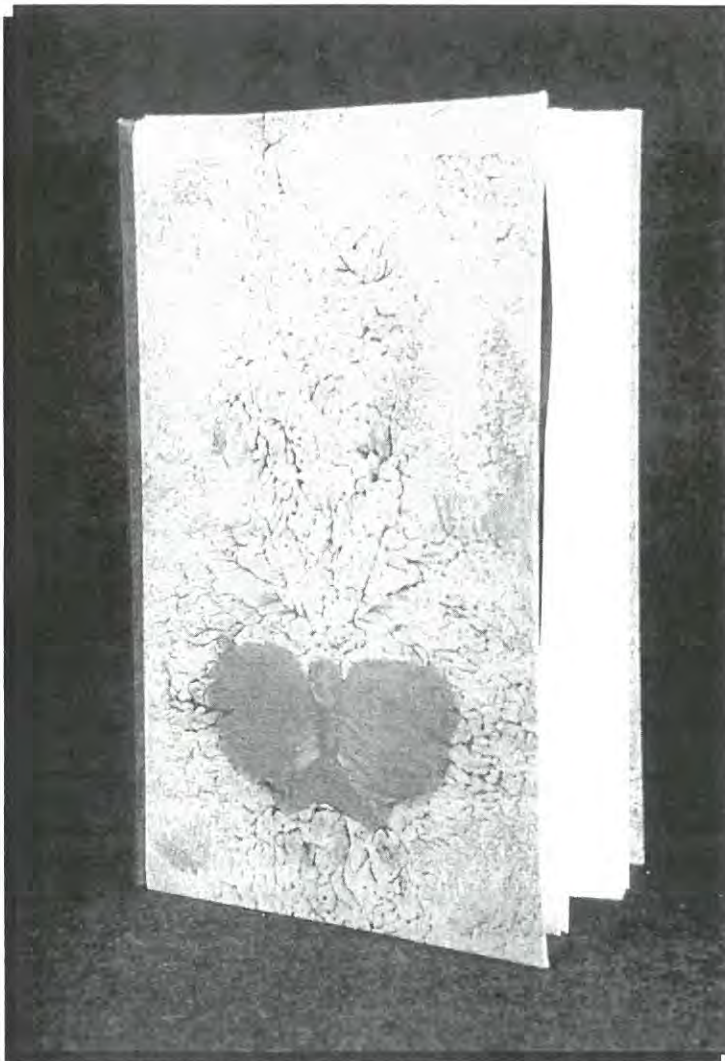
However, in the case of a child telling you they are being abused, or an adult telling you they are abusing a child, — this can still be kept as confidential information but it must also be reported to the authorities. The authorities will deal with the situation according to their procedures, but you can also continue to work with the person. If a child tells you about being abused, do not forget to be honest with her or him about the fact that you must report the abuse. You can also explain what the authorities will be doing, and it is a good idea to keep reminding the child that s/he is safe — that by reporting the abuse, it can be stopped.

Trust

It often takes a while for a person seeking help to trust anyone. They may not feel safe enough to trust anyone. They may have told someone else their problems and not been believed, been gossiped about, or the person responded in a way that was not helpful, such as, "Oh, it can't be that bad", or "Don't worry about *that*."

A counsellor's job is NOT to pass judgement or place a value (good or bad) on the situation. For example, saying, "What! You got drunk again last night and didn't go home!" or "Why must this happen all the time!" does not help the situation at all.

It is very hard not to be judgemental when you know within yourself that things are wrong in a person's life, but it is better if the person recognizes this and does something about it themselves. As a caregiver, this may be one of the hardest things you have to deal with.



Being comfortable in your role as caregiver-counsellor

You may be nervous, but that is okay. Just be yourself, and show that you really care about the person and the situation they are talking about. You might be too busy to talk at the time a person approaches you, but let them know about your free time and that you will be available to listen if they want to talk to you then.

Dealing with Anger

Troubled people may become hostile or angry and lash out at someone they feel safe with. Their anger is real, but it is misdirected at you. Do not be afraid of their anger or take it personally because they are not angry with you.

People who have been abused often reach a stage in their healing where they become very angry with the abuser. This should be seen as a positive step, for until

the anger is directed where it belongs, it is turned inward. Victims of abuse who blame themselves rather than the abuser may punish and hurt themselves in a variety of other ways — through alcohol or drug abuse or suicide attempts, for example.

Body Language

What a person looks like and the way their whole body moves gives important clues to how they are feeling. A person seeking help is often nervous and confused about what is happening to them. You probably know the person and will be able to tell if they are looking or acting differently.

For example, maybe the person is usually a good seamstress, but lately, she has been uninterested in sewing. Or a person's face and eyes have been looking strained, and they are not enjoying life as they used to. Perhaps the person's personality has changed, becoming very quiet or unusually loud.

What is NOT said is important — sometimes that is the only clue you will get from a person who has come to see you.

Developing a Relationship

Sometimes it is helpful to reach out and befriend the person needing help. Invite them for tea or invite yourself into their life.

It can sometimes help if you talk about similar situations or feelings you have experienced — it lets them know that you understand. You can determine if sharing your own experiences will help — you will find out what works with each individual as you develop a relationship.

Taking Care of Yourself

It is important to recognize when you cannot help someone. Sometimes, as a counsellor, you have unresolved issues that interfere with your ability to help. Maybe the stories you are listening to bring up painful memories or make you uncomfortably aware of problems in your own life.

Who do you turn to when you need someone to talk to? What do you, as a counsellor, do to stay healthy?

Your own physical and mental health is vitally important to those you are counselling. If you find yourself becoming overworked and overtired or the stories you are hearing all begin to sound the same, it is time to take a break. Make sure you do not wear yourself out trying to help others.



It is also important to recognize when you are doing too much caregiving or counselling too many people. Do not let it take over your life, unless you want it to and you have the time. Remember, there are other counsellors.

If you begin to feel stressed and overtired, try not to worry too much. Take time to re-energize — rest and collect your thoughts, go fishing, have a nice long visit with a friend, or play games.

Professional Referrals

Learn to assess what types of problems you can help with, but never forget that professional help is available. Some people have been in abusive situations for so long, they need professional help. There are others who are in the middle of a serious crisis and need professional help before they can be helped by friends and other caregivers. Referring people with serious problems to professionals does not mean you are unskilled, or that you are not good enough — it just means the person's needs at the time can be better met by someone else.

Learn to say no when you cannot help, and counsel those you can help. Refer people who are in crisis to the professionals.

4.1 Counsellors: Be Aware

Every human being is different and no one can really decide what is best for another. At times, your instincts will conflict with what the person coming to you needs or wants to do. In this situation, it is not easy to stand by and support the person, especially if they are close to you.

The following are some common problems that caregivers, counsellors, and friends can run into while helping others.

Taking Sides

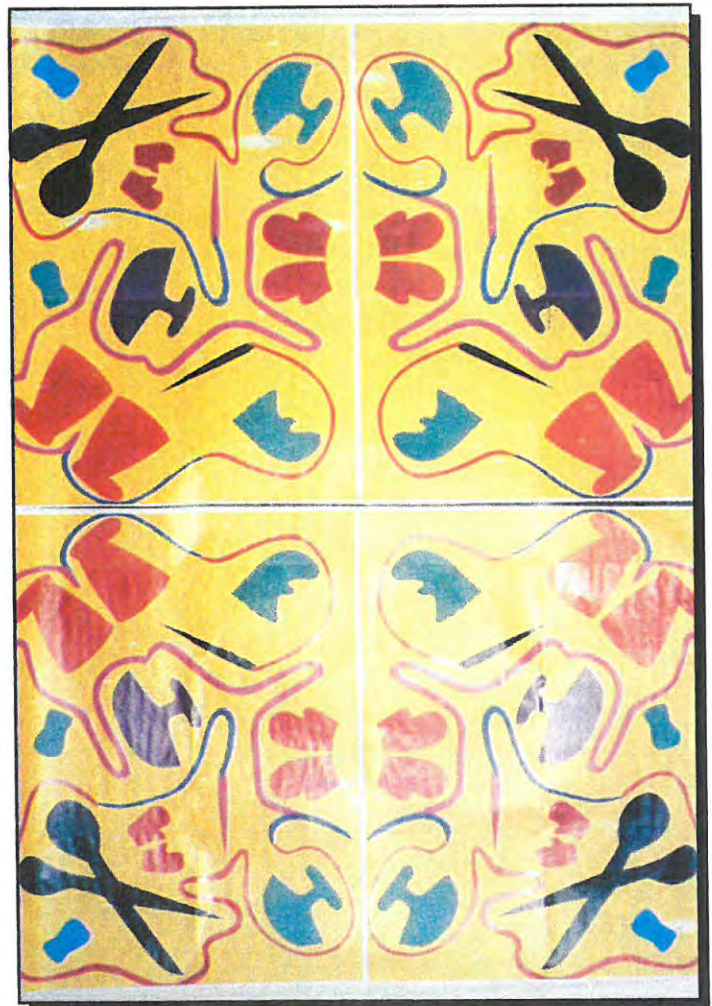
In small communities, you know all of the people involved in the life of the person talking to you. Your sister-in-law may come to you about a problem with her husband, your brother. You must remember that in seeking you out to talk, she is taking a risk therefore, your support and understanding are important.

You might also be hearing two very different stories about the same situation. A couple may not be ready to talk to each other directly, so they have come to you individually.

It is not a listener's role to take sides. One can empathize with the talker, without taking sides.

Rescuing

When we know someone who is experiencing problems, we want to help them so much. We often feel like rescuing them from their pain. Rescuing is doing things for the person, instead of spending time counselling until they make the decision to do it themselves.



People in crisis often want someone to make their decisions for them because they are feeling helpless and alone. Work with them until they feel ready to make a decision on their own. This route may be harder, but it is much more effective in the long run.

For example, a person may need to see a nurse or a doctor and want you to make the appointment. Encouraging them to make the call themselves, then offering to go with them would be a more positive way to help. This is support.

Giving Sympathy

This is feeling sorry for someone. Saying or thinking, “Oh! you poor thing” does nothing for people in crisis. **Empathy**, on the other hand, means recognizing their reality and understanding where they are coming from. For example, Inuit often say: When a child slips, or trips, do not help them up, because the child has to learn to fall and get up on her own. This way, the child learns that she has the strength and power to get up, and she feels good about having done it on her own. Otherwise, the child will grow up believing she can do nothing on her own.

Letting the child know you understand what it is like to be hurt — but still not helping her up — would be showing empathy.

Interrupting

Interrupting is speaking before a person has finished what they have to say, or finishing their sentence for them. Interrupting makes people think you are not listening. It also makes them feel inferior to you. Remember, people have different ways of expressing themselves, and a person seeking help is often not sure what they want to say. When they start talking, they may be testing to see if you care enough to hear them through, regardless of what they say and how they say it.

5.0

Examples of Counselling Situations

The following are examples only. They describe particular situations in which a counsellor shows that she is listening and understanding.

5.1 Situation #1

A woman comes to your home one afternoon acting more restless than usual.

Counsellor: "How are you today? Want some tea?"

Woman: "Not good, I feel like hitting someone. I guess I'm mad."

You notice that she looks tired and tense.

Counsellor: "Mmmmmm, so you're feeling mad eh?"

This is paraphrasing.

"You can't hit me, but I've got time to listen."

Showing a little humour can sometimes release tension.

Woman: "I don't know what to do, I'm so mixed up."

Pour tea.

Counsellor: "Yes, not knowing what to do and having a feeling of being confused is no fun. It's hard to understand what is happening sometimes."

This shows understanding and empathy.

Woman: "Sometimes I wonder why I bother. I can't do anything right."

The woman seems to be blaming herself. This is often the case when a person is being abused by others.

Counsellor: "You feel you can't do anything right. Has someone been telling you this?"

Here, the counsellor is trying to find out who is saying these things because, often, a person believes the negative things others say about them.

Woman: "He always tell me I'm no good and that I can't do anything right."

Counsellor: "He tells you that you're no good. Tell me, how you feel when he says those things?"

The counsellor is trying to find out how she is really feeling: she arrived angry and felt like hitting someone, but those feelings may be a defense against more vulnerable feelings.

Woman: "Maybe I'm just too sensitive, but I feel like a klutz. I try, but it just gets worse it seems."

Victims often blame themselves.

At this point a typical older Inuk would try to laugh it off and go on to another topic by saying something like: "Men eh? That's the way they are — unfeeling". The woman will do almost anything to get the spotlight off her, because in the overall "order of life" the woman is there for convenience, she is not worth much. If the counsellor really wants to help the woman, she will have to overstep practices and attitudes that were considered vital to a way of life.

It is the counsellor's and the woman's choice as to how to proceed from here. But before deciding, here are a few questions to consider:

- a) *How long has this situation been going on?*
- b) *Is the situation going to get worse?*
- c) *Does the woman really want to change her life?*
- d) *Are the children being influenced?*
- e) *Is this unusual behaviour for the abuser?*

If the counsellor does not already know the answers to the above questions, then she should ask the woman.

Counsellor: "Tell me what happens when he says those things?"

Woman: "My husband tells me I'm no good, he shouts at me in front of the children, and he seems to be doing it more these days."

Counsellor: "I'm sorry this is happening to you. It must have been very difficult for you to come here today and tell me this... I'm glad you are here."

This kind of response helps build up trust and it shows that someone cares.

Woman: "Why is this happening to me?"
She quickly wipes the tears from her eyes.

The counsellor can decide whether or not it would be all right to put a supportive hand on the woman because physical contact works with some people, while others don't like it. The woman is confused about what is happening to her: the counsellor should keep in mind that when people have been abused verbally or physically or both, they begin to think it is all their fault and that they are the cause of what is happening to them.

Counsellor: "I'm glad you came over, but I am concerned about you being safe... Can I do anything for you now?"

The counsellor is letting her know that she is worth caring for and that her well-being is of interest to her.

Woman: "It's okay, I'll be okay...I'm glad you were here today. I've been wanting to talk for a long time...."

Counsellor: "I'm glad you came by. I'd like to see you again. We could try to figure out some of the things that are happening and what you might be able to do."

REFLECTION

Care, empathy, and encouragement were demonstrated in the above example, as well as a sensitivity to the woman's space.

When a person is angry and feels like hitting someone, there are usually feelings of hurt, rejection, fear, and shame. By welcoming the woman into her home, and then showing that she is not judging her, the counsellor has helped her to feel less afraid. The counsellor can continue to work with her, one step at a time, encouraging her to express all of her feelings — good, bad, or confused. This gentle acceptance of her true feelings may help the woman gain courage to face further realities. It will also be important to encourage the woman to separate her feelings about herself from the verbal abuse she has experienced. This can take a long time. **Counselling is a step by step process.**

The woman's visit may have brought forward some of the counsellor's own feelings, especially if she has had similar experiences. Counsellors need to take time to reflect on their own feelings.

5.2 Situation #2

A young boy has come to see you, the school counsellor. His teacher has expressed concern about Adamie's aggressive behaviour and his lack of interest in everything around him. You have talked to him before, and you are aware that his teacher has talked to his parents, who are also concerned. Until this year, Adamie was doing well in school, and he was not nearly as aggressive.

Adamie walks in and slumps down on the chair, acting bored.

Counsellor: "Hi, Adamie! What's going on?"

Adamie does not respond.

Counsellor: "I'm glad you dropped by. It's been a while since we've talked."
"I thought it was a great game last night. Did you see it?"

*Letting Adamie know you are pleased to see him, and you are not going to get angry.
To get his attention and help him relax, try talking about something he enjoys.*

Adamie: gives an uninterested, "Yeah..."

You've got his attention, but he's waiting to see if there is a catch.

Counsellor: "What did you think of it?"

Adamie: Intense grab of the subject.
"It was **great!** You know when number 33 high-sticked our forward — the way he just tripped him — **that** was far out! I wish I could have punched number 33 right out of it."

His eyes light up at the enjoyment of violence. This may or may not mean anything.
His reaction might be due to his awkward age — stuck between boyhood and manhood — or something may be really wrong in his life.

Counsellor: "That would be something to work on — playing hockey and skating a lot more, eh? I see that you haven't played too much lately..."

You are ignoring his reaction to the fight, but showing that you care about his abilities.

Adamie: "Neh..I'm no good."

Counsellor: "Ah, but you were! Your team played last year and did really well. You enjoyed playing, right?"

You notice the light in his eyes is fading...

Adamie: "Yeah...I guess so..."

Counsellor: "You sound discouraged, Adamie. If you want to talk about it, I'm here to listen."

Adamie: “Neh. I used to like hockey, but that was before... and besides, I didn't know any better.”

*He sounds as though he almost let out some secret information. Try to remember that his situation could be as innocent as a normal reaction to growing up, or it could be as serious as physical, sexual, or substance abuse. How the counsellor phrases the **next** question is crucial.*

Counsellor: “Before what, Adamie?”

Straightforward and simple questions are best when you are not sure what you are going to find out.

Adamie: “...”

At this point, Adamie could answer any number of ways. The counsellor is well advised to stick to very simple and straightforward questions. This will help Adamie focus on the problems or issues that are bothering him.

REFLECTION

Children, like adults, need and want unconditional love, but they also think they have to deserve that love. In other words, they think that if they do or say the wrong thing, they will no longer be loved. Because of this mistaken belief, it is not easy to get children to talk freely — they are afraid that if they say something wrong they may lose the security of their home and family.

Everybody needs and wants the security and familiarity of home, regardless of how good or bad the home is. Very few people are willing to trade their home life for the unknown.

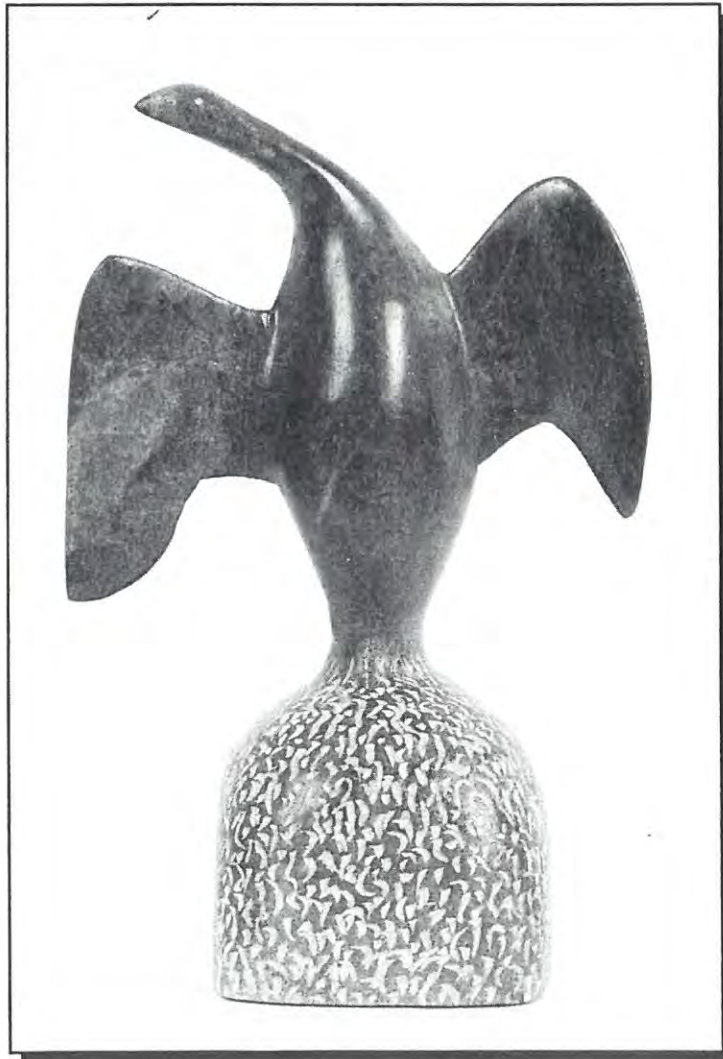
Children who have been physically, mentally, or sexually abused are often threatened not to tell. The abuser could have threatened them with words like, “...It will kill your mother or father... they will take you away... they will take me away forever... I will kill you...” Children believe the abuser, who is often bigger, stronger, and more knowledgeable than they are, therefore the threat will seem very real.

The Law and Abused Children:

Any adult, professional or otherwise, is obligated **by Law** to report any known or disclosed cases whereby a child is physically, mentally or sexually abused. This means that if a child discloses to you that she or he has been abused by parents or any other individual, you must **report** that information to the police and social worker.

If you do not report, you could be considered an accessory to the crime. This means that you could face legal charges.

In the North, this is often ignored, but the fact remains that it is a **criminal offence to abuse a child in Canada.**





Self-Help and Counselling Groups

Many people do not have access to professional help, or they find that professional help alone is not enough to provide the support they need. One alternative is to turn to friends and neighbours for empathy, support, and strength. Some people come together as individuals, while others organize small groups.

Self-Help Groups

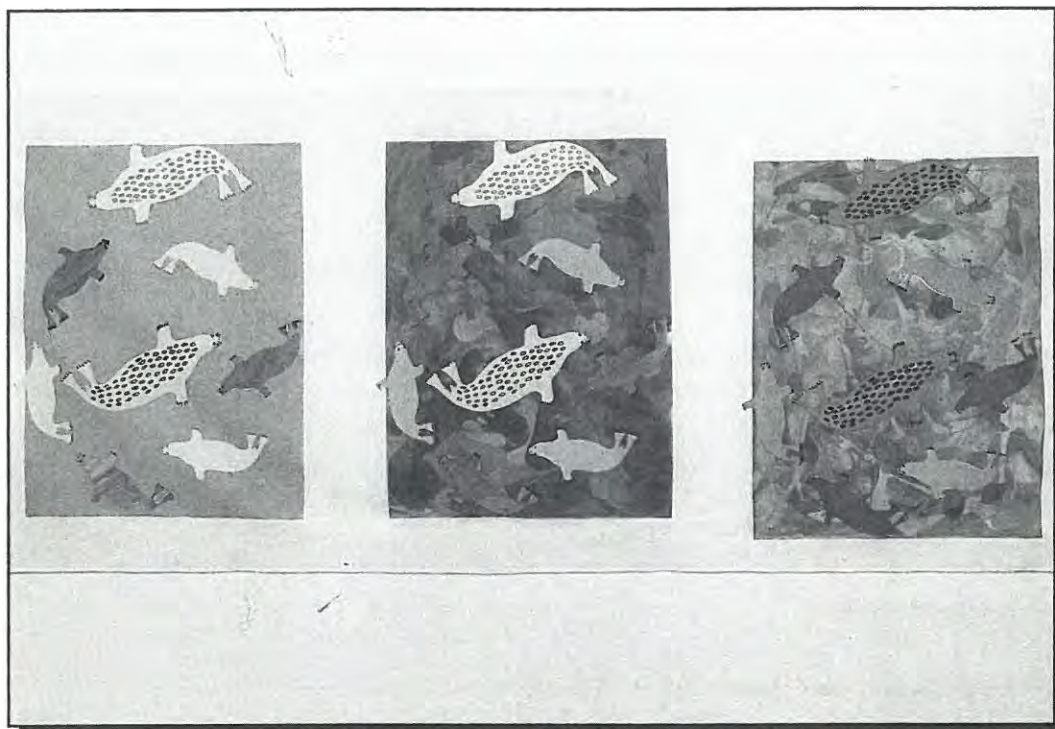
Forming a Self-Help Group is one way for people to share their experiences and work through their problems. These are groups of people who agree to meet every so often to talk, to encourage each other, and to share similar experiences on an equal and confidential basis.

Some people find self-help groups (or support groups) which bring people with similar problems together, a good way to cope with day to day life. **Strict confidentiality is essential, because people tend to express very personal and emotional feelings within the security of the group.** Each member receives support and respect from the group. Sharing personal stories in a group situation helps people discover that they are not alone — this is especially important to people who think that no one else could have suffered what they did.

Self-help or support groups can start with only two members, and they may grow to six or seven (any larger would not allow enough time for each person have a turn speaking). People form groups to share experiences on a variety of subject, be it raising teenagers or surviving physical or mental abuse. Anyone can start a support group around any issue.

Groups work in a co-operative manner, and they are based on mutual and confidential respect for each member. There is a need to create an atmosphere of trust and support in comforting surroundings: meetings often take place in members' homes. They are informal and do not rely on a professional social worker to guide them. There is no need for formalities like note-taking, by-laws, or committee-like dynamics.

It is all right for someone to come to the group and not talk about themselves for the first little while — attendance alone is a very important step in their own growth. The others can show their understanding by thanking them for coming and encouraging



them to come again. Each new member must agree to respect the confidentiality of the group, regardless of whether or not they are ready to talk about themselves.

Some people are not yet ready to share their problems at a group level, and they need one-on-one counselling, while others may join a support group but continue with individual counselling. Self-help groups are not for everyone.

Counselling Groups

A counselling group is more formal than a self-help group and it is facilitated or led by a counsellor. Any counsellor can offer to facilitate a group of people experiencing similar problems — such as addictions or abuse. It is the counsellor's role to guide the group and to make each member feel safe and comfortable. Again, members are held to honour the confidentiality of the group.

Counselling groups are not designed for people to drop in to once in a while. These are closed meetings which run for a specified period of time, and only those members who agreed to form the group are allowed to attend.

There are all kinds of counselling groups for all ages: there are groups for abusers and for people with problems with addictions, and groups for survivors of sexual assault. If you are interested in joining a counselling group to focus on a particular problem, contact your community social worker, alcohol and drug worker, shelter worker, or CHR to request that they set up such a group.



7.0 Limits

Everyone has limits to their knowledge and expertise, but only a few know when to say “no”. Most of us go beyond our limitations or abilities for the right reasons — because we want to help — but the fact is, there are certain social problems that have to be dealt with by experts like psychiatrists, nurses, and social workers. Professionals have taken courses on how to deal with serious mental health problems, severely depressed people, and addiction problems.

For example: **Suicide**

1. A person is depressed, without energy — their style says they want to kill themselves.
2. A drunk loudly threatens to commit suicide.
3. A young person goes storming out of the room yelling “Everyone would be a lot happier without me!”
4. A person, very quietly, with a funny look on her face, takes a gun saying she's going out hunting.

Which of these situations would you be qualified to help?

There are some extreme cases where only a police officer who knows how to calm an aggravated person can help. In other cases, only an elder can reassure a deeply disturbed adult, or only a parent or trusted relative could make someone feel safe.

There are also people who are prone to outburst of feelings that have been deeply buried since their childhood, and only a professional counsellor can help to get at root of the problems. It may take months or years of one-on-one professional counselling before a person is ready to use peer counselling or group therapy.

Learn your limits, and know when to refer people to professional counsellors.

There will also be times when you have to realize that you are just too closely related to help someone. There is nothing wrong with referring people to others, and both you and those you are helping will only benefit from your choice.

In other words, do not overload yourself and know when problems are beyond your expertise.



I AM A SURVIVOR

I am a survivor of child sexual abuse.
I am a survivor of teenage physical abuse.

Although the hurt and nightmare
will always be with me

I survived

When life was hard and confusing
I have tried committing suicide.

I survived

I now have a beautiful daughter
and a loving boyfriend at 17,
working towards my goal

I AM A SURVIVOR

8.0

Refreshing Activities

There are a lot of ways to help people to heal, and probably more than a thousand different ways to make people feel good about themselves. True, one-on-one counselling and group counselling are important, but it does not hurt to hold out of the ordinary sessions like the one's below:

1. Pack up and spend the day gathering berries;
2. Learn a new skill together — how to knit, scrape skins;
3. Find something that the person you are helping is good at doing, and have her or him teach you how to do it;
4. Watch a movie together, or watch "Hockey Night In Canada".

Counselling almost always involves highly emotional issues so activities like these can be a refreshing change. These special sessions sometimes help in evaluating where the counselling has been going and what other areas still require work.



Throughout this handbook, we have also suggested that you take care of yourself. Counselling is difficult and draining work, so you must take especially good care of your own physical and mental health. Take time for those things you really enjoy doing, and make sure you have someone to talk to when you need support and understanding. Be good to yourself.

There are many different things that people do en route to healing the inner being. Some sew, some sing, some write poetry about the hurts and the hope of healing. The following poem, written by a young Inuk woman as part of her healing process, was originally published in Pauktuutit's newsletter, *Suvaguuq*. At that time, the author wished to remain anonymous, but she is now ready to share both her name and her poetry. Melanie Paniaq is the courageous author of this poem.

*the kicks and blows were a part of my daily life once
i would be bruised and swollen all over my body and face
i was used to the sight of my blood and i was used to the taste of it man, it used to
be painful!
man, did i ever feel angry and helpless!*

*windows covered, doors locked, all dark so nobody comes in... i'd cry for help, more
punches and kicks!*

*i'd cry out of feelings of helplessness and unworthiness
i thought i'm a nobody — i'm just being disciplined like a dog*

*i'd wonder, "does my child have to see and hear all this?" there she'd be silently
playing by herself, as if she didn't notice man, i had to do something about it!*

we were all hurting and crying deeply in our hearts and souls

*today it's different because
i chose to make a move, for our physical and mental well-being
today i lead a life guided by my compassionate ancestors' spirits: caring, loving,
and understanding, their discipline is gentle but firm without any harshness...*

*today i do not allow myself to get into abusive situations anymore, it's been tough
but i did it and i'm still doing it*

*today i make my own decisions without any fear
because i know i am free to be who i am and what i am, as long as i'm true, honest
and good to myself and to people*

*today i feel great about me because i know, like pretty flowers; rocks; animals;
snow and sunshine; and the moon and the stars; and most of all like you:
i am worthy of love, care and validation
because like you and nature i was created to be in this world, i count - i have a
right to be*

i am a child of the Creator