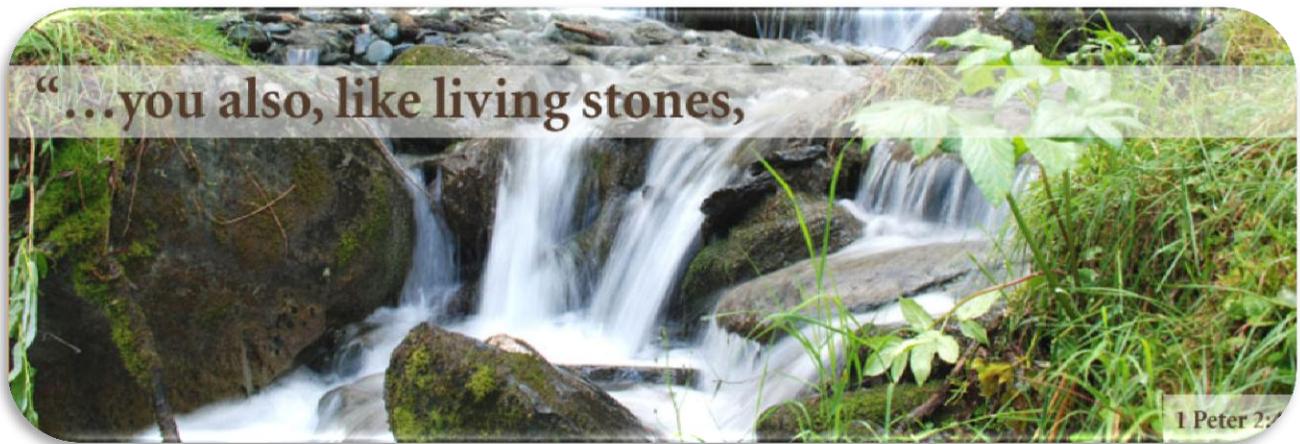


What We Value



Fresh Start Counseling,

recognizes that the following values are not "ours", they are instead a reflection of values common to most people throughout North America. Therapists listed at Fresh Start Counseling are committed to upholding these values for any client they receive through our site. This information is shared to you so that you can be empowered to make the right decision regarding therapy for your life and well-being. Clients are welcomed by us regardless of their values.

Value: We believe in saving marriages, and in the restoration of relationships.

Statement of Understanding:

Fresh Start Counseling is pro-marriage. While not all therapists on Fresh Start Counseling practice marriage

counseling, for those that do, this means our first hope is to save your relationship, if possible. Marriages to us are far greater than merely a "contract" or "piece of paper." They are the foundation for a healthy family. In 'saving a marriage' we do not mean simply keeping two people physically together where one or both spouses are unhappy. Our goal is that both spouses have renewed purpose, connection, value, and joy together. For couples who are not yet married, we are still strongly committed to finding the best path for your relationship. We believe in restoring broken relationships to a healthy place. Yet we also understand that not all relationships can be saved (such as a spouse who is adamant in divorce, or when someone's safety is at risk, etc.). In the case where a relationship cannot be saved, our goal is to resolve the issues that have left the relationship broken and restore the individual.

VALUE: We believe in the sanctity and dignity of human life, that all people have meaning and purpose, and that no individual is without true value regardless of age, sex, race, choices made in life, or religion.

We believe that each individual has purpose, meaning, and objective value. People are not born as merely empty vessels upon which a society or government grants rights and value to. Instead, simply by virtue of being a human being, you have inherent value, purpose, and meaning. The worth and unique value of a human being is objective. **With Fresh Start Counseling, this means your counselor will treat you with dignity, respect, and with genuine concern for your well-being.**

VALUE: We affirm individual responsibility and the need and power of forgiveness, acknowledging that right and wrong exist.

Statement of Understanding:

We believe that fundamental right and wrong are not relative, but something that is commonly understood. For example, whether its "small" acts like cutting in line, or larger ones such as acts of harm, stealing, or deception, the same universal principles are known, regardless of culture. These are the basis for our conscience, shared by all humans of all races.

Forgiveness implies that someone was wronged. Whether you are giving forgiveness to someone who wronged

you or you need forgiveness from someone you have wronged; there is a recognition that something happened that should not have, or did not happen that should have. In order for forgiveness to occur there needs to be an acknowledgement of responsibility and of right and wrong, meaning that sometimes guilt is a healthy response to wrongdoing. Too often in society we look to pin responsibility on everyone else, with the notion that there is no such thing as "wrong". Therapy should never be about convincing someone to have no guilt; instead, it should be about addressing what is broken, dealing with mistakes in a healthy way, and empowering clients to make healthier choices in life. Yes, this means that therapy can sometimes be difficult, but it is also very real, and the changes are very real. While we agree that there are certainly times when guilt can be oppressive and hurtful to growth (i.e. a battered wife who blames herself, or a victim of sexual abuse struggling with shame), we also acknowledge that guilt can sometimes be healthy, a sign that an individual has a conscience, **and a call to action.**

Forgiveness is very powerful and essential in any committed relationship, and important for our own selves. Sometimes forgiving our self is harder than forgiving anyone else.

PRINCIPLE: Guide Not the Judge

While our counselors share common values our clients need not. A client may



live a life of different values and is still wholeheartedly welcomed. Clients are accepted by us exactly as they are. Even though we believe in a set of common values, it is not our place to be judgmental, dictate, or impose on a client. Our values steer therapy. They do not condemn, but instead they guide. No matter what the values of a client are, a good counselor will accept that client and be a listener first. A counselor can never "fix" a problem or change someone, only the client can do that. A counselor that spends more time talking in sessions than his or her clients is probably missing out on important opportunities to understand and lead the client into a path of discovery. While there are certainly times that it may be appropriate to spend a lot of time advising a client, a good counselor is first a listener before being a speaker. A good counselor establishes a safe, collaborative relationship with the client and it is within the safety of this container that effective therapy takes place. A good counselor will guide, rather than judge. A good counselor will listen, rather than lecture. It is always the client, not the therapist, who must make the decisions regarding their life. The grounded counselor shows the way and provides the tools; the client must then make the choice and walk the path.

Get help any day of the year by calling any of our 3 locations.

- Merrillville: (219) 736-5990
- Hammond: (219) 933-7990
- Valparaiso: (219) 548-9400