

International Counseling Service

35 years of reaching out to expats



By Marie Anne Brun

Clinical Psychologist and founding member

Why does Paris need an English-language mental health service?

When a person or family finds life difficult to deal with, facing situations which may seem too much to handle, it's helpful to be able to talk to a professional in English. A therapist who speaks the client's native language is able to help the person to feel more connected, less isolated.

Equally important, when powerful emotions need to be verbalized, they are better expressed in a person's native language. Memory associations connected to events from childhood are more numerous, more detailed and emotionally marked when remembering is done in a person's original language. Finally, seeing a therapist who is also an expat, who understands what it is like to integrate into a foreign country, eliminates a whole barricade of miscommunication.

The International Counseling Service (ICS) began in 1979 when a group of seven bilingual mental health professionals started exploring how they could identify and answer the needs of the English-speaking community. They met with Reverend Tom Duggan who, as ACP pastor and counselor, understood the critical need for a psychological service in English. He offered a room in the church to our original team of clinical psychologists, social workers and a counselor, and the ICS was born.

We were open weekdays, and met bi-weekly in Dr. Duggan's office to further define our goals and share clinical experience. In 1982, the International Counseling Service became a 1901 association, with 10 founding members, including Dr. Duggan. It was natural for us to have begun at the American Church in Paris, since this church is a crossroads of the English-speaking community, housing English-speaking schools, associations and groups, along with multiple services vital to the expat community.

From the beginning, the ICS was a community-minded service, providing both professional assistance to those in need (individuals, couples, and families, spanning all ages) as well as networking with other English-speaking professionals (doctors, hospitals, schools, other professionals and associations) in the community.

How do we work? To the person, couple or family seeking help, we offer an initial assessment of the problems and needs, in a consultation that is free of charge for individuals. The assessing therapist will

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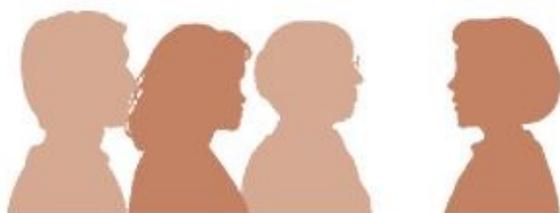
then make a recommendation, which may include a referral to a therapist or other appropriate resource in the Paris community.

In addition, we offer talks for schools and associations, organize workshops on mental health issues, provide supervision for other professionals, and create social events to bring together professionals, schools and associations in the English-speaking community, such as our annual networking party.

The ICS has evolved and has now joined the electronic age. We no longer have an office, but our website offers an interactive message service where those seeking help may leave a message; one of our therapists will respond, offering a telephone contact, often followed by an initial appointment to begin the process of identifying needs and proposing appropriate referrals. A 24 /7 telephone service is also available, through which a person in need will be called back within 24 hours (excluding weekends).

We are happy and proud to have offered 35 years of English-language counseling and psychotherapy to the expat community, and encourage all in need to contact us. Help is only a click away.

The International Counseling Service can be found at icsparis.com, by telephone: 01.45.50.26.49 or by email: icsparis@gmail.com



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