Many times people hear the word counseling and an image of a person holding a pen and paper, as they sit across from an individual lying on a couch, sharing all of their problems. Many people hear the words “And how does that make you feel?” come from the therapist. While these may be true for some styles of counseling, they do not hold true for every client-counselor relationship.

Some do hold a belief that counseling is only for people who are "broken" and need "fixing." Again, this may be true of some that seek counseling; these are not the only people who would benefit from the process.

**The American Counseling Association (ACA) defines counseling as “a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.”**

This definition better encompasses the many diverse uses of the counseling process. Many therapists do take notes during session, but not all. There may be a couch in the room, but lying down is not required, eye contact is preferred by many therapist and clients alike. Feeling are asked about and shared, but there are more questions and activities going on during the process. Many times people do wait until things are “broken” before seeking out counseling. They feel that they can handle life, until that crisis does occur.

Counseling is not something that can only be sought out after a crisis or when something is “broken”. It is a process that can be utilized to acquire life skills to manage crisis more effectively once they happen or to attempt to put preventative measures in place before a crisis occurs.

 Counseling is a direction to gain skills that help you to become the best you.

 Counseling is also a safe place utilized as a route to express frustrations that can’t be expressed elsewhere.

Counseling is a place to gain an outside perspective from a third party.

Counseling is an avenue to be utilized to sort through any confusing concepts that can arise in life.

Counseling is a process. It is not a quick fix solution. It is a resource that walks along side in your journey. Counseling is not something to be entered into lightly. It does require work, both in session as well as outside of session. Counseling can be uncomfortable. Feelings such as guilt, anger, frustration, sadness, and loneliness can arise. But, along with these risks, the payoff for this work can be grand, such as more effective communication skills, an improvement in existing relationships, more effective coping skills, and/or sorting through confusing concepts.

Emma Lee Broady Academy is partnering with a counseling agency to bring low cost services described above to students and/or families. Call the academy at (210)390-1549, Shauna Markowski, MA, LPC-Intern at (210)802-1851 or Becky Swiney, MS, NCC, LPC-Intern at (210)952-2680 or visit www. [steppingforwardcc.com](http://steppingforwardcc.com/) for more information.