**CLIENT FAQ**:

**What is Financial Counseling?**

Financial Counseling is an advanced field of study for advisors to provide a higher level of service. Most investment advisors and financial planners tend to concentrate on the financial needs/goals of clients, which are very important. But clients also have emotional needs and goals that are a major factor in the process of financial planning. Successful long-term investing requires both sets of needs/goals are met. If one or the other is not – the plan is doomed to fail. Financial Counseling combines traditional counseling psychology, personality psychology, and financial advising to create a more comprehensive and effective approach to financial planning.

 **What is the philosophy behind Financial Counseling?**

One of the first rules of investing is “know yourself,” a concept Financial Counseling calls Investor Identity. It may be useful to think of how it works in terms of a metaphor:

Getting in good shape financially is a lot like getting in good shape physically. There are a countless array of workout routines and diet/nutrition plans. What’s more, basically all of them work; that is, if you follow them. Which brings us to the importance of Investor Identity again; the best plan is not a plan that would work if you followed it, but the plan you can best follow. Investing is a lifelong exercise, not a short-term activity. Making sure you have an approach that matches up with your personality, values, and beliefs enables investors to travel the long road and reach their goals.

**Why work with a Certified Financial Counselor™?**

Any financial advisor could claim to get to know their clients and create a plan that’s “a good fit” and that’s “personalized.” But very few advisors acquire the training necessary to truly deliver on that promise. Certified Financial Counselors™ have received training in crucial skills that most financial planners don’t possess. The highly personal nature of financial counseling is beyond the scope of most financial advisors and the cookie-cutter financial plans offered by discount brokerages. CFC™ professionals have completed 12 one-hour classes and must complete two refresher courses annually to maintain their certificate. They have done the hard work to acquire the knowledge to help you understand yourself better as an investor. They’ve shown up for classes training them in how to communicate more effectively and design a plan based on critical success factors, including your values, beliefs, emotional style, and investor personality. Your values, beliefs, emotional style, and investor personality key determinants to long-term investing success. They make all the difference.

**Are there specific benefits for me to working with a Certified Financial Counselor™?**

Yes, to the extent that a CFC™ has received training in facilitating conducting crucial conversations, financial consumers benefit from working with a CFC™. While the ultimate goal is to help you understand yourself better as an investor, CFCs™ have been trained to inspire introspection. You get a clearer picture of your approach to risk, your motivations, your values, even your relative strengths and weaknesses in investing. Understanding yourself better enables people to better withstand investment ups and downs and prepares you to withstand temporary setbacks and maintain a long-term commitment to your plan.

**Are Certified Financial Counselors™ like therapists?**No. The focus of a CFC™ is your financial future and implementing a strategy for success. While CFCs™ have training in counseling psychology – such as advanced listening techniques and communication styles, they are not therapists and are not trained to help you deal with personal aspects of your life. CFC**™** professionals are trained to listen and identify your investor personality traits. However, CFCs™ are financial professionals and not mental health professionals.