

Psychotherapies



What Is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy (sometimes called “talk therapy”) is a term for a variety of treatment techniques that aim to help a person identify and change troubling emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Most psychotherapy takes place with a licensed and trained mental health care professional and a patient meeting one on one, or with other patients in a group setting.

Psychotherapy can be an alternative to medication or can be used along with other treatment options, such as medications. Choosing the right treatment plan should be based on a person's individual needs and medical situation and under a mental health professional's care.

Elements Of Psychotherapy

A variety of different kinds of psychotherapies and interventions have been shown to be effective for specific disorders. Psychotherapists may use one primary approach, or incorporate different elements depending on their training, the condition being treated, and the needs of the person receiving treatment.

Here are examples of the elements that psychotherapies can include:

- Psychotherapy is a term for a variety of treatment techniques used to help people identify and change troubling emotions, thoughts and behavior.
- Psychotherapy takes place with a licensed and trained mental health professional.
- Treatment should be based on a person's individual needs and medical situation.
- Getting help is not a sign of weakness: treatment can improve a person's quality of life and ability to function.
- Helping a person become aware of ways of thinking that may be automatic but are inaccurate and harmful. This approach is central to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Identifying ways to cope with stress
- Relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Exposure therapy for people with anxiety disorders
- Examining in depth a person's interactions with others and offering guidance with social and communication skills, if needed
- Tracking emotions and activities and the impact of each on the other
- Supportive counseling to help a person explore troubling issues and provide emotional support
- Safety planning can include helping a person recognize warning signs, and thinking about coping strategies, such as contacting friends, family, or emergency personnel



Wheeler

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What To Consider When Looking For A Therapist

Therapists have different professional backgrounds and specialties. The particular approach a therapist uses depends on the condition being treated and the training and experience of the therapist. Also, therapists may combine and adapt elements of different approaches.

Once you have identified one or more possible therapists, a preliminary conversation with a therapist can help you get an idea of how treatment will proceed and whether you feel comfortable with the therapist. Rapport and trust are important. Discussions in therapy are deeply personal and it's important that you feel comfortable and trusting with the therapist and have confidence in his or her expertise. Consider asking the following questions:

- What are the credentials and experience of the therapist? Does he or she have a specialty?
- What approach will the therapist take to help you?
- Does he or she practice a particular type of therapy? What can the therapist tell you about the evidence base and rationale for the therapy?
- Does the therapist have experience in diagnosing and treating the age group (for example, a child) and the specific condition for which treatment is being sought? If a child is the patient, how will parents be involved in treatment?
- What are the goals of therapy? Does the therapist recommend a specific time frame or number of sessions? How will progress be assessed and what happens if you (or the therapist) feel you aren't starting to feel better?
- Will there be homework?
- Are medications an option? How will medications be prescribed if the therapist is not an M.D.?
- Are our meetings confidential? How can this be assured?

Taking The First Step

The symptoms of mental disorders can have a profound effect on someone's quality of life and ability to function. Seeking help is not an admission of weakness, but a step towards understanding and obtaining relief from distressing symptoms. Some of the reasons that you might consider seeking out psychotherapy include:

- Overwhelming sadness or helplessness that doesn't go away
- Serious, unusual insomnia, or sleeping too much
- Difficulty focusing on work
- Constant worry and anxiety
- Drinking to excess or any behavior that harms self or others
- Dealing with a difficult transition such as divorce, job difficulties or someone's death
- Children's behavior problems
- Severe or ongoing stress

Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services

www.ct.gov/dmhas

NAMI Connecticut

<https://namict.org>

National Resources

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