

THERAPY

What Is Therapy?

Therapy is the treatment of a disorder or illness. Therapy isn't just for mental health; of course you've probably heard people discussing other types of medical therapy, such as physical therapy or chemotherapy. However, the word "therapy" is most often used to mean the psychological treatment of emotional and behavioural problems.

Therapy is a process that's a lot like learning. Through therapy people learn about themselves. They discover ways to overcome troubling feelings or behaviours, develop inner strengths or skills, or make changes in themselves or their situations.

A therapist is a person who has been professionally trained to help people with their emotional and behavioural problems. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, counsellors, and school psychologists are the titles of some of the licensed professionals who work as therapists.

Some therapists specialise in working with a certain age group or on a particular type of problem. Other therapists treat a mix of ages and issues. Some therapists work in hospitals, clinics, or counselling centres. Others work in schools or in psychotherapy offices.

What Are Some Reasons To See A Therapist?

Sometimes people who are trying as hard as they can to get through a rough time, such as family troubles or problem in school, find that they just can't cope by themselves. They may be feeling sad, angry, or overwhelmed by what's been happening and need help sorting out their feelings, finding solutions to their problems, or just feeling better. That's when therapy can help.

Here are just a few examples of situations in which therapy can help people through their problems:

- ◆ Working with a therapist can help someone overcome depression, anxiety, painful shyness, or an eating disorder.
- ◆ People in therapy can learn to deal with the emotional side of a weight problem or a chronic illness.
- ◆ Therapy can help someone whose parents are going through a separation or divorce to sort through the many feelings these changes bring.

- ◆ Therapy can help someone who has experienced a trauma, a difficult loss, or the death of someone close.
- ◆ Working with a therapist can help a family that is troubled by too much fighting or anger, or a family struggling with alcoholism or other addiction problems.
- ◆ Therapy can help teens sort out common problems such as peer pressure, and it can help people build self-confidence and develop friendship skills.
- ◆ Therapy can offer a person support to get through a difficult time. Some people go to therapy to get help with managing their anger or to learn to get along better with others.

What Do Therapists Do?

Most therapy is a combination of talking and listening, building trust, and receiving support and guidance.

Through talking, listening and observing a therapist is able to evaluate the problem situation that needs attention and care. In doing so, the therapist can help a person figure out what's been making him or her so unhappy and how to get things going on a better track again.

It might take a few meetings with a therapist before a person decides to talk openly. Trust is the most important ingredient in therapy- after all therapy involves being open and honest with someone and talking about sensitive topics like feelings, ideas, relationships, problems, disappointments and hopes. A therapist is trained to be patient with people who need to take their own time talking about themselves and their situation.

Most of the time, a person meets with a therapist one on one, which is known as **individual therapy**. Sometimes, though, a therapist might work with a family (**family therapy**) or a group of people who are dealing with the same issues (**group therapy** or **group**). Family therapy gives family members a chance to talk together with a therapist about problems that involve them all. Group therapy and support groups help people give and receive support and learn from each other and their therapist by discussing the issues they have in common.

What Happens During Therapy?

If you see a therapist, he or she will talk with you about your feelings, thoughts, relationships, and important values. At the beginning, therapy sessions are focused on discussing what you'd like to work on and setting goals. Some of the goals people may set include things like:

- ◆ Improving self-esteem and gaining confidence
- ◆ Feeling less depressed or less anxious
- ◆ Doing better with friends or schoolwork
- ◆ Learning to relate without arguing and managing anger
- ◆ Making healthier choices (for example, about relationships or eating) and ending self-defeating behaviors.

During the first visit your therapist will probably ask you to talk a bit about yourself. This helps the therapist understand you better. The therapist will ask you about the problems, concerns and symptoms you're having.

After one or two sessions, the therapist will probably explain his or her understanding of your situation, how therapy could help, and what the process will involve. Together you and your therapist will decide on the goals for therapy and how frequently to meet. This may be once a week, every other week or once a month.

Once the therapist has a full understanding of your situation, he or she might teach you new skills to help you think about a situation in a new way. For example, therapists can help people develop better relationship skills or coping skills, including ways to build confidence, express feelings or manage anger.

Sticking to the schedule you agree on with your therapist and going to your appointments will ensure you have enough time with your therapist to work out your concerns. If your therapist suggests a schedule that you don't think you'll be able to keep, be up front about it so you can work out an alternative.

How Private Is It?

Therapists respect the privacy of their clients, and they keep things they're told confidential. A therapist won't tell anyone else about what a person discusses in his or her sessions unless that person gives permission. The only exception is if therapists believe their clients may harm themselves or others. If the issue of privacy and confidentiality worries you, be sure to ask your therapist about it during your first meeting. It's important to feel comfortable with your therapist so you can talk openly about your situation.

Does It Mean I'm Crazy (or a Freak)?

No. In fact, many people have probably seen a therapist at some point – just like students often see tutors or coaches for extra help with schoolwork or sports. Getting help with an emotional problem is the same as getting help with a medical problem like asthma or diabetes.

There's nothing wrong with asking for help when you're faced with problems you can't solve alone. In fact, it's just the opposite. It takes a lot of courage and maturity to look for solutions to problems instead of ignoring or hiding them and allowing them to become worse.

A few adults still resist the idea of therapy because they don't fully understand it, or they have outdated ideas about it. A couple of generations ago, people didn't know as much about the mind or the mind-body connection as they do today, and people were left to struggle with their problems on their own. It used to be that therapy was only available to people with the most serious mental health problems, but that is no longer the case.

Therapy is helpful to people of all ages and with problems that range from mild to much more serious. You don't have to hide the fact you're seeing a therapist, but you don't have to tell anyone if you'd prefer not to. Some people find that talking to a few close friends about their therapy helps them to work out their problems and feel like they're not alone. Other people choose not to tell anyone, especially if they feel that others won't understand. Either way, it's a personal decision.

What Can A Person Get Out Of Therapy?

What someone gets out of therapy depends on why that person is there. For example, some people go to therapy to solve a specific problem. Others want to begin making better choices and others want to start to heal from a loss or a difficult life situation.

Therapy can help people discover more about themselves. People who work with therapists learn about motivations that lead them to behave in certain ways or about inner strengths they have. Maybe you'll learn new coping skills, develop more patience, or learn to like yourself better. Maybe you'll learn new ways to handle problems that come up or new ways to handle yourself in tough situations.

People who work with a therapist often find that they learn a lot about themselves and that therapy can help them grow and mature. Lots of people discover that the tools they learn in therapy when they're young help them cope with all kinds of difficult situations when they're older.