
Thinking About Psychotherapy

If you are thinking about making positive changes in your life, but are concerned about how difficult those changes might be, you may want to consider psychotherapy.

What is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy is the treatment of mental and emotional disorders using psychological techniques through the establishment of a psychotherapeutic relationship with a mental health professional. Mental disorders may include severe and recurrent psychological conditions or less severe and short-term emotional problems and disturbances that interfere with your life. Psychotherapy is both an art and a science, and has been scientifically studied. Studies show most people report success in making the changes they want with psychotherapy.

How Does Psychotherapy Work?

Psychotherapy works through the establishment of a relaxed, comfortable, trusting, respectful, psychologically safe, and therapeutic relationship with a mental health professional—a psychotherapist. This relationship becomes a “tool” to help you reduce anxiety and fear so you can successfully examine and confront issues and problems that interfere with your life and your happiness.

Who Provides Psychotherapy?

Qualified and trained mental health professionals who are licensed or certified by their state or jurisdiction usually provide psychotherapy services. Mental health professionals include social workers, licensed professional counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, marriage and family counselors, and pastoral counselors. Settings include public and private practices, and inpatient and outpatient mental health clinics.

Will I Be in Control?

Although the psychotherapist will work with you to help clarify your goals for therapy and solve problems, you have the right to direct your own life. The therapist will expect you to achieve solutions in your own way, and your successes will be your own. This is called “client self-determination,” and it is an important ethical principle in practicing psychotherapy.



Will Psychotherapy Work for Me?

Research shows that active clients who want to make changes do better in treatment than clients or patients who are passive. When you choose a psychotherapist, be sure to discuss qualifications, the therapist's experience, the frequency of your meetings, and their duration. You should try to be as open as possible. Ask for an explanation of your diagnosis and any unclear terms. Do the “homework” or tasks the therapist suggests, avoid canceling sessions, and discuss your feelings about the therapist and your progress.

What About Cost?

Discuss cost with your psychotherapist, and how payment will be arranged. If you have not been referred directly to a participating mental health provider, inquire about the possibility of reimbursement or direct payment by your health insurance provider. Your insurance company may limit the number of sessions you can attend, and it may require the therapist to send information to them about your treatment so they can approve sessions a few at a time. This is called “utilization review.” If you do not have insurance, or you face financial hardship, your therapist may be willing to adjust your fee. Some mental health professionals are bound by professional ethics to consider your ability to pay when determining fees.

What the EAP Can Do

The EAP can talk with you more about psychotherapy and how to make the best use of it. The EA professional can also help you decide what type of psychotherapist to consider, the different types of psychotherapy available, and what your insurance is likely to pay. If your health insurance does not direct you to specific providers, the EAP can give you names of mental health professionals to consider. The EAP may also help you with other insurance-related issues. Call your EAP to learn more.