



Why we need Psychotherapy?

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Why would someone seek Psychotherapy or Counselling?

We all encounter difficult or challenging situations and experiences in our lives. At certain times, in order to get relief from our distress, we may need more skill and understanding than our usual support networks can provide. At other times we may simply want an opportunity to review how to live a more balanced and meaningful life.

How effective is Psychotherapy/Counselling?

Extensive research has shown consistently that if you seek psychotherapy and counselling when faced with a difficult emotional or life problem that you will be better off than 80% of people who don't seek help - and that the benefits last. Research has also shown that, in general, the different approaches to therapy work equally well, regardless of the life problems involved.

What are the differences between Psychotherapy and Counselling?

There is no consensus about this. Some say Psychotherapy is more *in depth* or longer term, others say there is no difference. In reality, it makes no difference to you as a client - so we use the terms interchangeably.

What are the differences between Psychotherapy/Counselling, Psychology and Psychiatry?

In Australia, Psychotherapists and Counsellors are not regulated by a specific government body - anyone can use the titles. A psychotherapist/ counsellor may be a health professional such as a psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist or medical doctor who has undertaken further specialist training in psychotherapy and counselling. Other practitioners do not have a health profession background but have completed a training in psychotherapy and counselling. Some psychotherapy and counselling practitioners choose to belong to one of the many professional associations.

A training in psychology or psychiatry is no guarantee that a practitioner has extensive training in psychotherapy and counselling.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors trained to treat mental illness. They can prescribe medications, and they offer access to Medicare and private health fund rebates. Psychiatrists may rely more on medications than on talk therapy.

Psychologists usually have a post-graduate qualification and may have a doctoral qualification that allows them to use the title *Dr.* They have access to private health rebates. Clinical

psychologists and counselling psychologists are just two of the specialties that psychologists provide. Other specialties that do not involve psychotherapy and counselling are sports psychology, neuropsychology, educational and developmental psychology, forensic psychology, organisational psychology, health psychology or community psychology. To find out more about psychologists see the Australian Psychological Society website at <http://www.psychology.org.au>

What should I look for in a Therapist?

Although there are no rules about what makes a good therapist, here are a few guidelines to help you choose the right person for you.

With a good therapist, you should feel listened to and that the therapist is genuinely trying to understand your unique personality and life situation. You should feel respected, and not judged or patronised even if the therapist does not agree with the way you live. However, keep in mind that you may not always feel comfortable in therapy, and expect your therapist to challenge you in constructive ways.

A good therapist should get involved with your issues and remain objective at the same time. They should help you find your own solutions where possible and discover the life skills and resources you have outside the therapy room. They should help you to end the therapy at an appropriate time.

We encourage you to ask questions and trust your instincts. If you don't feel good about the person that you are seeing we would encourage that you listen to your own advice.

Traditionally, there are three cornerstones to becoming a competent Psychotherapist/Counsellor - knowledge of theory and technique, supervised practice, and personal therapy. None are guarantees of effectiveness with you personally. As a rule of thumb, you should feel some real benefits within 8 sessions. A good therapist will monitor and seek feedback about your progress, and be open to discussion about changing their approach, or referring you to another practitioner if things are not going well.

There are hundreds of different approaches to therapy, with more emerging all the time. Seeking the right therapist for you is not about finding the right technique to cure your specific problem. Rather, it is a question of whether the style or approach of the therapist feels right for you. Nevertheless, be open to new experiences, and negotiate with your therapist to find an approach that works for you. What works for one person may not work for another.

What qualifications should my Therapist have?

There are many roads to becoming a therapist. In contrast to more traditional professions (such as medicine or physiotherapy), there is no single, compulsory training path and body of knowledge. It is not simply a matter of choosing the therapist with the most qualifications. The attitude that the therapist has toward you, and the rapport (or lack of it) between you, are more important than formal qualifications. Nevertheless, training is also important as it demands ongoing engagement with new developments in the field, scrutiny by peers and commitment to professional values and standards.

Should my Therapist belong to a Professional Association?

As with qualifications, membership of professional bodies is not a guarantee of effectiveness in practice or that the therapist will suit you personally. What it does mean, however, is that your

therapist is governed by rules on minimum qualifications and ethical practice, and requirements for ongoing education.

To talk to an APS psychologist today, ask your GP for a referral to PBP Consultancy or simply write to prabu1@pbpconsultancy.com or visit www.pbpconsultancy.com or T/+61 41639056

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