

# Understanding Therapy



There are many different ways to cope with mental health challenges or mental illness. One of the most popular ways is through therapy. There are many different kinds of therapy, so this topic can be a bit confusing or overwhelming at first. This downloadable resource breaks down several different kinds of therapy and gives you a brief description of each one. Therapy is a very commonplace way of coping with mental illness, mental health challenges, or simply the daily stresses life can bring! By understanding the different kinds of therapy that exist, we can begin to reduce the stigma that exists around seeking help from a therapist. Going to therapy is just as important for our overall health as going to any other kind of doctor! Mental health is just as important as physical health, and treating it is just as normal.

Different kinds of therapy (adapted from [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)):

## 1.. Psychodynamic therapy

This long-term approach to therapy involves working with a therapist to look at the connection between your unconscious mind and your actions. That simply means that you explore how the things that are happening in your brain affect how you behave. This approach involves examining your emotions, relationships, and thought patterns.

Psychodynamic therapy can be useful for addressing:

- depression
- anxiety
- eating disorders
- somatic symptoms
- substance use disorder
- a variety of other conditions



## 2. Behavioral therapy

This is an action-oriented approach to mental health treatment. According to behavioural theory, certain response patterns develop from things you learned in your past. Some of these behaviours might affect your life negatively or cause distress. This approach involves doing different exercises that help you to change actions that might be negative.

Behavioral therapy can be useful for addressing:

- anxiety
- phobias
- substance use disorder
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- oppositional and defiant behaviors
- behavioral issues that result from communication difficulties or emotional challenges

## 3. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

This is a short-term approach to mental health treatment. It's similar to behavioural therapy, but it also addresses unhelpful thought patterns. The idea behind CBT is that certain feelings or beliefs you have about yourself or situations in your life can lead to distress. In CBT sessions, you'll work on identifying patterns and learning more about how they might negatively affect you. Rather than focusing on past events, CBT gives you strategies that will help you change your patterns and behaviours.

CBT can be useful for addressing:

- mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder
- anxiety and phobias
- eating disorders
- substance use disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- insomnia
- some symptoms of schizophrenia



#### 4. Humanistic therapy

This approach considers how your core beliefs about the world impact the choices you make, especially the ones that cause distress. It operates from the basic principle that you are the one who knows the most about how to make your life fulfilling and meaningful. Humanistic therapists work to help you better interpret your experiences, providing guidance without telling you what your thoughts and feelings mean.

Humanistic therapy can be useful for addressing:

- self-esteem issues
- difficulty coping with chronic health concerns
- effects of trauma
- depression
- relationship issues
- substance use disorder
- feelings of worthlessness or being lost in life

This brief overview provides a very general introduction to some of the major types of therapy. There are more specific types of therapy that you can do under each of these larger terms. Every therapist works slightly differently and what you yourself bring into the sessions can also affect how the session goes!

When it comes down to it, we can all benefit from therapy. Some people might need therapy to deal with the stress that life presents us or to cope with a diagnosed mental illness. Others might simply benefit from having someone to talk to who they know won't judge them.

Whatever the reason for therapy or whatever type of therapy you choose, seeking help in this way has a positive impact on many people's lives! If you think it might be helpful for you to talk to a therapist, consider discussing this idea with a trusted adult in your life who can help you with this decision.