

TYPES OF THERAPY

Therapists use a variety of treatment approaches, often tailoring their approach to satisfy their client's needs. The descriptions below are a few of the general treatment modalities a person may encounter. Not all clinicians provide all of these treatment modalities.

INDIVIDUAL THERAPY involves client and therapist in a one-to-one situation. Individual therapy sessions are usually scheduled for at least once a week to begin and the frequency is extended as the client progresses. Sessions usually last 50 minutes, giving the therapist the remainder of the hour to make notes which will aid in future treatment. Individual therapy works best for people who may not be comfortable in a group setting or whose specific problems are not appropriate to group discussion. Frequently, clients begin in individual therapy and progress to a therapy group after the initial crisis is resolved.

Within the framework of individual therapy, clinicians may use a variety of therapeutic techniques or interventions. These depend upon the unique issues of the individual being treated. It is beyond the scope of this document to describe the many treatment techniques available.

COUPLES THERAPY is effective for marriage or divorce counseling, relationship difficulties, or premarital counseling. Each person has the opportunity to express his/her feelings and point of view, with the therapist acting as a neutral sounding board for their conflicts and complaints. Couples therapy strives to identify the underlying issues distressing the relationship and helps the couple develop communication skills and conflict resolution techniques for enhancing the relationship. Again, there are many treatment techniques or interventions a therapist may use in couples therapy, depending upon the unique issues of the couple.

FAMILY THERAPY works not only with the problems confronting husband and wife, but also with the relationships between parents and children, and even extended family members. Family counseling allows interaction among family members in a safe setting where they can express their feelings and explore family roles without fear of ridicule or punishment. There are varying styles of family therapy. Some therapists may practice several methods while others may specialize in only one.

GROUP THERAPY offers a forum for increasing interpersonal skills, learning to build a support network, and resolving individual emotional problems. Group members share feelings, ideas and problems with one another as well as the therapist. Interactions with other group members often help individuals become aware of unproductive behavior patterns. Some types of groups are oriented around a specific problem or may focus on certain issues such as divorce separation groups; single gender groups; groups for couples, or weight loss groups. Group sessions last from 1 to 3 hours and may meet weekly, biweekly, or monthly.

TYPES OF TREATING PROFESSIONALS

Psychotherapists may obtain their training in a number of professional disciplines. Those described below are some of the more commonly found treating professionals.

PSYCHOLOGISTS may have a Doctorate or Master Degree in clinical or counseling psychology, or in education with an emphasis in Psychology. Training usually includes 2–4 years of graduate course work (depending on the program), a dissertation, and a year of postgraduate supervised experience and a written exam for licensure.

SOCIAL WORKERS (MSW or MSSW) have completed 2 years of academic work plus a thesis project and supervised clinical experience. ACSWs have also completed 2 years of supervised postgraduate clinical experience and passed a written national examination. Licensed Social Workers have passed the state licensure board requirements for training and experience, as well as a competency examination.

MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPISTS have a Doctorate or Masters degree in Marriage & Family Therapy or other mental health field, with specialized training and supervision in marriage and family therapy. Clinical Members of AAMFT (American Association of Marriage & Family Therapy) have an additional 2 years of postgraduate training.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS have a Doctorate or Master Degree in counseling or related mental health field and are licensed in some states. Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselors (CCMHC) have completed 3,000 hours of supervised clinical work and passed national written and work sample exams.

PSYCHIATRISTS are physicians (MD or DO) who have completed a 3 year psychiatric residency following medical school. People sometimes confuse professionals with Doctorate degrees with Medical Doctors. Psychiatrists, being Medical Doctors can prescribe medication. Psychologists cannot prescribe medications, even though they may have a Doctoral degree. Also, not all Psychiatrists provide counseling and therapy. These are important consideration when selecting either a Psychologist or Psychiatrist. Some people choose to go to Psychologists for therapy sessions and a Psychiatrist for medications.

PSYCHOANALYSTS may be any mental health professional (but are frequently Psychiatrists) who have completed postgraduate training in the psychoanalytic style of therapy. Psychoanalysis is a lengthy treatment process, and sessions are often frequent. These professionals are found less frequently with the arrival of managed care and restrictions on the number and frequency of treatment sessions.