

# Types of psychotherapy: Finding the right fit for your needs

February 22 2023, by Mandi Harenberg

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For anyone struggling with a mental health issue who is looking for

support coping with stress or managing complicated feelings, help is available.

It's called psychotherapy, and it might be the answer you're looking for.

According to the [American Psychiatric Association](#), psychotherapy "is a way to help people with a broad variety of mental illnesses and emotional difficulties. Psychotherapy can help eliminate or control troubling symptoms so a person can function better and can increase well-being and healing."

Psychotherapy is also known as talk therapy because it involves talking with a professional therapist.

## **Is psychotherapy for you?**

Psychotherapy may help if you:

- Feel overwhelming sadness or anxiety
- Are concerned about your drug or alcohol use
- Have a mental health diagnosis
- Have been in an abusive situation
- Are grieving a loss
- Are experiencing emotions that interfere with relationships, work, school, or day-to-day functioning
- Have experienced trauma

## **Where should you start?**

[Dr. Christine Crawford](#), associate medical director at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) said [recently](#) that, "It can be really tough to go online and start googling mental health treatment and support

because you'll get a whole slew of responses. And if you're already feeling overwhelmed with anxiety and depression or experiencing trauma, it's going to be incredibly difficult to process all of the information to know where to start."

Crawford suggests starting with a primary care provider who can help you with that first step.

Understanding the different types of psychotherapy can also help you make the best decision when choosing treatment.

## **What are the types of therapy?**

These four different types of therapy are commonly used by mental health professionals:

### **Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapies**

"This approach focuses on changing [problematic behaviors](#), feelings, and thoughts by discovering their unconscious meanings and motivations," according to the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA). Early childhood experiences, dreams and fantasies are also explored in this form of therapy, which can be long-term in duration.

Sigmund Freud, known as the founding father of psychoanalysis, was an early developer of this theory for understanding [human behavior](#) and treating [mental illness](#).

Is this for you? This type of therapy helps treat conditions like anxiety, depression, addiction, trauma and eating disorders.

### **Behavioral therapy**

The focus is on the belief that certain behaviors developed early in life now negatively impact peoples' lives. Therapy aims to change those negative and self-destructive behaviors into positive and productive behaviors, according to the APA.

In the 1890s, Ivan Pavlov developed this theory with the basic understanding that certain behaviors are learned through conditioning.

Is this for you? Those experiencing [anxiety disorders](#), anger problems, addiction, [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD), phobias, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and a range of mental health disorders can be effectively treated with [behavioral therapy](#).

## **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**

This is a goal-oriented form of therapy. The foundation for CBT is simple: "What we think, how we feel and how we behave are all closely connected—and all of these factors have a decisive influence on our well-being," according to the [National Library of Medicine](#) (NLM). This type of therapy helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviors, to improve coping strategies and overall mental health.

Aaron Beck first developed [cognitive therapy](#) in the 1960s, which has evolved and is now known as [cognitive behavioral therapy](#).

Is this for you? This is an effective treatment for individuals with depression, anxiety, PTSD, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), personality disorders and phobias. When combined with certain medications, it can also help treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, the NLM says.

## Humanistic therapy

This approach draws from the belief that individuals have the "capacity to make rational choices and develop to their maximum potential. Concern and respect for others are also important themes," according to the [APA](#). The focus is on the individual and their unique strengths, experiences and beliefs as well as the idea that people have free will and the desire to grow and live full lives.

Known as the early developers of the humanistic approach, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow are the founders of this theory.

Is this for you? Individuals struggling with self-esteem, relationship issues, addiction, coping mechanisms, trauma and depression are good candidates for this therapy.

Regardless of the type of psychotherapy you choose, you've taken an important step in the right direction by putting your mental health and well-being first and seeking support from a professional.

If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis, call or text [988](#). Free and confidential help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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Citation: Types of psychotherapy: Finding the right fit for your needs (2023, February 22) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-psychotherapy.html>

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