

### Questions to ask the professional:

- What is your training, areas of expertise, and experience? Are you licensed or certified to provide psychotherapy?
- What kind of psychotherapy do you use? What does the evidence say about this treatment for people with my diagnosis or concerns?
- What can I expect from treatment? What will the sessions look like and how long can I expect to see you?
- Are there any risks of this treatment approach?
- Is there a cost?
- Are there other ways to talk, such as videoconference, email, or phone?

### Questions to ask yourself:

- Do I feel comfortable sharing my experiences honestly with this professional?
- Do I feel like this professional understands where I'm coming from and what I'm looking for?
- Do I feel like I will be listened to without judgment?
- Do I understand what's expected of me? Are these expectations realistic for me at this time?

If you feel like you and your professional are not a good fit, it's best to be upfront and tell them. They know it isn't personal—the therapeutic relationship is just as important to them.

## HOW CAN I ACCESS PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy professionals can be found in public health systems (funded by government), workplace programs (services and benefits provided by your employer) and direct private practices (where individuals pay fees for services not covered by private insurance). If you do not have insurance coverage and cannot afford psychotherapy, some professionals offer lower fees for people with lower incomes. To learn more about services in your area, you can:

- Contact a professional or a counselling agency directly
- Talk to your doctor or other mental health care providers for recommendations
- Contact a local mental health or community organization
- See if your workplace has an Employee (Family) Assistance Program or extended health benefits to cover the cost of psychotherapy sessions
- Get in touch with counselling departments at your school or campus
- Contact national, provincial, or territorial professional organizations for information and referral services

## DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

Contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to learn more about support and resources in your area.

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is the most established, most extensive community mental health organization in Canada. Through a presence in hundreds of neighbourhoods across every province, CMHA provides advocacy and resources that help to prevent mental health problems and illnesses, support recovery and resilience, and enable all Canadians to flourish and thrive.

**Visit the CMHA website at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca).**



**Canadian Mental Health Association**  
*Mental health for all*

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# PSYCHOTHERAPY



**Canadian Mental Health Association**  
*Mental health for all*

[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Many people find that the simple act of talking with family and friends can help them see a new perspective, solve a problem, or simply feel supported. Sometimes talking with a friend isn't enough, and you need more specialized help and support. Psychotherapy is another type of conversation that can help you feel better.

The goal is to help you feel well and give you the skills to manage current and future problems in a healthy and helpful way.

## WHAT IS PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy\* is a treatment with a professional using psychological methods. It involves collaboration and conversation between a professional like a psychologist, psychiatrist, or counsellor and you, the patient or client. Using effective strategies supported by research, you work together to address problems or concerns that impact your well-being. The goal is to help you feel well and give you the skills to manage current and future problems in a healthy and helpful way.

\*Note: In provinces where psychotherapy is regulated by government, please refer to those province's regulations for definitions and information.

Psychotherapy is a common treatment for many mental illnesses. It may also be very helpful for people who want to better manage aspects of their lives like stress, relationship problems, anger, or physical health concerns. Psychotherapy may take place on its own or alongside other treatments, such as medication.

## COMMON PSYCHOTHERAPIES

There are many, many different psychotherapies for mental illnesses and mental health problems. Here are common therapies that research shows to be effective.

**Cognitive-behavioural therapy or CBT:** Teaches you how to change thoughts and behaviours in order to change feelings and other areas of well-being. It's a common treatment for depression and anxiety disorders, and has been adapted for some eating disorders, trauma, and other mental health and substance use concerns.

**Dialectical behaviour therapy or DBT:** A variation of CBT that also helps people find balance between acceptance and change, manage strong emotions in healthy ways, tolerate distress, and build relationships. DBT is often a treatment of choice for borderline personality disorder, and it may help people who experience self-harm and other mental health concerns.

**Acceptance and commitment therapy or ACT:** Similar to CBT, but it focuses on accepting difficult experiences rather than changing thoughts or behaviours to avoid difficult feelings. ACT may help people recognize situations, thoughts, or behaviours that cause problems. It may be helpful for depression, anxiety disorders, and may be a promising approach for schizophrenia.

**Mindfulness-based interventions:** Therapeutic approaches that use mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is found in psychotherapies like CBT, DBT, and ACT, or it may be practiced alongside other psychotherapies.

**Interpersonal therapy or IPT:** Focuses on building relationships, communication skills, and resolving conflict. IPT is commonly used for depression and may be most helpful for concerns related to loss, grief, difficulties in relationships, or life transitions.



While it's common to hear "therapy," "therapist," "counselling," and "counsellor," these terms on their own don't mean that someone is part of a professional group. To learn more about psychotherapy providers like psychologists, clinical, certified or professional counsellors, and others, see CMHA's brochure Getting Help at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca).

## WHICH PSYCHOTHERAPY IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There are some specific factors that may influence your choice, such as the diagnosis, the concerns you'd like to address, or your understanding of the problem. Your doctor or other care providers can help you evaluate your options. Many psychotherapies can be done one-on-one or in a group.

## WHICH PROFESSIONAL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

In any psychotherapy approach, your relationship with the professional is an important part of your treatment. It's best to carefully consider relationships when you choose a professional. Psychotherapy can take a lot of work. You may talk about things that make you feel uncomfortable or vulnerable. When you feel safe and supported, you're in a better position to tackle the tougher parts of psychotherapy.

Many professionals offer a session to meet them before you decide on a treatment. If this is available, take advantage of this time so you can see if you're a good fit.