

# Psychotherapy and its uses

## What is psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy can be defined as "talking treatments" of mental and emotional disorders by trained psychotherapists using psychological methods. The Royal College of Psychiatrists describes psychotherapy as helping people to overcome stress and anxiety, emotional problems, relationship problems or troublesome habits, based on talking to another person.<sup>[1]</sup>

Various techniques can be used in psychotherapy, eg, modification of behavioural patterns that will persist in the long-term. Patients can be seen on an individual basis or within a group setting and they can be seen by one or more therapists. Psychotherapy can take usually take weeks, or even years, and regular sessions are usually necessary.

## Types of psychotherapy

There are various types of psychotherapies, including the following:

- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT): an action-oriented approach to help people learn to stop avoiding, denying, and struggling with their inner emotions and, instead, accept that these deeper feelings are appropriate responses to certain situations that should not prevent them from moving forward in their lives..
- Psychoanalytic therapy: a form of talk therapy that explores how the unconscious mind influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.  
[Behavioural therapy](#), eg, phobia treatment.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (see separate article [Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies](#)).
- Dance therapy.
- Art, music, drama or movement therapy.

- Counselling.
- Psychodynamic therapy: involves developing a deeper understanding of emotions and other mental processes by helping people gain greater insight into how they think and feel, in order to make better choices about their lives, and also to improve relationships with other people and work toward achieving goals. Psychodynamic therapy is rooted in psychoanalytic theory but is often a less intensive and lengthy than traditional psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis tends to focus on the client-therapist relationship, but psychodynamic therapy also places emphasis on a person's relationships with other people.
- Existential therapy: brings elements of philosophy and psychology into therapy to help you understand a person's place in your world. It focuses on the anxieties and uncertainties that are a fundamental part of life and existence, such as death, the fear of the unknown, and the meaning of life.
- Family therapy.

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## Further reading

- [The Division of Clinical Psychology](#); Improving Access to Psychological Therapies.
- [UK Council for Psychotherapy](#)

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