

Psychotherapy, also known as “talk therapy,” is when a person shares their thoughts and experiences with a therapist in a safe and private space. They learn skills that can help lessen the intensity of the symptoms of their mental illness. It can also be used by families, couples or groups. The best way to treat many mental illnesses is by taking medication and therapy together.

Types of Psychotherapy

Therapists offer many types of therapy. Some people respond better to one type than another.

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** looks at the connection between a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. A therapist will help a person find patterns of thoughts that may be causing harmful behaviors. They can work together to create positive thoughts that will lead to healthier choices.
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** is like CBT, except it focuses on accepting uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and behaviors. By having an individual come to terms with what they struggle with, change no longer seems impossible. They work with their therapist to make a plan for recovery.
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR)** is a series of 20-30 second eye movements. It can make the emotional distress that comes from traumatic memories less severe. EMDR helps change negative emotions with positive thoughts.
- **Exposure Therapy** is used to treat OCD, PTSD and phobias. Treatment involves a person finding the triggers of their anxiety. They practice confronting these triggers in a safe and controlled space. This helps them find ways to avoid certain actions or feelings, when they are exposed to those triggers.
- **Interpersonal Therapy.** The goal is to improve social skills. A person reflects on their social interactions and point out negative patterns. This can include isolating oneself, or being aggressive. This helps them learn ways of understanding and interacting positively with others.
- **Mentalization-based Therapy (MBT)** can bring long-term improvement to people with Borderline Personality Disorder. MBT works on “mentalizing”. Mentalizing is when people reflect and understand their own feelings and thoughts. This is important because it helps us connect with other people.
- **Psychodynamic Psychotherapy.** A therapist will ask open-ended questions so that a person has the space to talk more about whatever is on their mind. This helps point out negative patterns of behavior and feelings that come from past experiences. The therapist works with the person to overcome the harmful pattern.
- **Therapy Pets.** Spending time with domestic animals can lessen feelings of anxiety, depression, fatigue and pain. Trained pets can be a part of therapy or simply visit people to provide comfort.