

# Finding Help: When to Get It & Where to Go

Mental health disorders are real, common and treatable. Approximately 1 in 5 American adults<sup>1</sup> and 13-20% of children living in the U.S. will experience a diagnosable mental health disorder in a given year.

## Where to Go for Help

Where you go for help will depend on who has the problem (an adult or child) and the nature of the problem and/or symptoms. Often, the best place to start is your local mental health organization. Your primary care doctor is also a good person to talk to if you think you may need to see somebody about your mental health, and can usually give you the name of a psychologist or psychiatrist to contact.

## First Steps to Finding Help

- You can get referrals from your family doctor, clergy or local MHA and crisis centers.
- Your insurance company can provide a list of providers who are in your plan.
- Eligible veterans can get care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- You can find mental health services through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Visit [www.samhsa.gov/treatment](http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment) or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- Your local health department's mental health division or community mental health center may provide free or low-cost treatment and services on a sliding scale.
- Your company's employee assistance program (EAP) can issue a referral to a provider. Reach out to your Human Resources office to get more information about your company's EAP.
- Medicare offers a list of participating doctors on its website, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

## What about Support Groups?

Peer support can be an important addition to the help you receive from professional mental health providers. Many people find self-help support groups a valuable resource. These groups, led by a layperson, are designed to bring together people with similar mental health or substance abuse conditions. People with mental health conditions have organized other types of peer supports, including drop-in centers, warmlines and training courses in wellness and recovery.

## Which Mental Health Professional is Right for Me?

**Psychiatrist:** A medical doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional illnesses. Like other doctors, psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication.

**Child/Adolescent Psychiatrist:** A medical doctor specially trained in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional and behavioral problems in children.

**Psychologist:** A professional with a doctoral degree in psychology, two years of supervised professional experience, including a year-long internship from an approved internship and is trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group therapy.

**Clinical Social Worker:** A counselor with a master's degree in social work trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group counseling.



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**Licensed Professional Counselor:** A counselor with a master's degree in psychology, counseling or a related field, trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

**Certified Substance Abuse Counselor:** A counselor with specific clinical training in alcohol and drug abuse trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

**Marital and Family Therapist:** A professional with a master's degree, with special education and training in marital and family therapy trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

**Pastoral Counselor:** A member of clergy with training in clinical pastoral education trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

## **You Called a Mental Health Professional...Now What?**

Spend a few minutes talking with him or her on the phone; ask about their approach to working with patients, their philosophy, whether or not they have a specialty or concentration. If you feel comfortable talking to the counselor or doctor, the next step is to make an appointment.

On your first visit, the therapist or doctor will want to get to know you and why you called him or her. The therapist will want to know—what you think the problem is; about your life; what you do; where you live and with whom you live. It is also common to be asked about your family and friends. This information helps the professional to assess your situation and develop a plan for treatment.

As you progress through the therapeutic process, you should begin to feel gradual relief from your distress, to develop self-assurance and have a greater ability to make decisions and increased comfort in your relationship with others. Therapy may be painful and uncomfortable at times but episodes of discomfort occur during the most successful therapy sessions. Mental health treatment should help you cope with your feelings more effectively. The following are a few common types of therapy:

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** has two main aspects. The cognitive part works to develop helpful beliefs about your life. The behavioral side helps you learn to take healthier actions.
- **Interpersonal therapy** focuses largely on improving relationships and helping a person express emotions in healthy ways.
- **Family therapy** helps family members communicate, handle conflicts and solve problems better.
- **Psychodynamic therapy** helps people develop a better understanding about their unconscious emotions and motivations that can affect their thoughts and actions.
- **Art therapy** can include using music, dance, drawing and other art forms to help express emotions and promote healing.
- **Psychoeducation** helps people understand mental health conditions and ways to promote recovery.

### *Sources*

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