

Mental health 101: The basics of caring for your mental and emotional wellbeing



If you have an earache or stomachache pain, you visit the doctor. But who do you reach out to when you feel sad, stressed or anxious?

There are experts for “emotional aches” — which can be as impactful as physical issues. That’s why it’s important to get the right kind of help.

Who helps with emotional issues?

Mental health professionals study and train to understand the human mind, thoughts and feelings.

Some complete medical school and go further with their studies to become psychiatrists.

Others — like psychologists and social workers — get master’s and doctorate degrees.

Mental health professionals help you deal with stress, feelings of unhappiness and other concerns. They help you set and reach goals. They work to explore behaviors and beliefs that could be affecting your feelings about yourself and your relationships with others. They want to help you live your best life.

What do therapists actually do?

There are different approaches and “schools” of therapy. Some people work one-on-one with a therapist. And sometimes couples and families go to therapy together to work on their relationships.

There’s no “one size fits all” when it comes to therapy. There are different types of therapy, which are all part of a counselor’s “toolkit.” But a counselor’s skill lies in finding the most effective way to help clients with the challenges they’re facing.

Therapy involves talking about yourself and your feelings. This may feel difficult at times. It can take a while to feel safe enough to share openly. The more open you can become, the more progress you’re likely to make.



How do you choose someone to help you?

Therapy can be most helpful when you work well with the therapist. The relationship you create is where:

- Listening and sharing takes place.
- Shame, blame and other uncomfortable feelings can be explored.
- Change can begin and your life can become happier and more satisfying.

When you choose a therapist, you may rely on reputation, word of mouth, availability, location, insurance plans or other factors. You may get referrals from us or your friends and family.

Regardless of what you've heard about a counselor, you're the final judge of who you feel most comfortable with. Meet with one or more therapists until you feel a sense of safety, respect and ease.

How long does therapy take?

Therapy is a journey, but there is no specific timeline.

- Therapy can last for a few sessions, weeks, months or years. It's up to you.
- Some people find it beneficial to go back for "tune-ups" when new challenges arise.
- Therapy is different for everyone and there is no right or wrong length of time.

How can I find out more about mental health and counseling?

Contact Resources for Living to learn more. We can supply additional information about mental health and counseling — and provide referrals to professionals who can help you.

You can also visit the **National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)** for more materials on mental health. Your family doctor may have names of counselors and counseling centers to share with you, too.

Reaching out for help can be the first step toward feeling happier and enjoying life more.

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