

Types of Therapy

When looking for a therapist, you may see a confusing array of acronyms and descriptions and you might wonder which kind of therapy you want or need. It is completely fine not to know what you are looking for, and it also helps explain why one therapist may be quite different from another.

The list below is in no way meant to be exhaustive, but it intended as an overview of some of the more common types of therapy you may encounter. Therapists typically have training in the kind of therapy they note on their website/online profile, and if you are looking for a specific type, it can be useful to ask what kind and how much training they have in a particular approach to ensure they really understand the technique. Most therapists pull from a mix of methods.

ACT—Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Uses mindfulness to help people stay focused on the present moment and accept thoughts and feelings without judgement. This results in clarity about forming and committing to behavioral change strategies.

CBT—Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A structured therapy that helps people learn to identify and change destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative impact on behavior and emotions. It focuses on current behavior, rather than the root cause. CBT has a lot of scientific evidence that it works well with several conditions and is one of the most studied therapeutic interventions.

DBT—Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Therapy that works towards skill-building with people who are struggling with intense emotions. It focuses on mindfulness, increasing distress tolerance (rather than trying to escape from negative emotions), emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness (learning to communicate with others in a way that strengthens relationships).

EMDR—Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy: Used primarily with people who have experienced trauma, including those with PTSD. Repetitive eye movements are used during certain parts of the therapy session, while the person thinks about an aspect of the traumatic event or thought.



Gottman Method: Used with couples, this therapy involves understanding the couple's partnership, skill building in foundational areas like managing conflict, and integrating research-based interventions.

Jungian Therapy: This therapy is designed to explore the deep-rooted causes and blocked emotions that are causing distress. Therapy is focused on bringing together the conscious and unconscious part of the mind using dream journaling, self-expression through art or movement, association tests, etc. People may meet with a therapist more than once a week.

Psychoanalytic Therapy: Aims to bring the unconscious mind (deeply buried feelings, thoughts) into the conscious using dream analysis, word association, and exploring transference (feelings towards/about one key person in your life may be transferred to another person). Jungian therapy is a type of psychoanalytic therapy.

Psychodynamic Therapy: An in-depth therapy that explores thoughts, feelings, fears, desires, etc. and focuses on solutions and problem-solving. It is similar to psychoanalytic therapy in looking at feelings and root cause but differs in its focus on problem-solving.

TF-CBT—Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Primarily used in children, this therapy uses techniques from regular CBT therapy combined with family therapy to help overcome trauma-related difficulties such as depression, upsetting/unwanted memories, avoidance, emotional numbing, etc.

