

Talking Treatments

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How are you supposed to know which of the many talking treatments available for mental and emotional problems will work best for you? Here we outline the different types of therapy.

You might be able to get treatment on the NHS with a referral letter from your GP. There are also organisations that offer free counselling; otherwise, private treatment costs between £5 and £50 (or more) an hour. Our organisations section can help you to find qualified private practitioners in your area.

Cognitive therapy

This stresses the importance of behaving in ways that challenge negative thoughts and unhelpful beliefs. It helps you examine some of the beliefs you hold about yourself, often as a result of early experiences, to see your situation in different ways and to build up coping skills.

It's effective for people with mild to moderate depression, and should be delivered by a properly trained person, such as a clinical psychologist or mental health nurse. It works particularly well with children and young people.

Counselling

This involves talking with someone who can help you develop insight into your problems and find ways of coping with them. It can be over the phone or face to face; it may be a one-off session or continue for several weeks or months.

Counselling can be for individuals, couples or families. There's also pastoral counselling, which takes into account the person's faith. Low-cost or free counselling is becoming more widely available.

Psychotherapy

This allows people to explore their difficulties and worries in depth. There are several types of psychotherapy, using different approaches.

Behavioural therapy

This can be useful for people with a phobia. You're gradually exposed to the object or situation you're afraid of and shown that it won't harm you. You're also helped to develop techniques for dealing with anxiety and panic.

Psychoanalysis

This method encourages people to talk freely about personal experiences to help them discover things in their unconscious mind that are affecting their emotional and mental state.

Group therapy

Sometimes it's helpful for people who have problems in common to receive psychotherapy as a group. Sharing sessions with other people helps you realise you're not alone with your problem and enables each member to contribute to the progress and well-being of the others.

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