



## **How Effective is Psychological Therapy?**

Many people have found relief from physical and emotional difficulties and other problems in life through psychological therapy. This brief question-and-answer guide provides some basic information to help people take advantage of psychological therapy.

### **What does research show about the effectiveness of psychological therapy?**

There is strong evidence that the right psychological therapy with a suitably qualified psychologist can increase an individual's wellbeing and performance. Research convincingly shows that certain kinds of therapy effectively treat a range of emotional problems such as depression, anxiety and many other issues. Psychological therapy can also provide benefits to physical health. Certain therapies have been found to increase survival time for heart surgery and cancer patients, and can have a positive effect on the body's immune system. Research increasingly

supports the idea that emotional and physical health are very closely linked and that therapy can improve a person's overall health status. Psychological therapy with children is similar in effectiveness to psychological therapy with adults.

Your clinical psychologist will be able to tell you about the evidence for the treatments that they recommend. You can find out a great deal of information about various conditions and the proven treatments by visiting the "Good Resources on Mental Health Conditions and Treatments" on our web site.

### **How to gain the most from psychological therapy**

All psychological therapy is a two-way process that works especially well when clients and their therapists communicate openly. Research has shown that the outcome of psychological therapy is improved when the therapist and client agree early about what the major problems are and how psychological therapy can help.

You and your therapist both have responsibilities in establishing and maintaining a good working relationship. Be clear with your therapist about your expectations and share any concerns that may arise. Psychological therapy works best when you attend all scheduled sessions and give some forethought to what you want to discuss during each one.

### **How do I know if therapy is working well?**

As you begin psychological therapy, you should establish clear goals with your clinical psychologist. Perhaps you want to overcome feelings of hopelessness associated with depression. Or maybe you would like to control a fear that disrupts your daily life. Keep in mind that certain tasks require more time to accomplish than others. You may need to adjust your goals depending on how long you plan to be in psychological therapy.

After a few sessions, it's a good sign if you feel the experience truly is a joint effort and that you and the therapist have a good rapport. On the other hand, you should be tell your therapist if you find yourself feeling 'stuck' or lacking direction once you've been in psychological therapy awhile.

People often feel a wide range of emotions during psychological therapy. Some qualms about psychological therapy that people may have result from the difficulty of discussing painful and troubling experiences. When this happens, it can actually be a positive sign indicating that you are starting to explore your thoughts and behaviours.

If you find yourself thinking about discontinuing psychological therapy, talk with your therapist. It might be helpful to

consult another professional, although it will help if you let your therapist know you are seeking a second opinion.

Although there are other considerations affecting the duration of psychological therapy, success in reaching your primary goals should be a major factor in deciding when your psychological therapy should end.

Psychological therapy isn't easy. But people who are willing to work in close partnership with their therapist often find relief from their emotional distress and begin to lead more productive and fulfilling lives.

## How Do I find a Clinical Psychologist

Clinical Psychologists work in a range of private and public health settings. Many public health services in New Zealand employ clinical psychologists who you may be able to see if you are a client of that service. Talk to your general practitioner (GP) about referral to public services. It can be easier to see a clinical psychologist in private practice but there is a fee.

There are several ways to find a clinical psychologist

Visit the [www.nzccp.co.nz](http://www.nzccp.co.nz) to find a list of private practitioners who work in your area.

Talk to close family members and friends for their recommendations, especially if they have had a good experience with psychological therapy. Ask your G.P. (or other health professional) for a referral. Tell the doctor what's important to you in choosing a psychologist so he or she can make appropriate suggestions. Look in the phone book Yellow Pages for the listings of Psychologists – NZ Registered Ideally, you will end up with more than one lead. Call and request the opportunity, either by phone or in person, to ask the therapist some questions. You might want to inquire about his or her qualifications, approach to psychological therapy, and fees. Such a discussion should help you sort through your options and choose someone with whom you believe you might interact well. Remember that selecting a clinical psychologist is a highly personal matter – finding one that is right for you is important.

A clinical psychologist who is a member of the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists has the training and experience to provide a safe and quality service.

Only psychologists who are registered with the New Zealand Psychologists Board under Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) and its subsequent amendments may call themselves a “Psychologist” or a “Registered Psychologist”. Visit the Psychologists Board website:

[www.psychologistsboard.org.nz](http://www.psychologistsboard.org.nz) to search the database of Registered Psychologists in New Zealand.

Only those psychologists who have completed appropriate qualifications in Clinical Psychology and registered in a Clinical Scope of practice may call themselves “Clinical Psychologist”.

It is not uncommon for some counsellors, psychotherapists, and psychologists to attempt to treat problems for which they have not been specifically - or adequately - trained. To be confident about their quality of care, consumers need to know what degree, what registration (if any!), and what training their psychologist or therapist has received. You should feel free to ask your psychologist (or other health professional) whether they are registered and what their qualifications are.

For more information check out

[www.nzccp.co.nz](http://www.nzccp.co.nz)