

## Common Types of Psychotherapy

If you've ever searched for a therapist for yourself, a loved one, or a patient, you might have noticed that there are **many different types of psychotherapy**. A few of the common approaches are described below. Many therapists use techniques from multiple approaches, which is called integrative or eclectic therapy.

Personal preference is a key factor in choosing a therapist and type of therapy. Studies have found that the **effectiveness** of different therapy approaches is often similar. The **most consistent predictor of psychotherapy outcomes is the quality of the relationship between therapist and patient**. So, it is important to find a therapist you connect with and to be open with your therapist about your experience in sessions.

### Common Therapy Approaches

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** focuses on **changing thoughts and behaviors** that contribute to distress. It is typically short-term (weeks or months, not years) with the goal of preparing patients for self-management. Usually there is homework to reinforce concepts and skills between sessions. CBT is effective for treating a wide variety of conditions including anxiety, depression, substance use, insomnia, and PTSD.

**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** emphasizes accepting thoughts, emotions, and sensations and **letting go of the struggle to control or change** them. Patients are encouraged to focus instead on living in line with their values and being in the present moment. ACT is effective for treating a variety of conditions including chronic pain, depression, anxiety, caregiver stress, OCD, and psychotic symptoms.

**Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** is based on the idea of dialectics, or balancing opposites. DBT aims to help patients accept the reality of their experiences while also learning to change dysfunctional behaviors. Patients learn to both **tolerate and regulate extreme emotions**. DBT is a structured treatment involving individual and group sessions and is designed for difficult-to-treat conditions such as borderline personality disorder and frequent suicidal ideation.

**Interpersonal Therapy** focuses on helping patients improve their interpersonal **relationships and social functioning**. The therapist helps patients identify and address interpersonal difficulties such as isolation, conflicts, life transitions, and unresolved grief. Interpersonal therapy is typically short-term and effective for treating depression and eating disorders.

**Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic Therapy** explores connections between thought patterns, emotions, behaviors, relationships, unconscious drives, repressed feelings, and **childhood or other past experiences**. This type of therapy is typically long-term, often lasting years, although brief versions have been developed for depression.

**Humanistic/Person-Centered Therapy** focuses on personal growth, living a fulfilling life, and **being one's true self**. The patient is seen as the expert in examining their worldview and choices. The therapist supports the patient by being empathetic and non-judgmental and offering unconditional positive regard.