
How to Choose the Right Therapist or Counsellor for Your Needs

One in five Americans experienced mental illness in 2021, according to recently published data from the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#). This can be an incredibly daunting statistic - and reflective of the reality that many Americans face in today's difficult world.

Having the ability to reflect and identify when you need help can be incredibly empowering - recognising that there is an issue is often the first step to progress. However, discovering what services may be available can be difficult, particularly when you may not be intimately aware of the intricacies of the mental health sector, such as a student who has completed an [online Master's in Clinical Health Counseling](#).

Let's dive into two of the most common providers available to those experiencing mental health issues - the role of therapists and counsellors in this vital field of health.

Why Is Looking After My Mental Health Important?

Looking after your mental health can often seem like a second thought. However, it is well established that mental health is often an extension of physical health.

We look after ourselves when preparing for physical activity by undertaking preventative measures such as stretching and pre-workouts. When we get involved in intensive exercise, we can face the stressors and get through the workout because we've built physical resilience. Doing this day by day enables individuals to face increasingly difficult physical challenges, empowering the body to handle even more.

Mental health has been increasingly found to be intertwined with physical health. However, often, this relationship is not well understood or poorly interpreted. Mental illness can have a direct impact on physical health - [poor mental health](#) can cause chronic health issues such as a high heart rate, fatigue, or a weakened immune system. Looking after our mind can sometimes be just as important as looking after our bodies - underlining just how important mental health can be today.

What Does A Therapist Do?

A therapist is a medical professional who specialises in understanding the issues that a client is having while providing solutions and quality of life improvement through the teaching and development of positive behaviours that may lead to improved personal and professional relationships.

As Candice Christiansen of the [Namaste Centre of Healing](#) describes, a therapist is "... someone who offers support, positive regard, compassion, guidance, a level of accountability, advocacy at times, a listening ear and sound clinical advice".

A therapist can help reduce the symptoms of mental illness by helping clients reflect on how their actions and behaviours may be harming their own lives. They reduce the stigma of seeking mental health support by being inclusive and welcoming - ensuring that patients who come through their door are supported, empowered, and confident to speak up about issues if needed.

What Does A Counsellor Do?

A counsellor is a healthcare professional often discussed when a client seeks mental health support. Simply put, a counsellor is an individual trained to help talk about the challenges and issues you're facing in life and clarify these issues so you can address them.

Clients often build a professional relationship with a counsellor - they're objective individuals trusted to provide feedback, such as helping clients identify the factors causing them emotional difficulty and distress.

Counsellors often use talk therapy as a strategy to get clients to state the issue they're having. Professional counsellors often use this as a basis to help identify problems that someone may be facing that cause them distress or hurt - and use that information to help explore strategies and

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known practices that can help relieve some of the pain.



Which Support Is Best For Me?

The reality is that there's no hard and fast rule to say whether a counsellor or a therapist is better. While they can both work in the mental health space, both can often lead to slightly different outcomes, depending on the needs of the client.

In general, counselling can often be seen as a short-term strategy - focusing on identifying issues and empowering clients to work through them using different strategies.

Counselling typically doesn't dive into the long-term historical issues behind mental health problems - which is where therapy comes in. Often, therapy can be a much more prolonged experience than counselling, as it seeks to dive into the range of underlying causes that make up an issue in the present day.

While working with a counsellor, you may find that your issues may be deeper than envisaged, and you could get recommended to a therapist. If you're unsure which support you think is best, it's a good idea to chat with your local general practitioner and see what support may be available.

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