



Because  
**talking** about it  
can actually help

**Understand talk therapy providers available to you** — because you are more than your stress.

Many people have misconceptions about seeking help for mental health concerns. Whether an individual is afraid of stigma (what others may think) or just does not understand the different types of support available. Talking openly about mental health can help reduce stigma over time. And understanding different terms used to describe different types of talk therapy providers may help an individual feel more comfortable in seeking care.

## Types of counseling

There are different kinds of mental health professionals who are trained to work with people. These providers have different titles and levels of expertise. The therapy they offer is called psychotherapy. You may have heard it called “talk therapy.”

Talk therapy can help you deal with your feelings and behaviors and suggest ways to cope. Your doctor may refer you to a psychotherapist, or you might look for one on your own. In any case, it’s helpful to understand your provider options.

**Psychologists** have a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) or Psy.D. (Doctor of Psychology) degree. They are also licensed by the state they practice in. They are trained to diagnose and evaluate a person’s mental health through testing and talking to the patient and to treat them accordingly.

**Counselors, clinicians, and therapists** are professionals that have obtained their master’s degree. They might also be licensed in their state as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) or a Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor (LCADAC). These providers provide psychotherapy aimed at helping improve your symptoms so you feel better.

**Clinical social workers** include Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Academy of Certified Social Worker (ACSW). All are trained to assess a person’s mental health and provide psychotherapy using various therapeutic techniques.

**Online therapy (telepsychology).** Some therapists are providing services over the Internet so you can talk to a therapist from your computer in the privacy of your own home. It is a convenient, comfortable and easily accessible option for many people. Be certain that the therapist you talk to is licensed in your state and complies with all privacy (HIPAA) laws.

**The therapists listed above can't prescribe medication.** But they might suggest it as something that could help you. They may encourage you see a doctor to discuss whether medications are right for you. If so, schedule an appointment as soon as you can.

**If you need medication: psychiatrists.** Medications for depression can be prescribed by your primary care physician or nurse practitioner. But there's another kind of physician that specialized in mental health — a **psychiatrist**. Psychiatrists have gone through medical school with additional training in the field of psychiatry. Because they are licensed physicians, they are able to prescribe medications. Your doctor might refer you to a psychiatrist because of this specialized expertise. Psychiatrists can also provide psychotherapy in addition to prescribing medications.

Some psychiatrists are now practicing **telepsychiatry**. This is a visit with a psychiatrist that is conducted via computer, much like telepsychology. You can check our virtual visits providers to find a psychiatrist who can see you online.

Source:

National Alliance on Mental Illness. Types of Mental Health Professionals. <https://nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals>. Accessed March 26, 2021.

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For more information about mental health and to access your benefits, visit: [cx.optum.com/mentalhealthmonth](https://cx.optum.com/mentalhealthmonth)

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\*BH benefits may be subject to deductible or coinsurance.

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