

Counselling & Psychotherapy Definition

Psychotherapy and Counselling are professional activities that utilise an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop self-understanding and to make changes in their lives. Professional counsellors and psychotherapists work within a clearly contracted, principled relationship that enables individuals to obtain assistance in exploring and resolving issues of an interpersonal, intrapsychic, or personal nature. Professional Counselling and Psychotherapy are explicitly contracted and require in-depth training to utilise a range of therapeutic interventions, and should be differentiated from the use of counselling skills by other professionals.

Professional Psychotherapy/Counselling:

- Utilise counselling, psychotherapeutic, and psychological theories, and a set of advanced interpersonal skills which emphasise facilitating clients' change processes in the therapeutic context. This work with client processes is based on an ethos of respect for clients, their values, their beliefs, their uniqueness and their right to self-determination.
- Require in-depth training processes to develop understanding and knowledge about human behaviour, therapeutic capacities, and ethical and professional boundaries.
- Take account of the cultural and socio-political context in which the client lives and how these factors affect the presenting problem. This includes awareness and assessment of social and cultural influences such as age, development, (dis)ability, religion, cultural identity, Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, nationality and gender. Professional Psychotherapists and Counsellors value such differences and avoid discrimination on the basis of these aspects of identity.
- May involve intervening with current problems, immediate crises, or long-term difficulties. The work may be short-term or long-term, depending on the nature of the difficulties, and may involve working with individuals, couples, families or groups.
- Counselling and Psychotherapy occur in a variety of contexts in the public and private sectors.
- Regard ongoing clinical supervision, professional development, self-awareness, self-development, self-monitoring and self-examination as central to effective and ethical practice. Such practices lead to enhanced capacity to utilise the self of the practitioner effectively in the therapeutic relationship.

Although Counselling and Psychotherapy overlap considerably, there are also recognised differences. While the work of Counsellors and Psychotherapists with clients may be of considerable depth, the focus of Counselling is more likely to be on specific problems, changes in life adjustments and fostering clients' wellbeing. Psychotherapy is more concerned with the restructuring of the personality or self and the development of insight. At advanced levels of training, Counselling has a greater overlap with Psychotherapy than at foundation levels.