

The **SOLUTION** *source*

Thunder Bay Counselling Newsletter

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For You & Your Family

Spring 2018



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE, THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU.

When searching for help you will find a variety of available professionals, from counselling providers, social workers and psychologists, to psychiatrists, psychotherapists and more.

Knowing who can offer the right support for your needs can be overwhelming. Counselling and psychotherapy can be provided by any of these professionals. All of them work in different ways to assist people who are dealing with the symptoms or impacts of mental health concerns.

At a high level, the main differences to understand are:

- Psychiatrists and Psychologists can provide a diagnosis
- Social Workers and Psychotherapists cannot provide a diagnosis.
- Psychiatrists are the only professionals who can prescribe medication.
- Each profession has its own education and training.

Here's a quick guide to help you chose the right professional for your needs.

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COUNSELLORS

Counsellors offer 'talk' therapy. They give advice, direction and actively listen to clients. Training can defer from counsellor to counsellor; from a college education up to a doctorate level.

Counsellors often perform the same activities as psychotherapists and as time goes on, it is becoming more difficult to determine the difference between the two professions.

In Ontario, the professions are differentiated by distinct governing bodies. Professionals who qualify and choose to be a part of the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario can legally be called a psychotherapist. Counsellors who are a Registered Social Worker as part of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers can also perform psychotherapy.

Counselling is a unique relationship between people who agree to meet privately. It offers a safe place to be yourself and to say what you truly feel in confidence without fear of judgment, criticism or unwanted advice.

SOCIAL WORKERS

There are various different types of Social Workers and they are probably the most diverse practitioners in the roles that they can perform. The field of social work includes the welfare of communities, families, groups and individuals. Their healthcare work is based on theories, methods of prevention and intervention, treatments providing aid in mental health, including psychotherapy and the treatment of disorders. They are the largest group of healthcare providers in the fields of mental and social health.

In Ontario, social workers must be Registered Social Worker with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Services Workers in order to provide counselling or any type of social work service. Their specialty can be diverse and their education is broader than the other mental health fields but does not include the medical model of psychiatry.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

A psychologist unlike a psychiatrist is not a medical doctor. They study and evaluate behaviour and mental process, where they can legally diagnose and treat a client. In Ontario, a psychologist must possess a doctorate in psychology and from a specific list of specified academic institutions otherwise they will not be recognized as one.

For the purpose of understanding the role of a psychologist, there are two main groups: applied (clinical) and research-oriented. An applied or clinical psychologist performs assessments, diagnosis, treats mental and emotional disorders and behavioural problems through the means of counselling and psychotherapy.

A psychologist, a psychotherapist, a counsellor, and a social worker can all perform counselling and psychotherapy, but some of the differences are that a psychologist often holds a doctorate degree in the field of psychology, is specifically trained in diagnosing, making assessments, and the administration of psychological tests that are used to assess various aspects of a person's mental health.



PSYCHIATRISTS

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has specialized education and training in the field of psychiatry which approaches mental health from primarily a biological and neurological approach to treatment. After their completion of their education and treatment as an M.D. they then have 3 additional years of residency in the field of mental health where they will learn and perform assessments and treatments based on the medical model of mental health disorders.

A psychiatrist evaluates a person in order to determine whether their presenting symptoms are resulting from physical illness, a biological mental illness, emotional disorders, behavioural problems, or the combination of them all. Psychiatrists predominantly prescribe medication and may refer their patient for further therapy to a psychologist, psychotherapist, counsellor, or social worker.

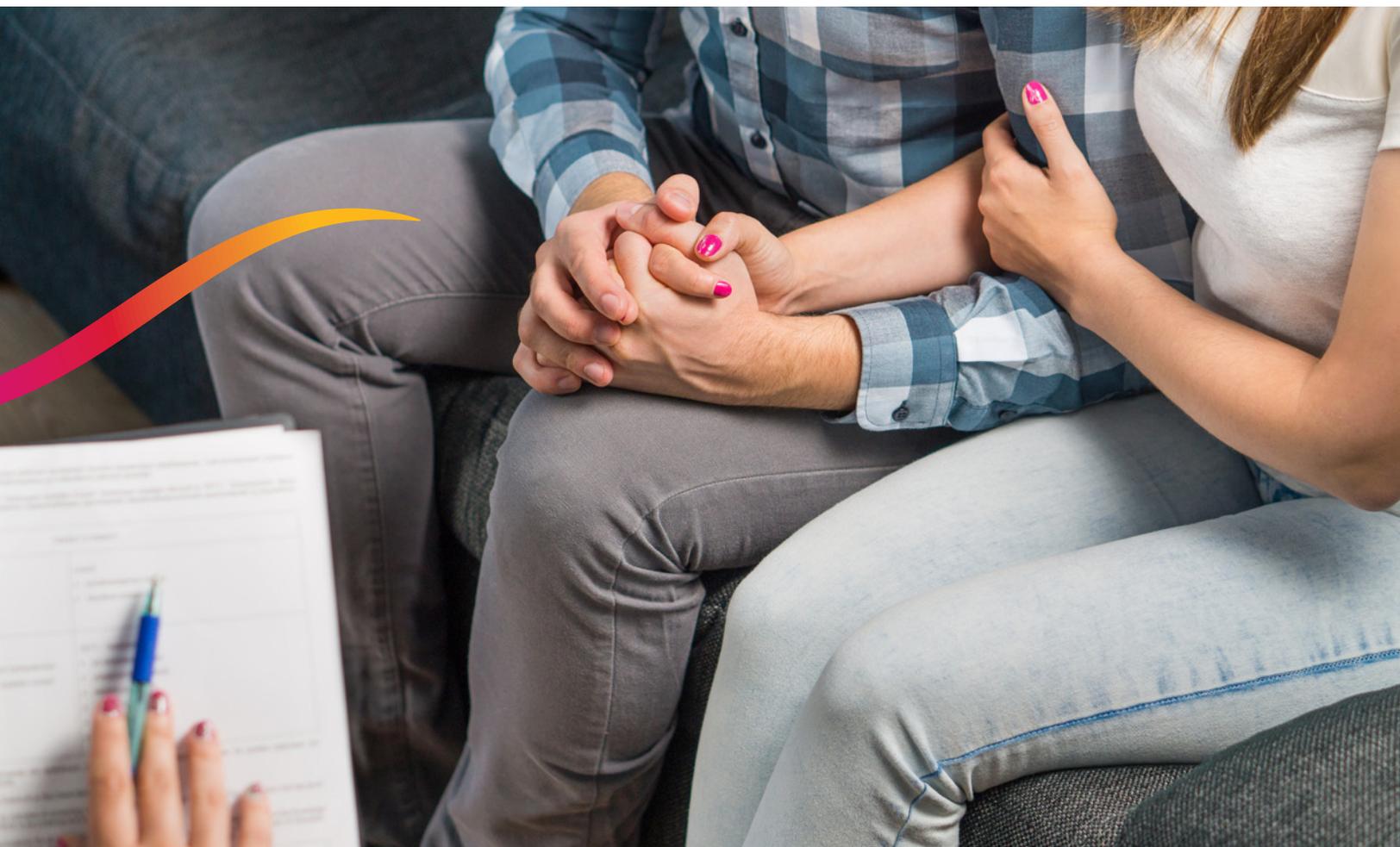
PSYCHOTHERAPIST

A psychotherapist's approach is strictly to aid a person to stabilize, resolve issues, come to a place of calm and move forward in life through the means of a therapy whether it be psychological, naturopathic, meditation techniques through the use of counselling and psychotherapeutic modalities.

A psychotherapist's education and training can be much broader than those of the other disciplines in the mental health field. The education can be from a specialized college to a university doctorate degree. In the province of Ontario, the act of Psychotherapy is controlled which means only members of specific Colleges can call themselves Psychotherapists or say that they practice Psychotherapy.

The term psychotherapy simply means healing or cure for the soul or mind. Psychotherapy is essentially a process that is interactive between client and therapist that involve various methods and techniques to help people resolve, heal, and live more fully. Rather than relying on pharmaceuticals, psychotherapy seeks to employ techniques and life style practices.

These various therapies help create useful dialogue in private sessions, group-work, marriage and couple's sessions which often leads to specific therapeutic interventions that helps each person to become whole and balanced.



What should you expect from your Counsellor or Psychotherapist?

Looking for and choosing a counsellor can be an overwhelming experience. The financial cost, finding a person you feel comfortable with and scheduling the time are all factors. People often ask themselves; "Why can't I do this on my own?" and "Why do I need extra support?"

It's important to know that these are all natural and common concerns. Many individuals, couples and families face times in their life when they are not able to resolve issues alone. Asking for help is actually a sign of great strength! Here are some things to expect from your counselling experience:

- You may need to try a few different counsellors to find the person who is right for you.
- Look for someone who will listen with compassion and with an empathetic, non-judgemental ear.
- You should always be treated with respect, kindness and dignity. As a client, you should come away feeling more in control and with new ways to cope with your challenges.
- Expect to learn new perspectives and be encouraged to find the answers that are already within you.
- It's a good idea to be ready to focus on a specific issue and be open with your counsellor.
- Attend all of your sessions, take an active part in them and be prepared before you arrive.
- Counsellors often give homework between sessions. You should try to complete it when possible.

If you're thinking about counselling, why wait? Often a sense of relief comes after just one session.

Have you considered taking Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a training program that has been developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Quite simply, it can be described as First Aid but for mental health issues.

Mental Health First Aid training gives you the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

Canadian statistics show that one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem this year. With this training, you will be able to recognize the signs that a person may be developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. You will learn how to provide initial help and guide the person to appropriate professional resources.

Various training programs are available including Basic Training and speciality courses for people who work with Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Seniors and Veterans.

It is expected that Mental Health First Aid will become as common and as necessary as CPR and Physical First Aid training.

If you're interested in becoming a trained Mental Health First Aider, Thunder Bay Counselling now offers MHFA Training courses. Ask us for more information.

Helping people is what we're all about.

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