



Reach out

Mental health 101: The basics of caring for your mental and emotional wellbeing
Aetna Resources For LivingSM

If you have an earache or stomachache, you call your physician. But who do you reach out to when you feel sad, stressed or anxious?

Luckily, there are experts for “emotional aches” — which can be as painful as physical issues. They just require a different kind of help.

Who helps with emotional issues?

Mental health professionals study and train to understand the human mind, thoughts and feelings.

- Some complete medical school and go further with their studies to become psychiatrists.
- Others — like psychologists and social workers — can get Master’s and even Doctorate degrees.

Mental health professionals help clients deal with stress and unhappiness. They help them set and reach goals. They work with clients to explore behaviors and beliefs that could be affecting their feelings about themselves and relationships with others. They want their clients to live more joyful lives.

What do therapists actually do?

There are different approaches and “schools” of therapy. In each, the client and mental health professional talk. Some people work one-on-one with a therapist. And sometimes couples and families go to therapy together to work on their relationships.

There’s no “one size fits all” when it comes to therapy. There are different types of therapy, which are all part of a counselor’s “toolkit.” But a counselor’s true skill lies in finding the most effective way to help clients with the challenges they’re facing.

Therapy involves talking about yourself and your feelings. This is hard for many people. It can take a while to feel safe enough with a therapist to share openly. The more open you can become, the more progress you’re likely to make.

How do you choose someone to help you?

Therapy can be the most helpful when you work well with the therapist.

- It’s in that relationship that listening and sharing take place.
- It’s where shame, blame and other uncomfortable feelings are explored.
- It’s where change can begin and your life can become happier and more satisfying.

When you choose a therapist, you may rely on reputation, word of mouth, availability, location, insurance plans or other factors. You may get referrals from friends, family or from us.

Regardless of what you’ve heard about a counselor, you’re the final judge of who you feel most comfortable with. Meet with one or more therapists until you feel a sense of safety, respect and ease.

How long does therapy take?

Therapy is a journey, but there is no specific timeline.

- Therapy can last for weeks, months or years. It’s up to you.
- Some people find it beneficial to go back for “tune ups” when new challenges arise.
- Therapy is different for everyone and there is no right or wrong length of time.

How can I find out more about mental health and counseling?

Contact Resources For Living to learn more. We can supply additional information about mental health and counseling — and provide referrals to professionals who can help you.

You can also visit the **National Alliance for Mental Illness** (NAMI) for more materials on mental health. Your family doctor may have names of counselors and counseling centers to share with you, too.

Remember, reaching out for help is the first step toward feeling happier and enjoying life more.

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