

PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I should see a psychologist?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, then you may wish to seek psychological services:

- 1) Are you finding it difficult to cope with the stress of everyday life?
- 2) Are your difficulties affecting your personal life, family, work, sleep, or physical health?
- 3) Are there changes that you would like to make in your life, but you are unsure of how to go about making them?
- 4) Would you like to maximize your personal growth?
- 5) Has someone in your life (e.g. friend, family member) suggested that you consult with a therapist?
- 6) Would you like some support and guidance in dealing with your problems?

What training do psychologists have?

To be a clinical / counselling psychologist in Ontario, one needs three university degrees – a Bachelor’s, a Master’s, and a Ph.D. in psychology – a process that takes at least eleven years to complete. Even after obtaining a doctorate degree in psychology, a Ph.D. cannot call themselves a psychologist until they have completed the registration process, which takes another one to two years to complete. In addition to the academic requirements, a psychologist typically needs at least 4500 hours of supervised clinical practice as part of their training. In total, a psychologist has spent over twelve years studying and practicing psychology before they are given the title of “psychologist”. This makes psychologists the most highly trained practitioner to be conducting assessments and psychotherapy (i.e. “talk therapy”) of mental, emotional, and interpersonal issues.

What does psychological therapy involve?

Psychological therapy is a collaboration between the psychologist and the client to work towards the client’s goals. Psychological therapy typically involves any or all of the following: discussion of issues, exploration of alternative views and actions, learning of new skills, increasing self-awareness, cognitive restructuring, behavioural changes, relaxation techniques, and exposure exercises. You may also be given “homework” in order to practice and apply your new skills to your daily life.

What is Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

CBT is the primary therapy modality used by Dr. Wong in the treatment of psychological issues. CBT has been demonstrated in thousands of research studies to be very effective in helping people to improve their mood, reduce their anxiety, and cope better with daily life. CBT is about learning and applying hands-on, practical skills for managing difficult feelings. Over the course of the therapy, you can expect to learn how to identify and manage negative thoughts and worries, develop techniques to increase your sense of calm and balance, learn about the factors that perpetuate anxiety and depression, develop healthier lifestyle habits, and act differently in response to negative feelings rather than letting your negative feelings control you.

What will happen in the first therapy session?

The first session is an assessment session. In this initial session, the psychologist will ask you a range of questions regarding your concerns and history. Based on this discussion of your needs, the psychologist will be able to describe to you your treatment plan and to help you to set some therapy goals. This will provide a guide for the subsequent sessions.

How long is a session?

A standard psychological session is 50 minutes long. This is called a “clinical hour”. The remaining 10 minutes is used by the psychologist to review your previous session notes and to write the current session note. Longer sessions (i.e. double sessions) are available for clients who would prefer more time.

How frequent are the sessions?

The majority of clients attend sessions once a week. However, some clients prefer more frequent sessions (e.g. twice a week), while others prefer less frequent sessions (e.g. once every two weeks).

How long does therapy last?

There is a wide range in the number of sessions that clients attend. Some clients come for as few as six sessions while other clients come for months, or occasionally even years. The most common duration for therapy is 10 to 20 sessions.

What if I can't make it to the Albany Medical Clinic office?

For individuals living in Ontario who cannot make it to the Albany Medical Clinic, phone sessions are an option. The initial session is always done face-to-face. However, subsequent sessions may be conducted by phone.