

Psychotherapy is an evidenced-based practice that sits within a multidisciplinary group of helping professions including counselling, psychology, psychiatry, social work, mental health nursing and pastoral care. Psychotherapists work with individuals, couples and families.

A Registered Clinical Psychotherapist®, is a PACFA trademarked title only for use by psychotherapists who are members of the [PACFA College of Psychotherapy](#). If a clinician has a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist badge, they have met the rigorous PACFA College of Psychotherapy requirements and meet the [PACFA Psychotherapy Training Standards](#). The following Psychotherapy definition is the result of that process.

What is psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy focuses on the whole person, encompassing somatic, emotional, mental, cultural, relational, and spiritual aspects of health and well-being. It is a holistic and relational psychotherapeutic approach that addresses everyday concerns, mental health problems, and severe mental illness. In psychotherapy, mental illness and psychopathology are understood as disruptions to the developing self which have been caused by repetitive trauma of an interpersonal nature.

While healing and symptom reduction often start from the first session, the primary goal of psychotherapy is to address the underlying causes of distress to facilitate lifelong change. Registered Clinical Psychotherapists provide a hopeful context, rooted in post-traumatic growth, assisting individuals in finding value, meaning, and purpose out of their suffering.

How does a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist® work?

In psychotherapy sessions, Registered Clinical Psychotherapists support their clients in exploring their symptoms, behaviours, thoughts, and feelings within a trauma-informed, safe, and confidential environment. These professionals use the latest evidence-based tools and techniques, as they are required to attend at least 20 hours of continued professional development and 10 hours of clinical supervision each year.

While these tools and techniques are important, the heart of psychotherapy lies in the psychotherapist's development of their own self and the establishment of the psychotherapeutic relationship as an agent of change. A PACFA Registered Psychotherapist has undergone over 150 hours of their own psychotherapy to develop their own 'instrument'. The psychotherapeutic relationship is central to psychotherapy, providing a supportive and non-judgemental space where clients can explore difficult emotions and experiences.

What concerns do Registered Clinical Psychotherapists work with?

Many people go to psychotherapy because they are experiencing discomfort, dissatisfaction, or suffering in their lives. Registered Clinical Psychotherapists work with people who have a wide range of presenting concerns such as addiction, anxiety, abuse, depression, eating disorders, chronic illness, intimacy and relationship difficulties in their personal life or at work, loneliness, sleeplessness, stress, suicidality, and trauma.

Psychotherapy is not only about symptom reduction but also about making the unconscious conscious; this creates opportunities for more freedom of choice in life. It is important to note that some people come to psychotherapy not because they have problems but because they want to deepen their relationship with themselves and live a deeper, richer, and more meaningful life.

What outcomes may be expected?

The goals of psychotherapy can vary widely depending on the individual and their concerns. Common outcomes include alleviating symptoms such as anxiety or depression, improving coping skills, enhancing communication, fostering personal growth, promoting self-awareness, and supporting the individual in reaching their authentic, innate potential in life.

Evidence shows that psychotherapy addresses the root causes of longstanding patterns and clients of psychotherapy often experience improved functioning and acquire skills that last a lifetime.

What training does a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist® have?

Becoming a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist requires a demanding but rewarding process, beginning with a bachelor's degree followed by over 450 hours of Advanced Specialist Training in modality-specific psychotherapy. This comprehensive training incorporates extensive psychotherapy theory, practical clinical skills, clinical supervision, experiential learning, human development, and human diversity. A solid grounding in current research in psychotherapy and a commitment to rigorous ethical standards are fundamental aspects of this professional training.

Additionally, psychotherapists undergo personal therapy as part of their training to ground and integrate their modality, deepen their emotional capacity and self-awareness, ensuring they are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of psychotherapeutic relationships (including working with transference) and client needs. A Registered Clinical Psychotherapist continues supervision, professional development, and involvement in a community of psychotherapists throughout their professional life.

What modalities of psychotherapy exist?

Psychotherapy is a dynamic field with numerous evidence-based approaches to support psychological well-being and post-traumatic growth. The PACFA College of Psychotherapy has a live list that you can access on our website.

Here is a short list example of recognised modalities.

- Buddhist Psychotherapy
- Gestalt Therapy
- Process-Orientated
- Psychodrama
- Somatic Psychotherapy
- Soul Centred Psychotherapy
- Transactional Analysis
- Transpersonal and Experiential Psychotherapy

[For a full list of the College of Psychotherapy recognised modalities, click here.](#)