

What is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy is a form of treatment for emotional or behavioral problems and involves talking with a trained counselor, called a psychotherapist. The treatment itself is designed to help you gain insight into your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as well as change certain thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.

Some mental health problems are the result of chemical imbalances in the brain. Often these chemical imbalances can be corrected with medication. In some cases, medications may be prescribed along with the psychotherapy treatment. If needed, medication treatment can be done before or along with psychotherapy treatment.

Psychotherapy can involve many different treatment methods. The treatment method used depends primarily on the needs of the patient, the kind of problem, and the goals of therapy. For example, some forms of psychotherapy help people understand how their lives in the past influence how they think, feel, or behave in the present. Examining these past patterns can help make it possible to choose to change the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that simply aren't currently working very well. Other psychotherapies focus on analyzing current thoughts and helping people change inappropriate or harmful behaviors currently affecting their lives. In addition to these two examples, there are many other forms of psychotherapy that are designed for specific problems.

Kaiser Permanente offers a variety of individual services provided by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and marriage, family, and child counselors. In addition, Kaiser Permanente offers couples therapy, group therapy, and many different classes and workshops on a variety of mental health topics.

If you have emotional problems that are disrupting your life, it's important that you ask for professional help. A few examples of disruptive emotional symptoms include overwhelming sadness or depression, uncontrollable anger, or extreme anxiety or fear. It's especially important to get help if you have persistent thoughts of death or thoughts about harming yourself or others. Talk with your doctor or other health care professional or call the Department of Psychiatry at your local Kaiser Permanente facility.

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For more information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at **members.kp.org** to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, or other resources.
- ❖ With a *Kaiser Permanente Healthphone Directory*, you can pick messages to hear on Kaiser Permanente Healthphone (1-800-332-7563; TTY: 1-800-777-9059). Request a *Directory* from your Health Center or Department or download a copy at **members.kp.org**. (Search “Healthphone”.)

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.