

Types of Therapists

[#mentalhealth](#) [#psychotherapy](#)

Choosing a therapist can often be a difficult task for many different reasons. One specific reason which may cause you trouble is deciphering among all the different types of therapists out there. Therefore, I sincerely recommend having a general knowledge of at least three kinds: psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors. As therapists, each of these categories share many similar characteristics and have important differences. Gaining some knowledge of these similarities and differences may help you make a better choice and increase the chances that your therapy journey is rewarding and meaningful.

Similarities

- Provide some sort of support with emotional problems for people dealing with mental health disorders
- Offer psychotherapy and counseling to families, individuals, couples, and/or groups
- Help with managing crisis intervention when warranted
- Have had training in assessment and diagnosis of mental health disorders
- Have had training in a variety of psychotherapeutic interventions and counseling techniques
- Able to work in collaboration with other mental health professionals
- Work in a variety of different settings

Differences

Michael R. Kiel, MA, LPC-IT

Phone: 414-476-9755 · Fax: 414-476-3413 · Website: www.therapywithmichaelkiel.com

- Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors (MD) who have had specialized training in behavioral health and psychiatry. They are often well suited to work with people who have both physical and behavioral health problems. They can prescribe medications, order physical tests, and admit people to hospitals. Although qualified to provide counseling, psychiatrist visits are typically shorter and less frequent than other mental health professionals.
- Psychologists have received eight years of college or more and have earned a PhD or PsyD. They are required to have a license to practice different types of clinical psychology. They often have highly specialized knowledge in the fields of psychology testing and psychotherapy. Psychological tests are used to aid in understanding and diagnosing a problem, and to help develop treatment plans.
- Counselors (also referred to as psychotherapists) have typically received six years of college or more and have earned a master's degree (MA). After completing their degree, they are required to obtain a minimum of 2 years of direct supervision with clients to receive their independent license. Counselors have specialized knowledge in the areas of counseling, psychotherapy, community resources, and developing treatment plans. Some counselors (such as myself) also gain extensive knowledge with psychological testing and are permitted to you use this knowledge with supervision.

Please remember, the above descriptions are only meant to highlight some of the similarities and differences between three different types therapists. There are certainly other kinds of therapists, such as [social workers](#), with which you may want to familiarize yourself. Hopefully

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you can take this knowledge with you and apply it to your search for a therapist that best matches your needs.