

By Catherine Findley

Therapy, also known as individual therapy, psychotherapy or counseling, is a process through which you talk about your life, thoughts and feelings in order to gain greater self-awareness and make positive changes in yourself and/or your life or relationships. Some types of therapy can take place in a short, limited time frame with specific goals. Other types utilize a longer process to support deeper change. Often there is some event, like a death in the family, a divorce, or a job loss; a situation, like fighting in a relationship; or a lasting negative feeling, such as sadness, anger, or fear that leads someone to seek therapy.

Therapists are professionals specifically trained to listen attentively, and they are proficient in techniques to help people with their problems. Therapists usually have advanced degrees in Social Work, Marriage and Family Counseling, Personal Counseling or Psychology. They are individuals who have chosen to focus their careers on helping other people reach their goals and/or live happier lives. A therapist is your partner, someone who is on your side and wants what is best for you. They are also objective and do not have a personal stake in your life that may cloud their judgement, as might be the case with a friend or family member. Therapy is a true investment in your happiness and well-being!

A Good Therapist Should:

- offer a safe, confidential environment
- offer you an opportunity to think, talk, and receive feedback about yourself, your life, and your feelings
- listen to the way you feel and how this affects you and others
- accept the way you are without judging you
- help you identify goals for yourself and how you might achieve them
- help you to make the changes you desire
- create a positive therapeutic relationship with you
- understand that it is not always easy to talk about problems and to express your feelings
- work with you towards improving your well being
- provide his/her undivided attention
- share other resources with you if needed and appropriate

A Good Therapist Will Not:

- offer to 'cure' you
- judge you
- make decisions for you
- take advantage of you in any way
- spend time talking about their problems
- share what you talk about without your permission (unless your safety or others' is at risk).

CJFS provides confidential professional counseling, for individuals and families of every age and faith, by Licensed Clinical Social Workers. CJFS accepts Medicare, Blue Choice, ALL Kids and other insurance plans. For private-pay clients, a sliding fee scale is available. To learn more, contact Robin McMilin, 205.879.3438 or robin@cjfsbham.org.