

Quick Facts About Psychological Counseling

- In psychological counseling, patients with depression work with a qualified mental health care specialist who listens to them, talks, and helps them correct overly negative thinking about improve their relationships with others
- Psychological counseling for depression does not mean talking about your childhood

Treating Depression With Psychological Counseling

Psychological counseling has been shown to be just as effective as antidepressant medication in treating many patients with depression. Psychological counseling can be done individually (only you and a mental health specialist), in a group (a mental health specialist, you, and other people with similar problems), or it can be family or marriage therapy where a mental health specialist, you and your spouse or family members participate. More than half of the people with mild to moderate depression respond well to psychological counseling. While the length of time that persons are involved in counseling differs, people with depression can typically expect to attend a weekly hour-long counseling session for 8-20 weeks. If your depression is not noticeably improved after 6-12 weeks of counseling, this usually means that you need to try a different treatment for your depression. Psychological counseling by itself is not recommended as the only treatment for persons whose depression is more severe. Medication is needed for this type of depression, and it can be taken in combination with psychological counseling.

What Can You Do to Help Your Clinician Most Effectively Treat Your Depression With Psychological Counseling?

- Keep all of your appointments with the mental health specialist
- Be honest and open, and ask questions
- Work cooperatively with the mental health specialist (eg, complete tasks assigned to you as part of the therapy)
- Keep appointments with your primary care clinician and tell him/her how the therapy is working (eg, whether your depression is getting better or worse)