

mental health glossary



AN
(INEXHAUSTIVE)
A-Z OF ALL THINGS THERAPY
AND MENTAL HEALTH

Accountability

Taking ownership of one's actions, reactions and decisions, while being prepared to deal with their consequences.

ADHD

A neurodevelopmental disorder marked by dysregulated attention, impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity.

Alliance

The collaborative and trusting relationship between therapist and client.

Anxiety

A persistent feeling of worry, fear, or nervousness that can interfere with daily functioning

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Assessment

The initial phase of therapy involving gathering information about the client's history, symptoms, and goals

Autism

a neurodevelopmental condition marked by a different way of socializing, communicating, and navigating the world

Bipolar Disorder

A mood disorder characterized by extreme shifts between depressive lows and manic (or hypomanic) highs, affecting energy and decision-making.

Borderline Personality Disorder

A condition involving emotional instability, intense fear of abandonment and impulsive decisions, often as a way to cope with severe trauma in early childhood.

Boundaries

Guidelines defining the therapeutic relationship to maintain safety and professionalism.

Clinical Psychologist

A mental health professional who is trained in standardized assessments to diagnose and treat mental health disorders

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

A structured, time-limited therapy focusing on changing unhelpful thoughts and behaviors.

Compartmentalizing

A psychological strategy of separating thoughts and/or feelings to manage distress, which can lead to disconnection if overused.

Confidentiality

A foundational principle where the therapist keeps client information private, with exceptions if there is risk of harm.

Containment

Managing overwhelming emotions by temporarily setting aside distressing discussion until it feels safer to process.

Coping Mechanism

Strategies used to manage stress, emotions, or trauma; can be adaptive or maladaptive

Co-regulation

Supporting one another to manage emotional and psychological states, especially lower distress

Counselling Psychologist

A mental health professional who is trained to do psychotherapy and counselling with people using various approaches

Couples & Family Therapy

Therapy involving couples or multiple family members to improve communication and resolve conflicts.

Counter-transference

Personal feelings of the therapist that may come up during sessions, requiring processing and reflection.

Depression

A persistent sadness, loss of interest, fatigue, and changes in appetite or sleep.

Diagnosis

Identifying a mental health condition using standardized criteria when appropriate.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

A form of CBT that emphasizes emotion regulation, distress tolerance, mindfulness, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Eating Disorders

Mental health conditions marked by severe disturbances in eating behaviors and body image (e.g., anorexia, bulimia, binge-eating), often harming physical and emotional health.

Goal Setting

Collaboratively identifying what the client wants to achieve in therapy.

Grounding

Techniques that help connect a person to the present moment, often used to manage anxiety or dissociation

Group Therapy

A therapy format where individuals with similar concerns come together in a guided therapeutic setting

Holding Space

The therapist's act of being fully present, non-judgmental, and accepting while a client explores difficult emotions or experiences

Informed Consent

A process of educating the client about therapy, including risks, benefits, confidentiality, and consent.

Insight

Awareness and understanding of one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Internal Family Systems

A therapeutic approach that views the mind as composed of distinct "parts", each with its own role and perspective, working under the guidance of a core "Self" to achieve healing and balance.

Intervention

Therapeutic techniques or methods used to address issues identified in therapy.

Learning Disorders

Developmental differences that interfere with learning skills related to reading, writing or Mathematics that is independence intelligence

Narrative Therapy

An approach that helps individuals recognize they are experts of their own lives, re-author their personal stories, and separate themselves from their problems.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

A mental health condition marked by intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions) that disrupt daily life and cause significant distress.

Person-centred Therapy

A non-directive approach that emphasizes empathy, unconditional positive regard, and therapist authenticity

Play Therapy

An approach used primarily with children to help them express feelings and resolve issues through play.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

A disorder triggered by trauma, causing intrusive memories, hypervigilance, and emotional numbness, often disrupting daily functioning.

Processing

Working through thoughts, emotions, or memories in therapy to gain insight, reduce distress, and facilitate integration.

Psychodynamic Therapy

Therapy focused on exploring unconscious processes, past experiences, and unresolved conflicts.

Psychiatrist

A doctor who specializes in diagnosis and treating mental health conditions with biomedical interventions

Psychoeducation

Providing clients with information about mental health, coping strategies, or their specific condition.

Psychotherapist

A psychologist with at least a Master's degree, practicing one or more therapeutic approaches with clients.

Referral

Directing clients to professionals based on their needs

Reflection

A process of looking back on thoughts, feelings, and experiences to deepen understanding and insight.

Safety Plan

Working through thoughts, emotions, or memories in therapy to gain insight, reduce distress, and facilitate integration.

Schizophrenia

A chronic mental health condition that affects thinking, perception, emotions, and behaviour; often includes hallucinations or delusions.

Self-regulation

The ability to manage one's emotional and physiological responses, especially during distress.

Somatic integration

A body-centered therapy that explores the connection between the mind and body in healing trauma and emotional distress.

Termination

Ending of therapy, ideally when the client has met their goals or feels ready to discontinue.

Transference

When a client unconsciously redirects feelings from past relationships onto the therapist.

Trauma-informed approach

An approach that recognizes and responds to the impact of trauma, emphasizing safety, choice, and empowerment.

Triggers

Internal or external stimuli that evoke distressing emotions or memories.

Validation

Acknowledging and accepting one's feelings or experiences as understandable.

Window of tolerance

The optimal zone of arousal where a person can function effectively, think clearly, and process emotions without becoming overwhelmed (hyperarousal) or numb (hypoarousal).

IF YOU HAVE MORE WORDS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE ADDED TO THIS GLOSSARY, DROP US AN EMAIL AT

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with hope
and solidarity

