

## Ask Your Therapist

By Krishnabai, MSW, LICSW, the Ashby Center for Counseling

Have you ever gone to a party or a meeting and found yourself explaining in great detail the very basics of what you do for work? I have! I am so familiar with the world of psychotherapy that I sometimes forget that not everyone is! So for today I am going to talk about what therapy is, give some definitions, and try to make this part of my world a little bit clearer.

What is therapy? The word “therapy” is short for “psychotherapy” which means to treat mental or emotional problems, as opposed to physical or occupational problems.

What are the different kinds of therapists? Therapists differ in their training and backgrounds, and that influences their approach to therapy. My training as a **social worker** with a master’s degree in social work (MSW), means I see people in a social context rather than just having an issue which is theirs alone. A **psychologist** has a doctorate in psychology (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) and will help you understand how your mind works, sometimes by talk therapy and sometimes through psychological tests or psychological training such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. A **psychiatrist** has been to medical school, has an MD plus advanced training, and will examine your body to see if you need medicines to remedy a chemical imbalance. A **psychopharmacologist** is a psychiatrist whose entire specialty is prescribing medications for patients. **Drug and alcohol counselors** are people specially trained in the arena of addictions to help people overcome this challenge.

Most practitioners employ many of the different approaches from various fields to help their clients although only psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and psychopharmacologists can prescribe medicines.

Who goes to therapy? People do their best every day to figure out how to navigate through Life, but sometimes the ways we cope stop working, or we need a different point of view, or we just run out of tools or options or folks who are willing to listen to us. And then there are those things we don’t want other people to know about us. The byline I use for the Ashby Center for Counseling is “Sometimes you just need an objective, professional person to talk to”.

In the next few columns I will talk about some of the common reasons why people go for help: depression, anxiety, substance dependence and abuse, marital and relationship problems, grief, medications, stress reduction, isolation in the rural landscape, aging, and pet loss. I invite questions of a general, NOT PERSONAL nature. If I can include them in one of my topics, I will do so. For example, a questions such as “How long is it OK to grieve?” is helpful to everyone, but giving details about someone’s situation “My next door neighbor’s daughter ‘Mary’ is a drug addict and blah blah blah” and asking for specific advice is not.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information.

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