



Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is psychology?**

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour. This involves both overt behaviour (the things you actually do) and covert behaviour (the things you think and feel). Psychologists generally employ a model that tries to take into account and understand all aspects of a person's life (i.e. the biological, social, contextual and psychological aspects) in order to help them achieve desired change.

Psychological therapies are used widely in many different types of settings. Psychologists are trained to work with people individually, in couples, group settings, with children and families and with organisations.

Psychologists endeavour to assist people develop the skills to cope better and overcome difficulties they are experiencing in their life. They can also assist people to develop their potential further in areas of their life, such as career and relationships.

- **What's the difference between a psychologist and a psychotherapist or counsellor?**

Psychologists have done extensive formal training (6-8 years) in psychology and have been trained to use scientific measures in their work. This means that they are often focussed on outcomes and using the most effective techniques for change available. Psychotherapists and counsellors have generally trained from 1-3 years and have a variety of backgrounds.

- **How many sessions will it take?**

It is very difficult to proscribe the exact number of sessions that someone may require. The psychologists at *Hope Psychological Services* are committed to providing the type of intervention that best suits the needs of the individual. Some people come for one session to talk through something on their mind, while others continue to see a psychologist for a number of years. And of course most people fit somewhere in between. For the most common problems (i.e. depression and anxiety) it is usual for most people to attend between 6 and 18 sessions.

- **How does Medicare apply to private psychology consultations?**

From November 2006 the federal government made provision for the public to access rebates for private psychological consultations. In order to use the Medicare rebate system you need to be referred by a GP. This is essential as the GP (not the psychologist) has the responsibility for linking you up with the Medicare system. Your GP will complete a Mental Health Care Plan which will be

either sent to the identified psychologist or you will be given the plan to bring with you on your first consultation.

- **How many psychological sessions am I eligible to access under the Medicare rebate system (Better Access to Mental Health Care Initiative)?**

From 1st January 2013, eligible individuals can receive a maximum of 10 (6 + 4) individual services in a calendar year. Your referring G.P. will assess your progress after the first six sessions. For further information you can visit the Medicare website: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au.

- **What happens in therapy?**

Psychological therapy is a two way process which centres on moving towards specific goals. The first session is about understanding your current difficulties and agreeing on treatment targets with your therapist. For example you may want to overcome feelings of sadness and a lack of enjoyment related to depression. Perhaps you would like to feel in control of your life rather than be consumed by worry. It can be helpful to think about your expectations from therapy and raise any concerns that you have with your therapist.

Evidence-based research shows that therapy works best when you attend regularly and give some thought to what you want to discuss during each session. The type of therapy offered by *Hope Psychological Services* asks you to practice skills and strategies between sessions. People who do this generally get more out of therapy.

- **What is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)?**

CBT examines the interaction between your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It is a form of therapy that was pioneered by Aaron Beck and has been shown to be a highly effective evidence-based treatment for many types of problems. There is considerable scientific research published about the effectiveness of CBT for many psychological issues, including both depression and anxiety. For more information regarding CBT refer to www.beckinstitute.org.

- **What are your confidentiality rules?**

Psychologists are bound by the Psychologists code of ethics. This can be found here www.aps.org.au. With regard to confidentiality at *Hope Psychological Services*, all therapy discussions are confidential with the important exception that if you are at risk of harm from yourself or to someone else we may need to break confidentiality. The third limitation on confidentiality is in relation to court orders. Should any of these situations be relevant to you, your psychologist will discuss them with you.

- **Is therapy only for people with serious emotional problems?**

Although therapy can be beneficial for people who do have serious emotional problems, it is also helpful for people with everyday concerns such as adjustment or phase of life issues.

- **Must therapy be a last resort?**

Most of us do not think that we have to experience a heart attack before we can see a doctor; it is OK to go if we merely have a sprained ankle. The same applies to therapy - you don't have to have the emotional equivalent of a heart attack to see a psychologist. By working with a psychologist you can often get back on track much faster and save yourself a lot of unnecessary distress in the future.

- **Do you have a cancellation policy?**

Hope Psychological Services is committed to supporting clients and we understand that sometimes unexpected challenges occur and sessions may need to be rescheduled. Under normal circumstances if *Hope Psychological Services* is provided adequate notice, sessions can be rescheduled at no cost to clients. It is important, however, to understand that session availability is limited and sessions cancelled without sufficient notice disadvantage clients who otherwise may have used that time.

It is for this reason that *Hope Psychological Services* subscribes to the guidelines established by the APS and reserves the right to charge a cancellation fee to clients for sessions that they fail to attend or cancel without sufficient notice. Sessions cancelled or not attended **within 48 hours** notice will incur a cancellation fee of **\$40.00**. Fees are payable at the time of session with cash, cheque or the use of EFTPOS facilities.