

General Practitioner (GP)

Best starting point for someone seeking professional help.
A good GP can:

- Make a diagnosis
- Check for any physical health problem or medication that may be contributing to the depression or anxiety, or may affect your treatment
- Provide information and discuss available treatments, taking your preferences into account
- Prescribe medication
- Work with you to draw up a Mental Health Treatment Plan so you can get a Medicare rebate for psychological treatment
- Refer you to a mental health specialist such as a psychologist or psychiatrist
- Schedule regular appointments to check how you are going

Mental Health GP

In Australia, doctors don't need any special training in mental health to practice as GPs, **BUT**

- Some have more expertise and specialisation in mental health

GPs with mental health training or expertise would be categorized as a 'Mental Health GP' and can offer more expert services if you are seeking help for mental health concerns.

You can determine this by consulting with the practice or talking to the GP about their relevant experience.

Counsellor

A counsellor is a trained, objective professional with whom you can build a healing and trusting relationship.

- They are trained to offer different types of assistance; most frequently talking-based styles of therapy.
- Counselling is a process of talking about and working through your personal problems.

There are many qualified counsellors who work across a number of different settings:

- Training involves a 2-year Diploma of Counselling or similar bachelor's degree
- Some counsellors may not be eligible to be registered with Medicare to qualify clients for a rebate

Psychologist

Psychologists are registered professionals focussed on providing psychotherapy (talk therapy) to help patients.

- You don't need a referral from a GP or psychiatrist to see a psychologist **BUT** you'll need a Mental Health Treatment Plan from a GP to claim Medicare rebates.
- Psychologists can also diagnose mental health disorders if necessary.
- Psychologists are **NOT** medical doctors, therefore **CANNOT** provide medication.

Registration as a psychologist requires:

- 4 year accredited university degree and
- 2 year Masters degree or work-based supervision program

Clinical Psychologist

Clinical psychologists are a specialised type of psychologist who have undertaken an additional clinical registrar program

- Similar to psychologists, they **DO NOT** prescribe medication, but focus on psychological therapies instead

A clinical psychologist can be of particular help when a condition:

- Is complex or difficult to diagnose
- Involves suicidal ideas or plans
- Isn't responding to standard treatment through your GP or another mental health professional

As part of their work, a clinical psychologist may help you to manage a long-term mental health condition and liaise with a broader team of allied health professionals.

Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have undergone further training to specialise in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions.

- You will need a referral from a GP to see a psychiatrist and claim Medicare rebates

Psychiatrists can prescribe and monitor medication, provide psychological treatment, and make other psychiatric assessments.

Psychiatrists specialise in complex mental health disorders, particularly if they are severe and hospital admission is required. E.g., Severe depression and anxiety, bipolar disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia, OCD, eating disorders, personality disorders

If you are considering a professional support session please read MHM's Profile of a Good Support and Professional Support Sessions document.

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Professional Support Sessions

Pre & Post Actions



BEFORE YOUR SESSION

There are a range of actions we encourage you to do before your session with a mental health professional.

Have an idea of what you want out of your session

Having the knowledge of what outcomes you want from your visit may help give you the confidence to engage in the right way with your mental health professional.

Write a list of things you would like to bring up in your visit

Take some time out in the days leading into your session to write down some things that are in your thoughts or are concerning you. This way you will not forget the things you wanted to acknowledge in your session. Let your practitioner know that you are prepared with some questions too.

Ask some logistical questions

As questions around payment methods, appointment timings, and how frequent you can book in appointments.

Make note of any or all medications you are taking

This will give the therapist a chance to get a grasp on your medication intake and give you a second opinion on the right dosage amount if they are qualified to do so.

Find solace in the fact that your session is kept confidential

Know you can open right up to your practitioner and take comfort in knowing that what is said in that room, stays in that room. The only way your clinician can break patient doctor confidentiality is if they believe your life or someone else's life is in danger, if you give written or verbal consent, or it has been subpoenaed in a court of law. Other than that it remains completely confidential.

Accept you may experience different emotions and feelings

Acknowledge the feelings you are experiencing and try not to protect yourself from them or run away. Log your feelings in a diary or journal so you can relay that to your practitioner in your next visit. But allowing yourself to sit with your emotions before you get into your self-care, will increase your emotional tolerance and help build your mental resilience.

Remember, you may not connect with the first therapist you see

Every individual is different, just as every mental health professional is different. Find that clinician you can connect with and trust. If you do not connect with the first one you engage with please do not give up, ask to see another or get a second opinion, through your EAP or GP.

1. What is the main reason for making the appointment?

2. What changes have you identified in yourself compared to what you are usually like? (I.e. How you usually think, act and feel)

3. What do you want to take away from the session? (E.g. Strategies to manage stress or anxiety)

4. Outline any questions you want to ask your mental health professional during the session?

5. Outline any medication/s you are taking or have taken previously to manage your mental health or mental illness?



Psychiatrists are medical doctors, **psychologists** are not. **Psychiatrists** prescribe medication, **psychologists** can't. **Psychiatrists** diagnose illness, manage treatment and provide a range of therapies for complex and serious mental illness. **Psychologists** focus on providing psychotherapy (talk therapy) to help patients. A **counsellor** is a trained, objective professional with whom you can build a healing and trusting relationship. They are trained to offer different types of assistance; most frequently talking-based styles of therapy. **Counselling** is a process of talking about and working through your personal problems.

AFTER YOUR SESSION

Just like before your session there are a range of actions we encourage you to do after your session with a mental health professional.

Keep notes on how you feel post session

Don't try and hide emotions from yourself. Make a note of your feelings and don't over think or over analyse yourself. Give yourself a positive pat on the back as you may have just shared your "inner world" with them. Just know that is ok to feel a little strange, uncomfortable and vulnerable after divulging that information with them.

Action any self-care, reading or resources

Makes sure you action any self-care or reading of resources that the clinician may have given you. This might include things like mindfulness, reframing and mindset techniques, gratitude journaling, or reading of relevant material. These are actions that you may not of done in the past, but if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got. Have an open mind to better managing your mental health.

Know that some of your immediate reactions will pass

You may have just unloaded a lot of pent up emotions and feelings of discomfort. This may lead you to feeling vulnerable, just know that this is very normal. Just know that you are changing the way you are feeling which is only going to benefit your mental health in the future.

Ask for resources or actions to take away

Let your therapist know that you would like some resources and or actions to take away to implement after your session. This will give the practitioner the confidence that you really want to better manage your mental health. Some actions that they may get you to do could feel foreign or strange at first, but it is important to remember you may need to action new ideas, activities, hobbies etc to get the best outcome for yourself.

Don't give up

If your first visit wasn't the desired experience, don't give up. Look at employing another clinician's services. Every individual is different as is every therapist. It may take you multiple practitioners until you find the right one for you.

Book your next session

Ensure you book in your next session to continue your mental health journey. Taking a proactive approach will assist you in better managing your mental health. Research tells us that early intervention leads to better outcomes.

You may feel a roller coaster of emotions

Throughout your seeking professional help journey, there may be times you feel great and some days not so brilliant. Firstly, give yourself some positive reaffirmation that you are doing the right thing and sometimes change can be uncomfortable. Then, challenge these uncomfortable perceptions with the fact you are bettering yourself and that you may need to move outside of your comfort zone to achieve your goals.

1. Write down aspects that will make up your self-care plan. (E.g. Exercise, sleep, nutrition, talking to others, sunlight, gratitude or mindfulness)

2. Write down who makes up your support network. (E.g. Friends, family, fellow worker, community group, professional, company EAP or anything else that works for you)

**If you don't have a positive social support network that is ok but please know you are not alone. Please refer to our 'Profile of a Good Support Network' Resource and utilise our MHM Support Network Toolbox on the resources section of our website.*

3. Write down strategies you have learned and what you need to work on implementing in your life from the session. (E.g. Different mindsets, coping strategies, behaviours, habits, structures or routines)

4. Book and write down your next session date.



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Profile of a Good Support



This resource was developed to provide clear, simple, effective information when being a support. It will identify key areas that you need to action to ensure you are providing best practice support for the people around you. It also provides you the key areas to identify when you are looking to build or maintain a positive support network for yourself. This resource can be utilised in any way you feel it would benefit you, both when being a support and when seeking support.

Non-judgemental

Allow the person to talk freely about their problems, and see their struggles from their point of view.

Don't dismiss their struggles

It may not seem like a huge problem to you, but it may be causing that individual a lot of angst. Be respectful of what is affecting them. Acknowledge their struggles and let them know they are not alone.

Trustworthy

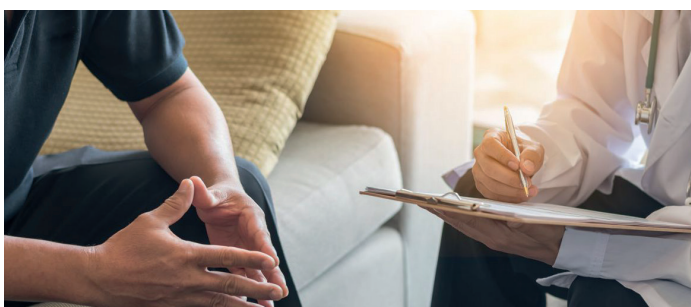
The individual you are supporting may delve into their inner feelings with you. Let them know that it will remain confidential between you and them. The only time confidentiality can be breached is if your life or their life is at risk, if they give you written or verbal consent, or if it is subpoena in the court of law.

Ask them what you can do to best support them

When supporting someone, it's not about telling that individual what to do. Ask them how you can best support them. That may give you a better indication on how you can help them through their struggle.

Be reliable

Be consistent with your support. You may not be there for them 24/7 but give them the reassurance that you'll be there for them consistently and give them other options (other social and/or professional support) if you cannot be reached. (Please refer to our MHM Support Network Toolbox – <https://www.mentalhealthmovement.com.au/resources/supporting-others>)



Give individuals your time

Affording people your time is an enormously powerful thing to do and can be a great way to support someone better. Not being preoccupied whilst someone is opening up to you (i.e. looking at your phone, needing to be somewhere else, not active listening etc) can lead to that individual being more comfortable opening up to you.

Allowing individuals to feel secure when opening up to you and talking about their problems, will help you to get them the most appropriate support.

Encourage & link individuals to appropriate support

Your job as a support is not to tell the individual what to do, it is not to diagnose, and it is not to try and solve or fix their problems. It is to identify any change in what they are usually like and start the conversation with them, a change is worth a check in. Your role is then to help link them into appropriate support depending on their change, challenge or adversity.

CRISIS

If their life or someone else's life is in danger, you **MUST** call professional help.

Lifeline 13 11 14, Emergency 000 or EAP Crisis Line
Don't leave them alone, reduce access to means and harm, connect them to family / social support and self-care and debrief yourself.

Don't diagnose or tell individuals what to do

Our job as a support is not to provide answers, solutions or diagnosis. Your role is to provide care, support & help link them into further services and supports. You do not have to have all the answers or solutions and you do not have to be a mental health professional. If it is out of your expertise or experience, please refer the individual you are supporting to appropriate professional and clinical support.

Note: If you would like further information on how to start and hold conversations around supporting a family member, fellow worker or loved one who may be going through a mental health struggle, please refer to our MHM Support Scaffold via <https://www.mentalhealthmovement.com.au/resources/supporting-others>

Your Support Network

Self Support

(Coping strategies, mindsets, hobbies etc)

1.
2.
3.

Crisis Support

(Lifeline, 000, Suicide Callback, C.A.T.T)

1.
2.
3.

Community Support

(Sporting clubs, church, Men's Shed, She Shed, rotary club etc)

1.
2.
3.

Family Support

(Partner, kids, parents etc)

1.
2.
3.

Professional and Clinical Support

(EAP, GP, Psychologist, Psychiatrist etc)

1.
2.
3.

Work Support

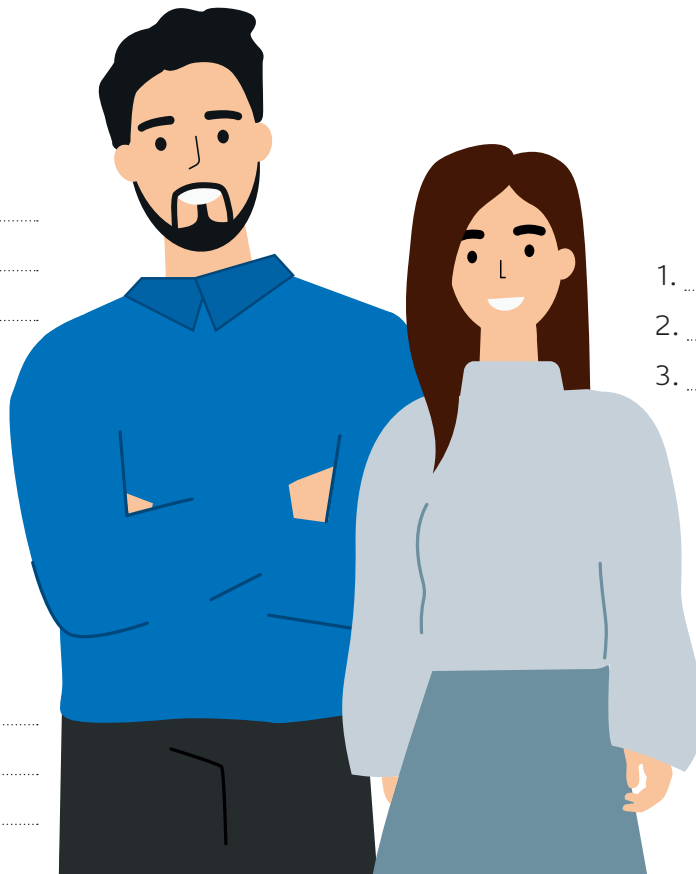
(Co-workers, managers, supervisor, EAP, peer supporters etc)

1.
2.
3.

Friendship Support

(Friends, local barrister, sporting teammate etc)

1.
2.
3.



This activity is designed to help develop your personal support network. Please identify specific supports that will fit into each of these categories and write them down. Doing this will give you a range of options that you can reach out to and use in your time of need. How you're feeling and what you're experiencing will dictate the support you need and that's why having a range of options is important.

Who makes up your support network?

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