



A.B.N.: 63 236 216 860

Your Listener Counselling

Phone: +61 402 333 950

Email: mail@johncuturilo.com.au

Web: www.yourlistener.com.au

Which professionals help with mental health concerns?

Counsellors/psychotherapists

- ▶ Mood concerns: depression, anxiety, anger, and similar.
- ▶ Trauma (single-event and complex).
- ▶ Relationship problems (including for couples).
- ▶ Adjusting to major life changes, including grief.
- ▶ Addiction and habit change.
- ▶ Alternatives to traditional talk therapy: play therapy, art therapy, music therapy, and similar.
- ▶ Life skills development: communication, personal organisation, motivation, and setting and achieving goals.
- ▶ Personal development: identity, meaning, self-confidence, and growth.
- ▶ General emotional and social support.

Psychologists

- ▶ Assessments (diagnostic, educational, developmental, personality, intelligence, forensic, and similar).
- ▶ Treatment of severe mental illnesses and symptoms: psychosis, severe delusions, depersonalisation, derealisation, personality disorders, eating disorders, and similar.
- ▶ Any concern that may involve a person losing control of their actions or body (e.g. losing consciousness or dissociation).
- ▶ Evaluation of whether a person is considered legally competent.

Psychiatrists

- ▶ Prescribing medicine for mental health concerns.
- ▶ Assessments (diagnostic, educational, developmental, personality, intelligence, forensic, and similar).
- ▶ Treatment of severe mental illnesses and symptoms: psychosis, severe delusions, depersonalisation, derealisation, personality disorders, eating disorders, and similar.
- ▶ Any concern that may involve a person losing control of their actions or body (e.g. losing consciousness or dissociation).
- ▶ Evaluation of whether a person is considered legally competent.

All are expected to...

- ✓ Practice evidence-based psychotherapy.
- ✓ Actively help clients to find solutions to personal concerns.
- ✓ Be trained in risk assessment and the prevention of harm.
- ✓ Practice competently and act in clients' best interests, consistent with accepted standards.
- ✓ Provide a calm and non-judgemental psychological environment so that clients feel safe regardless of their demographics or personal experiences.
- ✓ Know their own limitations and refer clients to other practitioners if their needs are outside of their scope.



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What do all the titles mean?

Psychiatrists are trained in both general medicine and psychology. They can diagnose mental illnesses, provide psychotherapy, advise other practitioners on treatment, provide testimony in legal settings, and unlike the other practitioners, administer medicine and other physiological treatments. "Psychiatrist" is a protected title; one must have completed minimum qualifications and hold a licence. They are usually engaged to help when a person's problems are so severe that they stop them from living life normally and caring for themselves (which usually means they have a mental illness), and medical treatment is necessary. Examples might be debilitating depression and anxiety, schizophrenia, personality disorders, and phobias.

Psychiatrists must be registered with the Medical Board of Australia: <https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/>

Psychologists can not administer medical treatments, but provide psychotherapy, advise on treatment, and may provide testimony and diagnose mental illnesses depending on their specialisation. They also must have completed minimum qualifications and hold a licence. Psychologists help with a broad variety of personal problems, often working with severe cases of mental illnesses alongside psychiatrists, but also often working with challenges that are not illnesses.

Psychologists must be registered with the Psychology Board of Australia: <https://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/>

Counsellors and psychotherapists provide therapy without diagnosing or using medical treatments. At the time of writing, these titles are not protected, meaning that while they are liable for their services, there are no minimum qualifications that they must hold to practice and they do not require a licence. There are private organisations that accredit members, and currently we are working to develop standards which may involve licensing. Counsellors and psychotherapists are quite diverse, and they help with the most common problems for which people seek therapy.

Counsellors and psychotherapists are usually registered with the Australian Counselling Association (<https://theaca.net.au/home>) or the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (<https://www.pacfa.org.au/>).



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How do you choose a professional?

The more qualified and regulated professionals described also help with issues addressed by those less so. However, this does not mean that all clients are best referred to one type of professional. Your choice of practitioner depends on the severity of your problems, your needs and preferences, and the practitioner's competence, therapeutic style, and personal qualities — which have a major influence on how well they work with you. For example, I as a counsellor regularly help clients experiencing problems such as depression, anxiety, and trauma, with which a psychologist or psychiatrist may also help. However, if a client was suffering trauma so severe that they experienced loss of memory or consciousness, I would refer them to a psychiatrist as this would be in need of medical attention. It is advisable to become familiar with different practitioners and their domains of competence so you can refer the right clients to the right people with confidence.

For essential therapy insights and myths dispelled, read my article: <https://www.yourlistener.com.au/post/finding-the-right-psychotherapist---and-what-to-expect-from-them>

Read more on my own philosophy and approach to therapy: <https://www.yourlistener.com.au/post/deeper-insight-in-to-my-services>