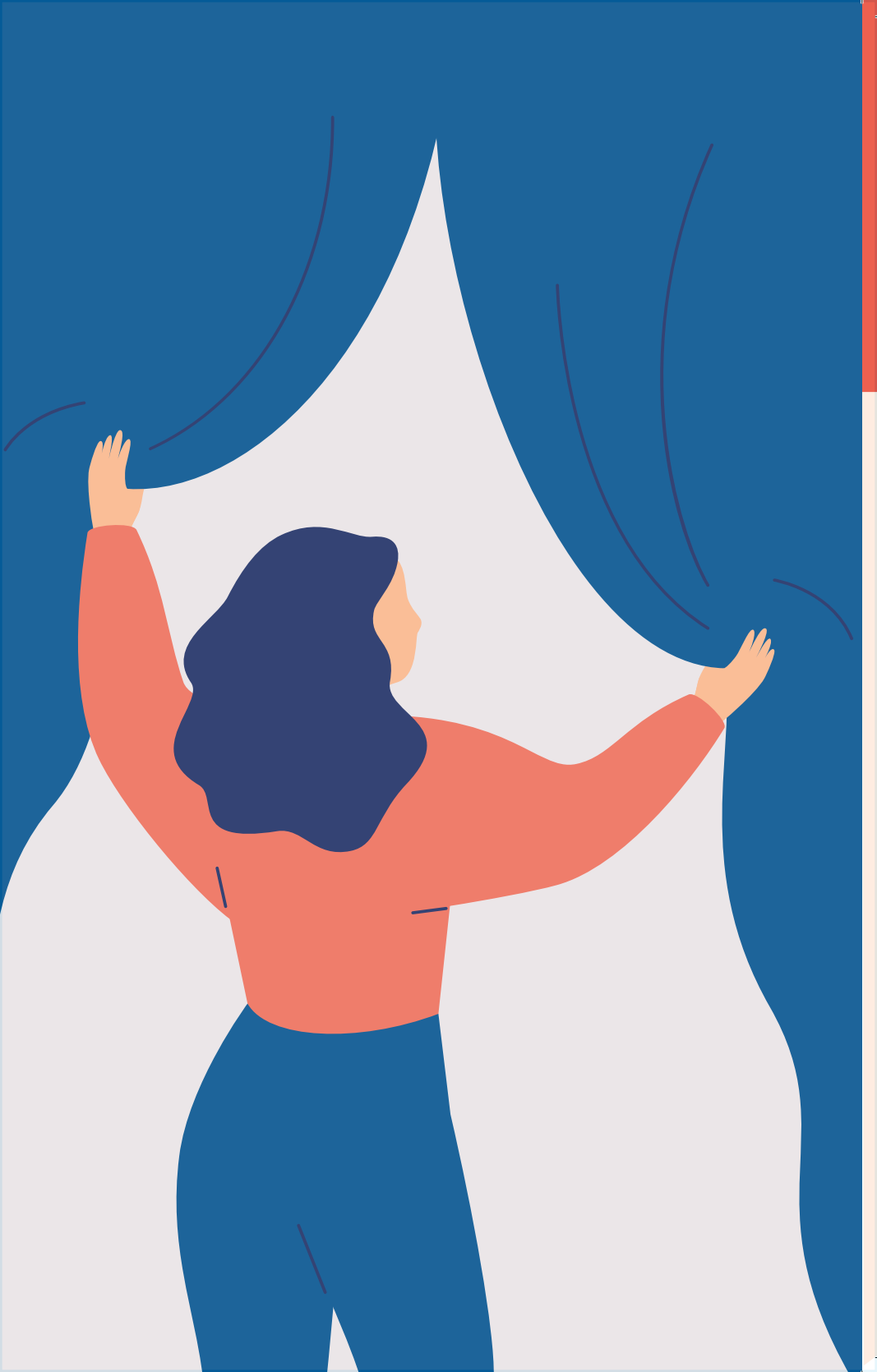


PSYCHO- THERAPY

ASKING
THE RIGHT
QUESTIONS





PSYCHO- THERAPY

In Quebec, psychotherapy is a reserved activity by law¹, which means that only authorized persons—psychologists, physicians and holders of a psychotherapist’s permit—may practice it. People who practice or claim to practice psychotherapy without being authorized to do so can be prosecuted for unlawful practice.

Psychotherapy is a treatment with recognized effectiveness. In passing the law governing this activity, the government wanted to better protect the public from people who are not qualified to practice it and who could, unfortunately, cause a great deal of harm.

The requirement for psychotherapists to have double titles

To simplify the wording in this brochure, we will use the word psychotherapist to refer to the professionals who are authorized to practice psychotherapy: psychologists, physicians and holders of a psychotherapist’s permit. However, the law stipulates that psychotherapists cannot refer to themselves with that title alone: they must use a double title such as “nurse psychotherapist.” Psychologists and physicians are the only professionals who can practice psychotherapy without using the title of psychotherapist.

1. Information on the law governing the practice of psychotherapy is available on the Ordre des psychologues du Québec website at www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/english.

WHAT IS PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy is a treatment designed to relieve suffering or difficulties of a psychological nature. It is for anyone—child, teenager or adult—who wants to make significant changes in their life in order to feel better. This can be done by bringing about changes in behaviour or emotions and helping the person to find answers to questions, make choices, or understand or cope better with a difficult situation.





WHEN SHOULD I CONSULT A PSYCHOTHERAPIST?

Like everyone, you may experience hard times or challenges that are difficult to overcome. Often, those closest to you (family, friends, colleagues) can provide the support you need to help you cope.

But sometimes the support of those around you isn't enough to get you out of a complicated or painful situation. When your distress doesn't improve, when the resources around you are not enough, or when your difficulties prevent you from doing your job and affect your personal life, professional help may be needed.

WHY UNDERTAKE PSYCHOTHERAPY?

People begin psychotherapy for many reasons.
For example:

- Insurmountable sadness
- Persistent worries
- An addiction
- A break-up
- Bereavement
- A career setback
- A difficult period in life

You don't need to know exactly why you're seeking help.
The psychologist or psychotherapist will assess your situation
and work with you to determine the most appropriate course
of action for your needs.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy is an active process. It requires a certain openness
to talking about yourself. The psychotherapist is not there to judge
you, but to help you understand yourself and find solutions to your
difficulties. No subject is off limits in psychotherapy.

It's very important to feel at ease with your psychotherapist and
to establish a relationship of trust. This relationship is built up
over time and is crucial to delivering maximum benefits. That's why
choosing a psychotherapist is an important step in your process.



WHO CAN PRACTICE PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy has been regulated by law since 2012.

Only psychologists, physicians and holders of a psychotherapist's permit are allowed to practice psychotherapy. Psychologists and physicians can practice psychotherapy without an additional permit.

The psychotherapist's permit is granted by the Ordre des psychologues du Québec. It is only granted to professionals whose training and skills meet stringent requirements established by law. There are psychotherapists who are members of certain professional orders (nurses, social workers, marriage and family therapists, sexologists, psychoeducators, guidance counsellors, criminologists and occupational therapists) and others who were already practising psychotherapy when the law came into force and whose qualifications have been recognized (grandfather clause). No one can use the title of psychotherapist alone, since the law requires the use of a double title, i.e. the professional title followed by the title of psychotherapist.

For example, a practitioner could be a "social worker-psychotherapist" or a "guidance counsellor psychotherapist."

To find out whether someone is authorized to practice psychotherapy, consult the Professionals Directory available on the Ordre des psychologues du Québec website at:

www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/verifier-le-droit-d-exercice.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PSYCHOTHERAPIST?

If someone suggests a psychotherapist to you, you can check whether that professional has been sanctioned by the disciplinary council of their professional order by calling the order to which they belong.

If you would like to consult with a psychotherapist in private practice, you can use the Ordre des psychologues du Québec's referral service, which lets you search by region and according to various criteria, such as the type of problem, the theoretical approach, the types of client served and the psychotherapist's gender.



This free service is available at
www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/trouverdelaide.

Feel free to contact more than one practitioner in order to choose the one you feel most comfortable with.



WHAT HAPPENS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY?



Initial assessment

The first step in the psychotherapy process is the assessment, a very important step that allows you and the psychotherapist to identify:

- Your needs
- Your expectations regarding psychotherapy
- Your strengths and your difficulties
- The nature and origin of the problem
- The history that led you to seek help
- The goals of the psychotherapy

The assessment meeting also allows you to learn about the psychologist's or psychotherapist's approach and to see if you are comfortable with both the practitioner and the approach. So don't hesitate to ask questions. This is the time to ask about the practitioner's:

Training

- Theoretical orientation and proposed intervention strategies
- Way of working
- Availability
- Fees

In-depth assessment

At the end of this assessment meeting, the psychotherapist may decide that the nature of the problem requires a more in-depth mental health assessment or diagnosis. The psychotherapist might then direct you to the most appropriate professional to conduct that assessment. Physicians, psychologists and certain other professionals are qualified to do this.

Consultation sessions

Treatment involves meetings in the form of an interview between you and your psychotherapist. These sessions usually last between 45 and 60 minutes, and are held at a frequency determined by you and your psychotherapist. In most cases, they are weekly.

WHAT ARE THE THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND WHAT IS THE RIGHT ONE TO CHOOSE?

In psychotherapy, there are four main theoretical approaches, also known as theoretical orientations or models. Most psychotherapists use more than one approach, or techniques drawn from different approaches. Feel free to ask the psychotherapist questions about the way they work with clients, and make sure that it suits you. During the initial assessment, the psychotherapist may refer you to a colleague with a different theoretical approach if that is more in line with what you're looking for. Here is an example to illustrate the different approaches.

The example of Julie

Julie is depressed. She has been suffering from insomnia for over a month. Every day, she argues with her partner. She doesn't feel like seeing her friends anymore and has lost interest in her usual activities.

Julie has had enough and decides to undertake psychotherapy.

The cognitive behavioural approach

In this approach, psychological difficulties are related to unhelpful thoughts or behaviours. In cognitive behavioural therapy, the psychotherapist uses a variety of techniques and strategies to help the client modify their behaviours, thoughts and emotions.

What behaviours and thoughts are bothering Julie? What is making her feel bad? The psychotherapist will work with her on her behaviours, habits and thoughts, and offer strategies to help her live a happier life.

The existential-humanistic approach

According to the existential-humanist approach, human beings have within themselves everything they need to realize their potential. Humanist psychotherapists work in the present moment, on the person's ability to be aware of their current difficulties, to understand them and to change their way of being or acting. They help their clients to believe in their potential and to make changes in their own lives.

How is Julie feeling today, right now? Why does Julie think these feelings are overwhelming her? How can she cope with them? The psychotherapist will try to help Julie make sense of her emotions and develop her own solutions.

The psychodynamic-analytical approach

This approach is strongly influenced by psychoanalysis and the concept of the unconscious. It draws a connection between the client's current difficulties and their past experiences and any repressed unresolved conflicts from their personal history. In this way, the client gradually becomes aware of the influence these conflicts have on their current behaviour, so as to understand them and gradually break free of them.

What is disturbing Julie so much? Is a recent event evoking painful memories? The psychotherapist will seek to understand Julie's history, her past conflicts, her fears and her traumas, which have shaped her perception of herself and of life. By looking at her past, Julie will be able to put it into perspective and better understand her situation.

The systemic-interactional approach

In this approach, personal problems are thought of as arising and persisting as a result of the interactions between the client and those around them (family, friends, colleagues, etc.). The aim of systemic therapy is to change the relationships between the client and the people around them. Often, this will involve meetings between the psychotherapist and important people in the client's life.

What is it about Julie's entourage and relationships that exerts so much influence on her? How might Julie's relationships be damaging? The psychotherapist will analyze Julie's relationships, her methods of communication and the systems that have been established between her and the people around her.



HOW LONG DOES PSYCHOTHERAPY TAKE?

The duration of a psychotherapeutic treatment varies. It depends, among other things, on the nature of the problem that led you to seek help and the goals you and your psychotherapist have set together.

It's important to remember, however, that making significant changes in your life can take time. Psychotherapy can last from a few weeks to several months, or even years in some cases.

CAN PSYCHOTHERAPY BE ACCOMPANIED BY MEDICATION?

Psychotherapy is a treatment in itself.

In some cases, however, a combination of treatments may be advisable.

In such situations, your psychotherapist may recommend that you undergo a medical evaluation. It's up to the doctor to decide with you whether to add medication to your psychotherapeutic treatment.

If you are having psychotherapy and using medication at the same time, it's in your best interests for your psychotherapist and doctor to work together.



HOW MUCH DOES PSYCHOTHERAPY COST?

The cost of psychotherapy varies from one psychotherapist to another. Authorized professionals in private practice are each responsible for their own fees. These are usually set per 45- to 60-minute session, and you should generally expect to pay between \$120 and \$180 per session.

Ask your professional about their fees and feel free to ask any questions you may have about the fees and other conditions.

ARE THERE ANY FREE PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES?

The services of a psychotherapist are available through the public health and education system, including elementary and secondary schools. There is no cost to you for these services. However, with resources being limited and in high demand in the public system, waiting times for psychotherapy can be long.

There are also community resources that can offer free or low-cost services to people with low incomes. Your local CLSC can give you more information.

ARE PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES REIMBURSED BY INSURERS?

Some private insurance plans or group insurance plans reimburse all or part of the cost of psychotherapy consultations. To find out whether your insurance plan covers these costs, contact your insurer directly.

Many psychological services are tax-deductible as health care services.

WHEN AND HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT?

Psychotherapy is regulated by law, and professionals authorized to practice it are subject to a code of ethics that they must follow.

Holders of a psychotherapist's permit are not members of the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, the entity responsible for issuing psychotherapist's permits.

If you are dissatisfied with your psychotherapist's behaviour or services, or if you feel you have been the victim of inappropriate conduct on their part, you can report it to the professional order to which they belong. If your psychotherapist is not a member of any professional order, you should contact the Office of the Syndic of the Ordre des psychologues du Québec. For more information on how to file a complaint, go to **ordrepsy.qc.ca/web/english/when-should-i-make-a-complaint**

The Ordre des psychologues is also responsible for taking legal action against the unlawful practice of psychotherapy.





For more information
about psychotherapy,
please see the
Ordre des psychologues du Québec
website at
www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/english

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