

## Types of Therapy



A-F G-L **M-P** Q-Z

[Marriage and Family Therapy](#)

[Mentalization-Based Therapy](#)

[Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy](#)

[Motivational Interviewing](#)

[Multicultural Therapy](#)

[Music Therapy](#)

**Narrative Therapy**

[Neuro-Linguistic Programming Therapy](#)

[Neurofeedback](#)

[Parent-Child Interaction Therapy \(PCIT\)](#)

[Person-Centered Therapy](#)

[Play Therapy](#)

[Positive Psychology](#)

[Prolonged Exposure Therapy](#)

[Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy](#)

[Psychoanalytic Therapy](#)

[Psychodynamic Therapy](#)

[Psychological Testing and Evaluation](#)

## Narrative Therapy

Reviewed by Psychology Today Staff

Narrative therapy is a form of counseling that views people as separate from their problems and destructive behaviors. This allows clients to get some distance from the difficulty they face; this helps them to see how it might actually be helping or protecting them, more than it is hurting them. With this perspective, individuals feel more empowered to make changes in their thought patterns and behavior and “rewrite” their life story for a future that reflects who they really are, what they are capable of, and what their purpose is, separate from their problems.

Michael White and David Epston developed this therapy type in the 1980s. They thought that an individual should see themselves as making a mistake, rather than seeing themselves as *bad*, per se. The individual is respectful of the self and does not point blame or judgment inward. A good narrative helps a person to process and clarify what they experience. In a paper that appeared in The Sage Encyclopedia of Theory in Counseling and Psychology, this modality can be useful for individuals.

There are core aspects of narrative therapy:

- The deconstruction of problematic and dominant storylines or narratives
- Breaking the narrative into smaller and more manageable chunks
- Rewriting the script of the problematic and dominant storylines
- Broadening your view and moving toward healthier storylines (this is also called the unique outcomes technique, which may help us better understand our experiences and emotions)
- What is true for one person may not be true for another person
- Externalizing the problem because you are not your problem

- A healthy narrative will also help us make meaning and see purpose

## Contents

- [When It's Used](#)
- [What to Expect](#)
- [How It Works](#)
- [What to Look for in a Narrative Therapist](#)

## When It's Used

Individuals, couples, and families can all benefit from narrative therapy. Those who define themselves by their problems, whose lives are dominated by such feelings as “I am a depressed person” or “I am an anxious person” can learn to see their problem as something they have but not something that identifies who they are.

This form of therapy can be helpful for people who suffer from these conditions, among others:

- [Anxiety](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Trauma](#)
- Addictions
- Eating problems
- [Anger](#)
- General difficulties with [emotion regulation](#)

## What to Expect

Your therapist will encourage you to direct the conversation by asking what you prefer to talk about and, on an ongoing schedule, checking to see if the topic, which is most likely a problem, is still something you are interested in discussing. After some time, your therapist will lead you to tell other, more positive stories from your life to help you discover inherent traits and skills that can be used to address your problems. The goal is for you to see how there are positive and productive ways to approach your life and your future when you stop identifying yourself by your problems.

## How It Works

In narrative therapy, the events that occur over time in a person’s life are viewed as stories, some of which stand out as more significant or more fateful than others. These significant stories, usually stemming from negative events, can ultimately shape one’s [identity](#). Beyond this identity, the narrative therapist views a client’s life as multitiered and full of possibilities that are just waiting to be discovered. The therapist does not act as the expert, but rather helps clients see how they are the experts regarding their own life and how they can uncover the [dreams](#), [values](#), [goals](#), and skills that define who they are, separate from their problems. These are the [buried](#) stories that can be rewritten and woven into the ongoing and future stories of their lives.

## What to Look for in a Narrative Therapist

A narrative therapist is a licensed mental health professional, social worker, or therapist who has additional training in narrative therapy through academic programs, intensive workshops, or online [continuing education](#). In addition to checking credentials and experience, you should feel safe and comfortable [working](#) with any narrative therapist you choose.

Screen your potential therapist either in person or over video or phone. During this initial introduction, ask the therapist:

- How they may help with your particular concerns
- Have they dealt with this type of problem before
- What is their process
- What is the treatment timeline

## References

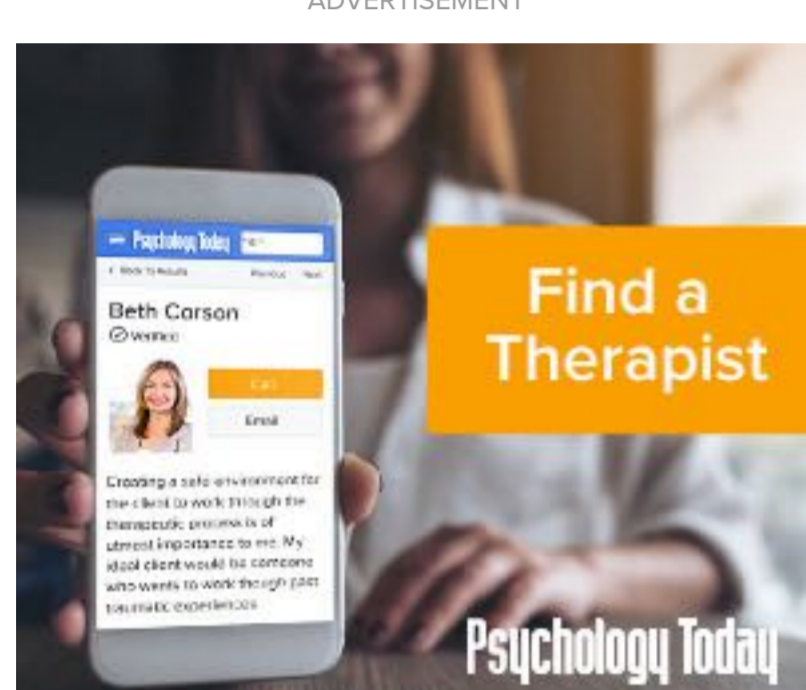
Dulwich Centre: What is Narrative Therapy?

Narrative Therapy Centre of Toronto: About Narrative Therapy

Rice, Robert H. (2015). "Narrative Therapy." The Sage Encyclopedia of Theory in Counseling and Psychology 2, 695-700.

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## Get Help

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## Connected Topics

[Identity](#)

[Productivity](#)

## Diagnosis

[Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)

[Social Anxiety Disorder \(Social Phobia\)](#)

[Agoraphobia](#)

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[Learning Disability](#)

## Test Yourself

[What's Your Personality Type?](#)

[Ambition Test](#)

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