

Psychotherapy with a Registered Psychotherapist

Psychotherapy is primarily a talk-based therapy and is intended to help people improve and maintain their mental health and well-being. Registered Psychotherapists work with individuals, couples and families in individual and group settings. Psychotherapy occurs when the Registered Psychotherapist (RP) and client enter into a psychotherapeutic relationship where both work together to bring about positive change in the client's thinking, feeling, behaviour and social functioning. Individuals usually seek psychotherapy when they have thoughts, feelings, moods and behaviours that are adversely affecting their day-to-day lives, relationships and the ability to enjoy life.

A psychotherapy client should be able to observe the following key elements over the course of their work with an RP:

- a conversation about the **benefits, risks and expected outcome(s)** of the psychotherapy and the opportunity to give their **informed consent**.
- a clearly communicated, mutually agreed upon **goal** or **plan** for the psychotherapy.
- each therapy session has a **clear beginning** and a **clear end** where problems or concerns are presented and discussed and outcomes are explored.
- the Registered Psychotherapist demonstrates the appropriate use of **boundaries** to create a **safe and confidential environment**.

These important elements are part of the effective **client-therapist psychotherapeutic** relationship that is the foundation of psychotherapy. Through this relationship, RPs are expected to:

- ensure that the client's well-being is at the forefront of the relationship;
- work with the client(s) to gather relevant information that will support the formulation of a plan for psychotherapy;
- continuously evaluate outcomes of each session and the impact on overall treatment goal(s);
- practise **safe and effective use of self** throughout the psychotherapeutic process; and
- adhere to the standards of practice for the profession.

Registered Psychotherapists will be competent to use a treatment approach or modality that is part of one or more of the categories of prescribed therapies, which include:

- Cognitive and Behavioural therapies
- Experiential and Humanistic therapies
- Psychodynamic therapies
- Somatic therapies
- Systemic and Collaborative therapies

Registered Psychotherapists are authorized to perform the **controlled act of psychotherapy**. By definition in the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, this involves **five elements**:

- i) treating
- ii) by means of psychotherapy technique
- iii) delivered through a therapeutic relationship,
- iv) an individual's serious disorder of thought, cognition, mood, emotional regulation, perception or memory that,
- v) may seriously impair the individual's judgement, insight, behaviour, communication or social functioning (*RHPA 1991*).

All five elements of this definition must be present in order for the controlled act to have taken place.

In the practice of psychotherapy, RPs use their knowledge, skills and judgement to determine whether their client's condition is serious, having considered the client's subjective assessment, the RP's own clinical assessment, and/or the assessment by another care provider.

It is important to note that all five of the elements must be present for an activity or intervention to fall within the controlled act of psychotherapy.

CRPO acknowledges the value and importance of the array of work done by unregulated providers who often establish genuine therapeutic relationships with their clients to improve health outcomes and well-being. The providers may use psychotherapy techniques as an ancillary part of their duties. However, the College does not consider these providers (many of whom work with vulnerable populations in the education, social services, victim services and community sectors) to be providing the controlled act of psychotherapy. Examples of the kind of interventions provided by unregulated providers include but are not limited to activities such as those that help to foster life skills, teach techniques for coping with acute situations, crisis intervention and de-escalation, and service coordination. Unregulated providers who believe that they are performing the controlled act may need to restrict their practice in order to ensure that they are not engaged in unauthorized practice.