

Dr. Peterson is a specialist in the area of life-span development. She has done a significant amount of research and treatment with women's issues beginning in early adolescence throughout late adulthood. She is currently licensed by the Minnesota Board of Psychology.

Dr. Peterson trained at the Fielding Graduate University where she earned a Doctorate of Philosophy in Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical Psychology. She also earned a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Her Bachelor's Degree from U.W. - River Falls was in Communicative Disorders. Dr. Peterson worked on the Lac Courte Orielles Ojibway Indian Reservation near Hayward, Wisconsin. Receptive vs. expressive language was the focus of her work with children on the LCO Reservation.

She brings with her 25 years of experience as a College Administrator, Clinical Psychologist, and Psychology Instructor. In her years of services within the Community College System, she taught a wide range of workshops and college level courses. Dr. Peterson has been a trainer for the U.S. Forest Service, Minnesota Workforce Center, and Displaced Homemaker Programs throughout Minnesota and Michigan. Dr. Peterson was a member of the Governor's Task Force for the Supreme Court focusing on Delinquency Prevention.

She is qualified to conduct comprehensive psychological evaluations on teenagers through late adulthood. She has a specialty in the assessment of pre-delinquent adolescent females. A brochure on Psychological Testing is available at her private practice location in Southeastern Minnesota.

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How Psychotherapy Helps People Recover From Depression



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How does psychotherapy help people recover from depression?

There are several approaches to psychotherapy -- including cognitive-behavioral, interpersonal, psychodynamic and other kinds of 'talk therapy' -- that help depressed individuals recover.

Psychotherapy offers people the opportunity to identify the factors that contribute to their depression and to deal effectively with the psychological, behavioral, interpersonal and situational causes. Skilled therapists such as licensed psychologists can work with depressed individuals to:

- pinpoint the life problems that contribute to their depression, and help them understand which aspects of those problems they may be able to solve or improve. A trained therapist can help depressed patients identify options for the future and set realistic goals that enable these individuals to enhance their mental and emotional well-being. Therapists also help individuals identify how they have successfully dealt with similar feelings, if they have been depressed in the past.
- identify negative or distorted thinking patterns that contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that accompany depression. For example, depressed individuals may tend to overgeneralize, that is, to think of circumstances in terms of 'always' or 'never.' They may also take events personally. A trained and competent therapist can help nurture a more positive outlook on life.
- explore other learned thoughts and behaviors that create problems and contribute to depression. For example, therapists can help depressed individuals understand and improve patterns of interacting with other people that contribute to their depression.

- help people regain a sense of control and pleasure in life. Psychotherapy helps people see choices as well as gradually incorporate enjoyable, fulfilling activities back into their lives.
- Having one episode of depression greatly increases the risk of having another episode. There is some evidence that ongoing psychotherapy may lessen the chance of future episodes or reduce their intensity. Through therapy, people can learn skills to avoid unnecessary suffering from later bouts of depression.

In what other ways do therapists help depressed individuals and their loved ones?

The support and involvement of family and friends can play a crucial role in helping someone who is depressed. Individuals in the 'support system' can help by encouraging a depressed loved one to stick with treatment and to practice the coping techniques and problem-solving skills he or she is learning through psychotherapy.

Living with a depressed person can be very difficult and stressful on family members and friends. The pain of watching a loved one suffer from depression can bring about feelings of helplessness and loss. Family or marital therapy may be beneficial in bringing together all the individuals affected by depression and helping them learn effective ways to cope together. This type of psychotherapy can also provide a good opportunity for individuals who have never experienced depression themselves to learn more about it and to identify constructive ways of supporting a loved one who is suffering from depression.

Can depression be treated successfully?

Absolutely. Depression is highly treatable when an individual receives competent care. Psychologists are among the licensed and highly trained mental health providers with years of experience studying depression and helping patients recover from it.

There is still some stigma, or reluctance, associated with seeking help for emotional and mental problems, including depression. Unfortunately, feelings of depression often are viewed as a sign of weakness rather than as a signal that something is out of balance. The fact is that people with depression can not simply 'snap out of it' and feel better spontaneously.

Persons with depression who do not seek help suffer needlessly. Unexpressed feelings and concerns accompanied by a sense of isolation can worsen a depression. The importance of obtaining quality professional health care can not be overemphasized.

What causes depression?

Changes in the body's chemistry influence mood and thought processes, and biological factors contribute to some cases of depression. In addition, chronic and serious illness such as heart disease or cancer may be accompanied by depression. With many individuals, however, depression signals first and foremost that certain mental and emotional aspects of a person's life are out of balance.

Significant transitions and major life stressors such as the death of a loved one or the loss of a job can help bring about depression. Other more subtle factors that lead to a loss of identity or self-esteem may also contribute. The causes of depression are not always immediately apparent, so the disorder requires careful evaluation and diagnosis by a trained mental health care professional.

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