

What treatment is available to me?

The most effective treatment for personality disorders involves meeting with a trained mental health clinician to talk over your problems.

These discussions are called counselling or psychotherapy and they usually focus on helping you develop strategies to cope better with situations, relationships, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

WHAT DOES TREATMENT LOOK LIKE?

Individual

Individual therapy involves seeing a clinician on your own for an agreed amount of time (e.g. 50 minutes, once a week). Therapy may be structured (follow the same pattern each week), unstructured (what you talk about each week may be left up to you), or a combination of both. Your clinician may help you identify problems, develop goals, ask you to talk about whatever comes to mind or even ask you to try some things outside the session. Different kinds of therapy work for different people. It's important to stick with it – it can take time to feel like things are changing. It may take a number of appointments over some weeks or even months for things to feel better.

Groups

Group therapy involves attending sessions with others who are having similar struggles to you. Groups usually consist of two clinicians and up to 10 group members who all work together to support one another. Groups often help people feel connected to others who are having similar experiences and provide a space to share experiences, learn new skills, deal with problems, and have fun. You may feel anxious about starting in a group – many people express feeling this way. Talk to the group clinicians about how you are feeling. It may help to ease some of your concerns.

WHAT ABOUT HOSPITAL TREATMENT?

Sometimes a short hospital stay can be helpful if things are getting really tough and you don't feel safe. A short stay can help you manage a crisis or difficult time so you can get back on track. Ideally, hospital stays will be planned and talked through with your doctor or clinician.

WHAT ABOUT MEDICATION?

If your doctor suggests taking medication, ask for information about it including the benefits and any possible side effects. If you don't understand some of the information, ask for more details. Medications do not usually treat the personality disorder, but they may help with other difficulties you are having at the same time. As with any medications, it is always best to take it as prescribed, and avoid suddenly stopping or changing the dose without talking to your doctor first.

The Project Air Strategy acknowledges the major support of NSW Health. The Project works with mental health clinicians, consumers and carers to deliver effective treatments, implements research strategies supporting scientific discoveries, and offers high quality training and education. Contact us at info-projectair@uow.edu.au or visit www.projectairstrategy.org