



# Types of Therapy

every connection matters™



## Mental Health as a Continuum

All too often is mental health viewed simply as the presence or absence of a condition that impacts negatively upon an individual's life. But this perspective is an oversimplification of a much more intricate experience.

Mental health is not a black and white state, where you are either mentally healthy or mentally ill. Just like with physical health, we each have days when we feel better, feel average, or feel worse. Viewing mental health from the perspective of being well or being unwell has the potential for individuals to reserve seeking support only until they feel they absolutely need to take action.

Think of all the actions that people take to maintain their physical wellbeing, to push for a higher level of health when they are already healthy, and to make small changes each day to see slight improvements. Being unwell is not the only time we consider improving physical health. The same must be done for mental health.

The idea of mental health as a continuum looks to provide a broader view of the human experience of mental health. It acknowledges both the negatives and positives, while viewing the human mind from a continuous linear perspective. This perspective offers a closer look into the differing states of wellbeing, which, in turn, allows for a deeper focus on certain signs and symptoms of each experience. This provides insight into even small shifts in mental wellbeing.

Noticing small shifts, regardless of what side of the continuum we sit, increases the potential for proactive steps to be taken whilst also providing a guide to the form of support we may need.

## The Four Core Zones

The mental health continuum commonly looks at four core zones; however, as it is a sliding scale there are also less defined areas in between each.

**Thriving:** individuals who are in this category will often feel "normal". They experience good sleep routines, participate in a healthy lifestyle, are capable of moving through difficult emotions, engage well socially, and exhibit usual levels of self-confidence and performance.

**Surviving:** those who find themselves in this category may experience a rise in irritability or agitation, nervousness, procrastination, sadness, or forgetfulness. This is often accompanied by a lack of sleep and energy, as well as difficulty in relaxing and enjoying social interactions.

**Struggling:** people who have reached the struggling phase are often progressing to a point of significant functional impairment. These individuals will be experiencing prolonged states of anger, sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, or worthlessness. The quality of their work/academics may have dropped significantly and they may withdraw from social situations. Sleep quality continues to decline.

**In Crisis:** those in crisis have reached the threshold of what may be considered a clinical disorder, resulting in persistent and severe functional impairment. They will likely be experiencing extreme difficulty in regulating emotions, possibly including panic attacks, constant feelings of being overwhelmed, depressive moods, and continuous fatigue. The individual's contact with reality may be disturbed and thoughts around self-harm or suicide could be increasing in intensity or severity.



CALL 1300 364 273 SMS 0401 33 77 11  
NZ 0800 000 657

[www.acaciaconnection.com](http://www.acaciaconnection.com)  
[info@acaciaconnection.com](mailto:info@acaciaconnection.com)



acacia EAP  
employee assistance program

Understanding this continuum is a great first step, but it is just as important to know what to do when you aren't living a life aligned with where you want to be.

### Types of Therapy

Acacia has a team of highly experienced EAP Professionals who can support you on your personal journey, regardless of where you are on the mental health continuum. What is asked of you is to be present and actively engaged in your support – you are, after all, the expert on yourself.

Our EAP Professionals take on a brief, solution-focused approach to support. The more minute details and unique style of the intervention or therapy itself vary across each professional. Some of the more common therapies you may engage in include:

### Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT works from the perspective that an individual's thoughts, feelings, physical experiences, and actions are all connected and, therefore, impact one another, both positively and negatively. The aim is then to view which negative experiences are leading to unhelpful behaviours and form plans to break these down and create more helpful alternatives. Treatment plans may include cognitive reframing, journaling, activity scheduling, behavioural experiments, or relaxation techniques.

### Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

ACT looks to support clients to live a life that is more consistently aligned with their values. It assists clients in utilising acceptance and mindfulness skills when they find themselves being impacted by uncontrollable experiences. ACT holds the view that most psychological suffering is caused by trying to avoid or remove unwanted experiences. In order to counteract this, ACT will guide clients through six core stages: acceptance, cognitive defusion, connecting the present moment, the observing self, values, and committed action.

### Mindfulness

The focus of an intervention that utilises mindfulness is on improving the client's awareness of thoughts and feelings, without analysis or judgement. When an individual is better able to identify without getting caught up in their negative thoughts and feelings, they have more control over how they respond to or interact with certain stimuli. Engaging in mindfulness can involve breathing exercises, guided meditation, imagery, sensory experiences, or grounding techniques.

### Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or EMDR therapy, is unique in the way that it does not rely on talk therapy as the previous therapies do. EMDR is a structured form of therapy that requires the client to focus briefly on traumatic memories while simultaneously engaging in rapid rhythmic eye movement which consequently reduces the emotional impact and vividness of the trauma.

The phases of EMDR treatment are sectioned up into history taking, client preparation, assessment, desensitisation, installation, body scan, closure, and finally assessing the progress of the intervention. The aim is for the client to complete the treatment with a sense of empowerment after gaining control over the trauma which once impacted them.

### Final Words

According to The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2020-2021, 61 percent of Australians took action to help manage their mental health. Be it becoming more physically active, engaging in activities you enjoy, or connecting with your EAP, let today be the day you take steps to support your mental health and wellbeing.



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