Introduction: A stepped care approach to talking therapies

Key messages

What are talking therapies?
Talking therapies help people understand and make changes to their thinking, behaviour and relationships in order to relieve distress and improve wellbeing.

What is stepped care?
A stepped care approach is directed at the best chance of delivering a positive outcome, ensuring the right level of support and therapy is offered to a person at the right time. The less intensive intervention that is likely to be effective is delivered first. At all levels of stepped care, people are supported by input from family and whanau, community services and appropriate cultural supports.
Levels and types of therapy

1. Early presentation of problems or distress
   - Service Level: Low-intensity
   - Examples: Early identification of vulnerability
   - Who: Primary health care and community practitioners

2. Mild to moderate presentations
   - Service Level: Low-intensity
   - Examples: Brief interventions including active monitoring, education, information, self-care.
   - Who: GPs and other health care professionals who have first contact with service users.

3. Moderate to severe presentations
   - Service Level: High-intensity
   - Examples: Evidence based therapies such as CBT, interpersonal therapy (IPT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), solution focused therapy.
   - Who: PHDs, NGOs, primary health care, and community practitioners.

4. Severe presentations and disorders
   - Service Level: Specialist
   - Examples: Specific structured therapies including CBT, dialectical therapy (DBT), psycho-therapy, family therapy.
   - Who: Mental health and addiction clinical staff (any profession) trained in evidence-based therapies.

5. Complex and long-term
   - Service Level: Highly specialised
   - Examples: Specialist psychological and multi-systemic therapies.
   - Who: Psychologists, therapists, psychiatrists and other health professionals with specialised training in psychological therapies.

Supportive environment and health promotion e.g. National Depression Initiative, Like Minds, self care, whānau ora, housing, employment, education, social network.

Specialist Cultural Interventions e.g. Māori, Pasifika, Asian.

Interface with secondary care

First point of contact
An example: stepped care talking therapies pathway

**Step 1: Assessment**
An assessment or screen to clarify the problem and need for therapy which may be brief at a GP level or comprehensive at a DHB level.

**Step 2: Matching**
Matching to the right level and type of therapy to ensure the needs and preferences of the person are being met.

**Step 3: Therapy**
The person receives the appropriate therapy, at the right time, at the right place.

**Step 4: Review**
Early review of therapy ensures therapy is effective, or there is a need to move to another level or type of therapy.
For further information and tools to support talking therapies visit
www.tepou.co.nz/letsgettalking