



Comparing and Contrasting Psychologists and Psychiatrists



Psychologists

- study and train for at least 6 years
- **cannot** prescribe medication but can offer a range of **psychotherapies** and counselling
- have no medical degree but may still work in hospitals in order to develop programs, counsel and support patients and their families
- may choose to work in one or more of a **range of fields**: child psychology, education, health, organisational psychology, vocational psychology, research, forensic psychology, sports psychology, counselling, etc.
- focus on **promoting well-being** as well as on supporting those with mental health concerns
- often deal with **more commonly experienced problems** such as stress, grief, everyday anxieties, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, etc.
- may be qualified to carry out psychological testing, e.g. IQ tests, vocational tests

Psychiatrists

- are doctors who, after completing their general medical degree, specialise in the study and treatment of mental illness, emotional disturbance and abnormal behaviour; they are therefore responsible for both medical and psychological treatment.
- need to study for 11-12 years after school. Usually they work as GPs for a while before specialising in psychiatry.
- may work in a hospital or psychiatric institution as well as in private practice
- **can prescribe medications** – one of the most important differences between them and psychologists
- can commit patients to a psychiatric hospital, but only in very clearly defined circumstances

• have a shared interest in human behaviour, well-being and the treatment of **mental illness**

• **clinical psychologists**, like psychiatrists, focus on the field of mental illness especially

• both employ **psychotherapies** (e.g. cognitive-behaviour therapy) in order to support their clients or patients

Quick Knowledge and Understanding Check

Fill the blanks below. Use the gap-fillers provided.

**cognitive-behaviour therapy • clinical • hospital • medications •
psychiatrist x2 • psychologist x2 • psychotherapy**



a A _____ can prescribe medication/s for a mentally ill person.

b Both psychologists and psychiatrists employ _____; in other words, non-medical psychological techniques in which patients are encouraged to talk through problems, identify faulty thought patterns and change their behaviours in systematic and reflective ways.

c An example of a psychotherapy is _____, in which both unhelpful thought patterns and problematic behaviours are addressed through personal interaction between the therapist and the patient or client.

d The kind of psychologist whose work is most similar to a psychiatrist's is a _____ psychologist. Although this professional works with the mentally ill, he or she cannot prescribe _____ such as antidepressants or anti-psychotic drugs.

e Widespread problems that all people are likely to face in the course of a lifetime, such as grief or stress, are more likely to be dealt with by a _____.

f Both psychologists and psychiatrists may work in medical institutions such as a _____ or in private practice.



g David has been deeply depressed for over a year and is beginning to feel as though he cannot bear to live on. He visits his GP, who is most likely to refer him to a _____.

h Rosie is concerned that her child is not coping well with school work and is struggling to make friends and feel a sense of belonging at school. She might consider seeking support from a child _____.