

Health psychology in applied settings

A guide for the public



- How can a health psychologist help me?
- What sort of work do they do?
 - How can I find out more?



How can a health psychologist help me?

What is a health psychologist?

Health psychologists are specially trained to help people deal with the psychological and emotional aspects of health and illness. They use their knowledge of psychology and health to promote general well-being and understand physical illness.

Health psychologists promote healthier lifestyles and try to find ways to encourage people to improve their health. For example, they may help people to lose weight or stop smoking.

Health psychologists also use their skills to try to improve the healthcare system. For example, they may advise doctors about better ways to communicate with their patients.

Who do health psychologists work with?

Everyone! Health affects everybody, so health psychologists work with people of all backgrounds and ages for example: patients, carers, families, healthy people and health care professionals, such as doctors and nurses. They may work with older adults, pregnant teenagers or people with a particular condition, such as back pain or irritable bowel syndrome.

Health psychologists work with people on a one-to-one basis, in groups, as a family, or at a larger population level.

Where do health psychologists work?

Health psychologists work in many different settings including the NHS, private practice, universities, communities, schools and organisations.

What sort of work do health psychologists do?

Helping people to lead a healthy life

- Health psychologists develop and run programmes which can help people make changes in their lives such as stopping smoking, reducing the amount of alcohol they drink, eating more healthily, and taking regular exercise.

Who do health psychologists work with?

- Some illnesses can be treated better if they are caught early. Health psychologists have worked to understand why some people do not go for screening or immunisations. They are finding ways to encourage people to have health checks for illnesses such as cancer or heart disease.
- Health psychologists are also finding ways to try to help people to avoid risky behaviours that may affect their health and well-being, such as unprotected sex.
- Health psychologists can also help to encourage regular teeth brushing or hand washing to prevent future ill health.

Conducting research

Health psychologists carry out research to answer questions such as:

- What influences healthy eating?
- How is stress linked to heart disease?
- What are the emotional effects of genetic testing?
- How can we change people's behaviour to improve their health?

At a glance

Health psychologists...

- are specially trained to help people deal with the psychological and emotional aspects of health and illness;
- work with people of all backgrounds and ages in many different settings;
- help people to change behaviour, e.g. to eat healthily or stop smoking, and live with illnesses such as diabetes, cancer or arthritis;
- use ideas from psychology to help them promote general well-being and understand physical illness; and
- work with people on a one-to-one basis, in groups, as a family, or with big populations.



Find out more at:

www.bps.org.uk/dhp



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