

DR GARRETT PSYCHOLOGY

What is a psychologist?

Firstly, you may be wondering what a psychologist does, and how they're different from a counsellor, psychotherapist, or psychiatrist. Have a read of [this link](#) on the NZ College of Clinical Psychologists website if you'd like more information. Psychologists provide talking therapy, not medication. They have extensive university training, often to a doctoral level, but at least a masters level, and are required to be registered, so are governed by the Psychologists Board and have to meet the requirements of the HPCA Act (which you can read more about [here](#)). Their interventions are based on a range of theories and scientific techniques, so how you may approach a problem with a psychologist can vary.

What therapy modalities do you use?

The main therapy I utilise is Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Essentially this looks at peoples thinking styles, and how they influence their emotions, behaviours, and difficulties. For example, people experiencing heightened anxiety often see the world in a more threatening way than others, and feel quite vulnerable. They tend to overestimate the threat of bad things happening, and envision them happening in a particularly catastrophic manner, and being completely unable to cope. Often, while these fears make sense in terms of that person's personal experiences and backgrounds, they are exaggerated and not in line with how things really are. By working on these biases in a number of ways (examining thoughts, changing how we approach situations, experimenting with fears), we can often produce substantial changes in the way we see things and feel. This is not a matter of "positive thinking", or "talking ourselves out of it", but genuinely examining these in a way that produces lasting change, and new ways of thinking that you genuinely believe. There is much more to this, but that is a very brief taster of what CBT is about. I also incorporate principles of Metacognitive Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Mindfulness amongst others. These all broadly revolve around looking at the way we engage with our thoughts, emotions, & experiences as a whole rather than trying to challenge each individual thought. I really like these approaches because with anxiety, the thoughts / worries are often not solvable, as they are fears that haven't happened yet and which we have little control over. And, even if we did solve a worry, the nature of worry is that another would just come up in its place. These approaches help you approach things like worry totally differently. Rather than trying to solve worries, or get rid of worries, you learn to let them be in the background but have much less of an impact on your life. It's absolutely fascinating how this works.

Hesitations / fears about seeing a psychologist

There are many reasons why a person may feel apprehensive about seeing a psychologist, and that's really common and normal. You can always contact me to ask questions, or attend an initial assessment session and see whether it might be right for you or not. If not, I can always guide you in the direction of other resources. Rest assured that our work is completely confidential. What you tell me stays private between us (unless there is a significant safety risk, but we can discuss that in more detail before proceeding). The sessions focus on YOUR goals and run at a pace that you are comfortable with. You don't need to answer any questions you don't want to answer, or talk about anything you're not comfortable with. Whilst I do ask if I can gather some information about your past, by and large the sessions tend to focus on the present, and practical strategies for what you can do in the here and now. I like to think I am non judgemental, and have heard most things before! Not much surprises me. I understand what it's like to feel stressed and anxious, and aim to provide a completely supportive, safe environment for you to talk to someone neutral.