

The Psychiatrist, Psychologist, and Psychoanalyst: The Differences Between the Three P's

The Psychiatrist

A psychiatrist is a **physician** who deals with mentally ill patients. Psychiatrists are MDs, so they can prescribe medication. As a result, they usually deal with clinical issues such as schizophrenia and manic-depression whose treatments tend to require medication.

The Psychologist

Psychologists, unlike psychiatrists, **are not MDs**, and they tend to deal more with emotional issues than with clinical issues. For example, a person experiencing low self-esteem would visit a psychologist rather than a psychiatrist, because they do not have anything physically wrong with them; they just need to talk things out. A person with schizophrenia would visit a psychiatrist, because they would need medication to correct the chemical imbalance in their brain.

The Psychoanalyst

Psychoanalysts follow Freud's theories that painful childhood memories contained in the subconscious are the cause of mental illness. Psychoanalysts are like psychologists in that they usually deal with emotional issues and do not prescribe medication. However, their approach is different from that of conventional psychologists. Psychoanalysis is a method of searching through a person's subconscious memories for the source of their current difficulties, rather than focusing on conscious memories. Psychoanalysts also tend to meet much more often with their clients. Rather than meeting only once a week (as is common with psychologists), they usually prefer to meet as often as three to five times a week.