

That's A Hard No

Transcript: S2 Mini4 "What Types of Mental Health Professionals are There?"

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Heather: Welcome to That's a Hard No, the podcast about saying no and setting boundaries

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Sarah: so you can become the authentic and empowered you, that this world needs.

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Heather: Before we start, a quick reminder:

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Sarah: While I am a licensed professional clinical counselor, this podcast is in no way a replacement for one on one therapy with a mental health professional. If you notice that content in this podcast triggers some big feelings, visit our website: hardnopodcast.com for mental health resources and other helpful links.

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Heather: In season two of that's a hard no we're making it a priority to dig deeper into the process of finding and utilizing the help you need, we want to take the time to discuss with our in-house expert, Sarah Saunders, what to expect from therapy and all of its intricacies.

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Heather: Hi Sarah.

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Sarah: Hi Heather.

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Heather: Now that we've discussed knowing when you may need to seek therapy and how to find a therapist How do we know they're the right type of mental health professional? There are so many different types of care providers. Can you break those down for us?

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Sarah: Heather you are so right, you hit the nail on the head. There are so many people that fall under this category. There's a lot of people out there with different credentialing, different certifications, and it can get really confusing. So I want to keep this as simple as possible. Just to give you guys a generalized idea of the umbrella of mental health. But again this is there are. It can be very detailed. This is just kind of your basic rundown, and so I'm going to be focusing on five specific mental health professions. So you have psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and therapists, social workers, marriage and family therapists. So psychiatrists specifically, they have a PhD level of education. Psychiatrists primarily deal with the physical brain and they prescribe medication. Some psychiatrists, they do provide talk therapy in addition to the medication. However, that's not their specialty and so it's very common that someone will work with the psychiatrist for the medication and another mental health provider for the therapy.

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Heather: Right, that makes sense.

That's A Hard No

Transcript: S2 Mini4 "What Types of Mental Health Professionals are There?"

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Sarah: And one of the things that I do think is important to note, and I use this gently and respectfully, but pills don't teach skills, and so it is important that, depending on the type of medication that we are receiving, that you're working with your psychiatrist alongside a mental health provider to ensure that you're also getting the tools and the skills that you need.

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Heather: Right: addressing the root causes, not just the symptoms.

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Sarah: Absolutely so. A psychologist also is a mental health professional that has a PhD level of education. They are trained to really evaluate a person's mental health by using very concrete clinical interviews and psychological testing and evaluation. So with a psychologist they often will diagnose someone and then they will refer them to a provider that can best serve their needs. However, there are times that they will provide treatment, but it's very specialized, and so what I mean by this is that their approach in their focus is very specific to the diagnosis itself, treating and managing those specific symptoms. So someone may be getting an evaluation or for anxiety or even autism, and so the psychologist is going to take a very linear approach to treatment that they're specifically going to work on reducing and managing those symptoms rather than really unpacking more of root causes.

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Heather: So they're focused on that specific issue, not everything else in your life that may also be contributing.

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Sarah: Exactly.

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Heather: Got it.

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Sarah: So then, you have counselors or therapists, which this term is usually interchangeable. They have masters level of education and these types of mental health professional use talk based treatment and have evidence-based training. So their goal is to really help overcome mental health challenges, life stressors and other obstacles that are interfering in some one's daily life. What's important to recognize is that, as I mentioned before, counselors and therapists and certain mental health professionals. They do have different certifications and trainings and specializations, and so, for example, for me, although I am a licensed professional clinical counselor, I have extensive background and training in marriage and family therapy as well as creative art therapy. So when I work so, I work with individual couples and families using a systemic perspective, while also using some of the creative art therapy techniques during our sessions together.

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Heather: Okay, interesting. This is fascinating. I've always wondered this. I've always tried to

That's A Hard No

Transcript: S2 Mini4 "What Types of Mental Health Professionals are There?"

like figure out what does that mean and what level is this person, and so this is really great. Keep going! Keep going!

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Sarah: I'm so glad this is helpful. So then you have social workers, so this can be a very broad field. Just as councillors and therapists, social workers also have a masters level education. Social workers also use talk based therapy and they have evidence-based training. Many social workers provide what we kind of use the language of "wrap around" services and so meaning that they do a lot of coordination of care with families. So if a social worker is working with a child, or working with a family who is struggling in the schools. The social worker oftentimes is someone who is going to provide advocacy for that child and that family to kind of help the family navigate what's happening in the school.

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Heather: Do they also help them, like find other resources that a kid might need or, you know, help find sort of a team of people that would provide support to that family?

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Sarah: Absolutely, yeah, and so this is kind of that team approach. Granted, releases of information are something that is important if you are seeking therapy. So if a counselor is working with someone doing treatment, they may use a release of information for the psychiatrist if there's that medication management. So coordination of care is important, but specifically with social workers, they're really helping to advocate for the person that they're working with.

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Heather: Pk, Interesting.

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Sarah: The last one is marriage and family therapists. This is one that I specifically and most passionate about, because this is where my foundation of training comes from, and so a marriage and family therapists - they have extensive background in dealing with couples doing marriage counselling as well as family therapy. They have a master's level of education and the work that they do is very deep work, its depth processing. It's using a systemic perspective, and their focus is on the couple or the family unit to help them overcome disfunction, to work together as a cohesive whole in order to thrive. And so, while marriage and family therapists can work with individuals, they're always looking through a generational or systemic lens when doing this work. And I also think it's extremely important to note that if couples are looking for someone to do couples therapy or marriage therapy, I really encourage you to find someone that has the marriage and family therapy training, because they'll be able to provide you with the best support that you need systemically in your relationship.

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Heather: Because the systems of families, the systems of couples, are very intricate and very

That's A Hard No

Transcript: S2 Mini4 "What Types of Mental Health Professionals are There?"

different from what might happen in an individual's personal history or something like that. Is that right?

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Sarah: Yeah, yeah, that's that's correct.

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Heather: Interesting.

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Sarah: I feel like someone in the helping profession. We all want to help, and so sometimes, especially in the world that we're in right now, people are on waitlists and everybody is just wanting to be seen that some therapists may find themselves taking on clients that aren't specifically in their niche. This is one of those that I really encourage people to do their homework on to make sure that if they are looking for someone to help with their relationship, that the person has the training in the systemic work.

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Heather: So I want to add one little thing, and I'm sure you could talk more eloquently about it than I can. But in my family we've had people who've had specific issues or wanted to get therapy, and they have a specific type of therapist they're looking for. And so what gets confusing then is when you're looking for someone like who might have experience with a certain thing. People can say either in their know, their psychology today, profile, like, interests in or specialize in or whatever. But unless someone has a certain kind of certificate or training, or maybe there might be a couple of different ones that sound the same and you don't know what's what, it's hard to know if, if what they're saying is true, if they really do have any expertise in something. So I think the fallback we've had is making them explain what that is. What is that certificate? Where did you get it? What did you have to go through to get that certificate? You know like. What does that mean, because someone can say they're certified in something and not be at all what you're expecting.

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Sarah: You're right and it's not black and white, and that's where it's tough and that's where I'm hoping understanding a little bit more about this. That's why we're sharing these things to help educate those that are listening. But it's important to recognize that we don't know what we don't know, and so, as you said, Heather, you know there's these profiles out there, people can label themselves a certain way. I think it's important to also go back to minisode three, where we talked about how do we know if it's a good fit, and so you may very well find someone, and it's like box checked box check. This is what I want and then it's OK to reevaluate during treatment.

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Heather: As you always say, it's okay to change your mind.

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Sarah: Absolutely.

That's A Hard No

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00:12:39

Heather: Ok, well, thanks Sarah, with such a diverse group of mental health professionals: it can be difficult to know if you've got the right. So, hearing all of this information I'm sure will definitely help a lot of people understand what might be the right kind of person to look for when they're seeking therapy.

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Sarah: And remember I am human first therapist second. This is what I feel is most important: to kind of just give you that foundation.

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Heather: That top-level understanding

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Sarah: Exactly. But there are so many layers and levels to this. So I hope that you found this information helpful. If you are struggling to find a good fit or have additional questions, please be sure to reach out to us through our social media handles or through our website.

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Heather: There's an email form there. Just shoot us an email. We'll be happy to talk to you. Well, thanks again Sarah, and thank you for listening.

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Sarah: It's my pleasure. I hope you've found all of this information helpful and I'm excited to dive in to our next Minisode, which will be on understanding medication and whether it may or may not be a part of your treatment plan.

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Heather: Sounds good, thanks again, bye everyone!