

DIY Therapy

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An alternative way of doing therapy

I am a trained, experienced and accredited psychotherapist and I love therapy. Unfortunately, therapy has a big problem: it does not love everyone and many people are poorly served by the system. This is what that system looks like in the UK at the moment, more or less:

- NHS services: IAPT, 111, Accident and Emergency, Social Prescribing, referrals to other talking therapy services via your GP
- Community counselling projects, often for specific populations of people
- Community projects that bring people together to talk, often with an activity like gardening or walking, or political groups of activists
- Helplines
- Inpatient services, day centres
- NHS or private psychiatry, medication
- Peer counselling, usually facilitated group work within organisations
- Private alternative medicine
- Private group therapy
- Private one-to-one therapy
- Self-help, including reading books and articles, doing a course, using apps, watching documentaries, Googling things, internet forums, scrolling through social media, creative and reflective activities like drawing or keeping a journal, self-medication
- Services and activities that have a psychological support component to them, eg sport, coaching, mentoring
- Services provided by work, school, university, religious organisations
- Support groups
- Talking to lovers, friends, family, colleagues, teachers, other people in your community, your hairdresser, strangers, etc
- Text services, games, artificial intelligence, bots
- Therapeutic communities

There are also advocacy agencies that help you get mental health services. Other forms of help, or pseudo help that is actually coercion or causes harm, can include a mental health component. This might include social workers, nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, charity workers and NGOs, the probation service, the benefits system and the rescue industry.

Sometimes you find just what you need, sometimes you don't. People looking for support often encounter these problems:

- Organisations may only offer short-term help and you might want something longer-term
- With some services you won't get to choose who you see or the methods they use to help you
- You might have to prove you are a suitable candidate to get through the gate-keeping
- Private care is expensive, currently about £2000 a year at the cheaper end
- Privacy risks around your data with tech-based services
- Quackery, sometimes what looks like help isn't much help at all, and vulnerable people can get exploited by dodgy practitioners or well-meaning people working beyond their capacity
- Services that are culturally inappropriate
- Services that are often over-subscribed and there will be a long wait to see someone
- Services that aren't as intensive as you need
- Services that might trap you in situations you don't want
- The therapy world is really weird, it is hard to ensure that you see the right practitioner with an appropriate modality if you don't understand its culture, history, assumptions and don't know how to find out
- Therapy training is exclusive, expensive and demanding, the kinds of people who make it through that system are often posh, white and older; they might not be able to fully understand the conditions of your life
- There is sometimes a danger of being sucked into a dehumanising system and suffering harm

All of these problems are made more difficult if:

- You are poor
- You are socially marginalised, for example through racism, sexism, transphobia, classism, homophobia, ableism, and so on
- You have complicated problems that need to be resolved fairly promptly
- You are neurodivergent
- You are scared, traumatised or otherwise in a pickle to begin with
- Any combination of the above

This guide is an introduction to an alternative way of doing therapy, perhaps a way that could help you. In DIY Therapy I'm going to share some ideas that might help you access

long-term, culturally appropriate, friendly support for free, and learn some useful things along the way. You can take up these suggestions, adapt them, ignore them completely! Perhaps this guide will help you understand therapy a bit more. I'm doing this because DIY Therapy is an approach that has helped me, more people should know about it, and because I think you have a right to accessible healing conversation if you want and need it.

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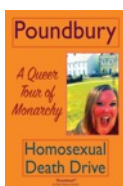
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