Question 1: What' the biggest difference between a Psychologist, Counselor, Therapist and Psychiatrist?

The biggest difference between a Psychologist, Counselor, Therapist and Psychiatrist has to do with their educational background and training. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor (MD or DO) who specializes in preventing, diagnosing, and treating mental illness. A psychiatrist's training starts with four years of medical school and is followed by a one-year internship and at least three years of specialized training as a psychiatric resident. Because of extensive medical training, the psychiatrist understands the body's functions and the complex relationship between emotional illness and other medical illness.

A psychologist has a doctoral degree (PhD, PsyD, or EdD) in psychology, which is the study of the mind and behaviors. Graduate school provides a psychologist an education in evaluating and treating mental and emotional disorders. After completing graduate school, a psychologist completes an internship that lasts two to three years and provides further training in treatment methods, psychological theory, and behavioral therapy. Many go on to post-doctoral fellowships for further specialization.

Licensed psychologists are qualified to do counseling and psychotherapy, perform psychological testing, and provide treatment for mental disorders. Although they are not medical doctors, in some states, if they have the credentials they can write prescriptions for pharmaceutical medicine. Often a psychologist will work in association with a psychiatrist who provides the medical treatment for mental illness while the psychologist provides the psychotherapy.

A psychotherapist or counselor is a mental health professional who has a master's degree (MA, LPC, LMFT) in psychology, counseling, or a related field. In order to be licensed, the professional counselor also needs two additional years' experience working with a qualified mental health professional after graduate school. A mental health counselor is qualified to evaluate and treat mental problems by providing counseling or psychotherapy.

Although the terms counseling and therapy are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between psychotherapy and psychological counseling.

Counseling focuses on specific issues and is designed to help a person address a particular problem, such as addiction or stress management. The focus may be on problem solving or on learning specific techniques for coping with or avoiding problem areas. Counseling is also usually more short-term than therapy.

Psychotherapy is more long-term than counseling and focuses on a broader range of issues. The underlying principle is that a person's pattern of thinking and unconscious awareness affect the way that person interacts with the world. The goal is to uncover those patterns and become aware of their effect and then learn new, healthier ways to think and interact.