

6 Major Counseling Theories and Approaches



Humanistic:

Humanistic counseling theories hold that people have within themselves all the resources they need to live healthy and functional lives, and that problems occur as a result of restricted or unavailable problem-solving resources.



Cognitive:

Cognitive counseling theories hold that people experience psychological and emotional difficulties when their thinking is out of sync with reality.



Behavioral:

Behavioral counseling theories hold that people engage in problematic thinking and behavior when their environment supports it. When an environment reinforces or encourages these problems, they will continue to occur.



Psychoanalytic:

Psychoanalytic counseling theories hold that psychological problems result from the present-day influence of unconscious psychological drives or motivations stemming from past relationships and experiences.



Constructionist:

Constructionist counseling theories hold that knowledge is merely an invented or “constructed” understanding of actual events in the world.



Systemic:

Systemic counseling theories hold that thinking, feeling and behavior are largely shaped by pressures exerted on people by the social systems within which they live.