

Please treat this table just as a starting point. This is a brief summary of some different paths to doing clinical work and becoming a therapist. Not every program fits the descriptions listed, and there are more options than listed here. An excellent way to learn is to visit the websites of graduate schools that offer each degree. Talk with your faculty advisor about schools you can start researching.

Degree	Description	Skills emphasized	Special skills or jobs possible for this degree only	Difficulty of getting into graduate program	Length of grad program	Cost of grad program
M.D. or D.O. (Psychiatry)	A medical doctor's degree with a specialty in psychiatry.	Medication and physiological treatments may be emphasized over psychotherapy training	M.D.s and O.D.s can prescribe medication (e.g., SSRIs) (Nurse Practitioners or Physicians assistants (PAs) can also prescribe medication.)	More difficult (medical school track)	4 years medical school + 4 years residency + more for specialty training	Very expensive, like 4 more years of college. Financial aid is available. Eventual salaries likely to be high, even though the cost of training is high.
Ph.D. in clinical psychology	A doctoral level degree. In graduate school, you will focus on both clinical training and training in how to do research in psychology (e.g., effectiveness of interventions).	Both research and clinical training (e.g., assessment, psychotherapy)	University faculty positions, ability to supervise other therapists	One of the most difficult	6 or more years on average; this includes 5 years of graduate school and one internship year; + post-doc in most cases	Possibly free; many Ph.D. students get tuition covered and a stipend for being a TA or RA.
Ph.D. or Ed.D. in counseling psychology	A doctoral level degree. In graduate school, you may focus more on clinical training than on research. A counseling psychologist typically does therapy with populations with less severe conditions. Some counseling programs are in Schools of Education, hence the degree is also an Ed.D	Clinical training	University faculty positions; positions in university counseling centers; ability to supervise other therapists	Difficult, but perhaps less so than M.D. and Clinical Psych Ph.D. programs	6 years on average; this includes 5 years of graduate school and one internship year, + post-doc in most cases	Possibly free; many Ph.D. students get tuition covered and a stipend for being a TA or RA.
Psy. D. in clinical psychology	A doctoral level degree. In graduate school, you will	Clinical training	University faculty positions (esp. in	Less difficult than M.D. or	4-6 years on average, including an	Very expensive—like 4 more years of

	focus almost exclusively on clinical training, only some research training.		Psy.D. training programs); Ability to supervise other therapists	Ph.D. in clinical (but still competitive)	internship year, + post-doc in most cases	college at a private university. Financial aid is available. A few programs have TA lines.
Master's in social work (MSW), with later licensing for clinical social work (LCSW).	A master's level degree. Your coursework will include traditional community social work, but also training and practice in therapy and counseling services typically provided to patients in schools and health settings.	Clinical training, often with a social justice emphasis; very broad training (everything from case-management and public policy to psychotherapy) thus a very flexible degree, but not as in-depth in any one area as other more focused degrees.	Very flexible degree	Somewhat easier to get into	2-3 years on average. Graduates must pass a licensing exam and accumulate hours of supervised practice (600 to 2000 hours, depending on the state) in order to practice independently. (search "Licensed clinical social worker")	Similar cost as 2 -3 more years of college. Financial aid is available.
Masters (M.S. or M.A.) in clinical psychology	A master's level degree with training in clinical skills. Increasingly, master's level therapists are being allowed to practice independently. States and employers vary in their licensing requirements (search "Licensed professional counselor")	Clinical training and some research training	Can be a stepping-stone to a doctoral degree for some people.	Somewhat easier to get into	2-3 years on average. Graduates must pass a licensing exam and accumulate hours of supervised practice (600 to 2000 hours, depending on the state) in order to practice independently. (search "Licensed professional counselor")	Similar cost as 2 -3 more years of college. Financial aid may be available.
Masters (M.S. or M.A.) in counseling psychology	A master's level degree with training in clinical skills. Increasingly, master's level therapists are being allowed to practice independently. States and employers vary in their licensing requirements (search "Licensed professional counselor")	Clinical training in counseling (mostly less severe conditions, sometimes with no diagnosis)	Can be a stepping-stone to a doctoral degree in counseling psychology for some people.	Somewhat easier to get into	2-3 years on average. Graduates must pass a licensing exam and accumulate hours of supervised practice (600 to 2000 hours, depending on the state) in order to practice independently. (search "Licensed	Similar cost as 2 -3 more years of college. Financial aid may be available.

					professional counselor”)	
Masters (M.S. or M.A.) in marriage and family therapy	A master’s level degree with training in clinical skills focused primarily on couples and family treatment. Increasingly, master’s level therapists are being allowed to practice independently. States and employers vary in their licensing requirements	Clinical training, with a focus on family systems and relationships		Somewhat easier to get into	2-3 years on average. Graduates must pass a licensing exam and accumulate hours of supervised practice (600 to 2000 hours, depending on the state) in order to practice independently. (search “Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist”)	Similar cost as 2 -3 more years of college. Financial aid may be available.
Master’s in school psychology (You can also pursue an Ed.D., a doctoral degree in school psychology)	A masters (& doctoral) level degree that teaches how to assess learning, behavioral, or emotional problems in children. You would practice primarily in a school setting, assessing individual children and working with teachers and parents to design effective interventions.	Clinical training, assessment of children in their learning environment	School focus (K-12), specialized testing expertise (i.e., IQ and achievement testing)	Somewhat difficult to get into	2-3 years on average (4-5 years for Ed.D.)	Similar cost as 2-5 more years of college, but may also have TA and RA opportunities, which would make the program free. Financial aid may be available.