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“I don’t need a *psychiatrist!*”

A psychiatrist is a medical physician who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of psychological problems, like stress, anxiety, and depression. Psychiatrists are uniquely qualified to assess both the mental and physical aspects of psychological disturbance. Their medical education has given them a full working knowledge of the many causes for a patient’s feelings and symptoms. Armed with this understanding, psychiatrists can make a complete, accurate diagnosis and then recommend or provide treatment, such as medication (if necessary), and special types of talk therapy that may make medication unnecessary.

An unfortunate reality of our society is there is still a stigma associated with seeing a psychiatrist. Based on stereotypes, stigma is a negative judgment based on a personal trait — in this case, having a problem with psychological symptoms. It was once a common perception that having a psychological problem was due to some kind of personal weakness. We now know that these problems have a biological basis and can be treated like any other health condition. Having a psychological problem doesn’t mean you’re weak any more than having high blood pressure or diabetes means it.

As a result of stigma, some patients who have a psychological problem try to pretend nothing is wrong, or don’t seek help. Some patients are more comfortable seeing their family physician or another type of physician like a gynecologist or internist for their problem. However, your doctor might think it is important to see a psychiatrist who specializes in psychological problems just like it is important to see a specialist for any other kind of problem that requires specialized expertise and treatment.

Some symptoms of psychological problems include:

- Feeling unusually sad, down, or blue
- Feeling anxious or having attacks of anxiety
- Lacking interest or enjoyment in things
- Having problems in relationships
- Getting tired easily
- Having trouble concentrating or inattention
- Insomnia or sleeping too much
- Having problems with memory
- Low self-esteem
- Being unusually hyper and outgoing
- Short-temperedness
- Self-defeating behaviors
- Conflict avoidance
- Inability to deal productively with painful feelings
- Feeling uncommonly shy
- Having unusual thoughts or trouble telling what’s real
- Having trouble leaving your house
- Binging and purging or other means of compensatory weight control
- Problems adjusting to life changes
- Sexual problems
- Many others

So if your doctor recommends seeing a psychiatrist, consider giving it a try. You might ask yourself the question: *How much better would I feel if I solved my problem and reached my full potential?* Just imagine. ☺

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