

# Professional Helpers

Not sure about what different specialists do? Here is a list of professional helpers and how they can support someone going through mental health, relationship or financial difficulties.

## Mental Health

### General Practitioner (GP)

GPs are your first point of contact. They have your health history and can provide an individualised approach. They are trained to identify health issues and recognise symptoms of mental health. However, not all specialise in this area, so it is best to find one which has this specialty. A GP will work with you to write a mental health plan, which may include a referral to access additional mental health supports. If you have a mental health plan you may be eligible for extra Medicare rebates.

### Psychologist

Psychologists are trained in diagnosing, treating and preventing mental health problems. They understand how your brain works, how you think and how you behave. They use different types of counselling and psychotherapy to help you develop better ways of thinking and behaving, but they can't prescribe medication. Psychologists often specialise in different areas, and use different approaches, so sometimes you may have to meet a few practitioners before you find the right person for your situation.

### Psychotherapist

Psychotherapist is a mental health practitioner (eg. counsellor) with additional training in psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is just another word for talk therapy which focuses on exploring feelings, thoughts and behaviours that are distressing you and understand how you can work to change them.

### Psychiatrist

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor with specialised training in mental health issues. They can decide whether you need medication as part of your treatment and are able to prescribe it for you. For this reason, they are often more involved with supporting people with more severe mental health issues. They are trained to understand how your brain works, how you think and how you behave. They use different types of counselling and psychotherapy to help you develop better ways of thinking and behaving.

### Counsellor

Counsellors use talk therapy to help people develop self-understanding and make changes in their lives. A counsellor will support you to talk through your personal concerns, gain perspective, develop coping strategies, and increase self-awareness. Many specialise in different areas of support so it's good to check on what type of counselling they provide and see if it matches your needs and circumstances.

### Social Worker

Social workers draw on a range of theories and therapeutic approaches to work holistically with people to support their recovery and help them effectively manage or change the situations that may contribute to mental health conditions. Usually, you only get referred to a social worker when there are multiple issues you are facing in your life that put you and others at risk.

# Professional Helpers cont

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## Money Management

### Financial Counsellor

Financial counsellors are qualified skilled professionals who provide information, advice and advocacy to people in financial difficulty. Their services are non-judgmental, free, independent and confidential. Financial counsellors will listen to your problems and help you with things like bills or fines you're struggling to pay, being harassed by debt collectors, gas, electricity or phone disconnection, being evicted from your house, car accidents with no insurance, and tax debts. They do not offer legal advice.

### Accountant

Accountants stay on top of the ever-changing tax landscape so they can offer their expertise to their clients. Accountants help their clients understand what they are entitled to including their potential tax deductions, calculate their capital gains, and determine any potential write-offs.

### Financial Advisor/Planner

Financial advisors (or a financial planners) help you plan and manage bigger financial decisions. They work with you to set financial goals so you feel confident that your future plans are achievable. If you're not on track to achieving your goals, an adviser can help you put the right strategies in place, or set more realistic goals. Financial advice can be useful at turning points in your life, like when you're starting a family, being retrenched, planning for retirement or managing an inheritance. An advisor should take the time to discuss what's important to you and ask about your short and long term goals before they make any recommendations.

## Family and Relationships

### Mediator / Family dispute resolution practitioner

Family dispute resolution practitioners (often called 'mediators') assist the parties to identify and assess options and negotiate an agreement to resolve their dispute. This can relate to a range of circumstances but often involves family disputes where partners need to divide up assets or make arrangements for children. Mediation is an alternative to a judge imposing a decision on the parties.

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### Family lawyer (solicitor)

Family lawyer is a solicitor who has a particular interest and skill in family law work. They provide professional advice, assistance and support with a wide range of issues including separation, divorce, child support, adoption and property, financial settlements, or preparing a new will. While some lawyers specialise in one of these processes, many instead maintain a 'general practice', advising their clients on a range of issues.