



EXPLORE WELLNESS

Talk to Detox

Reaching out can improve your health! *Ever wanted to let it all out? To speak your mind? To share what's in your heart? Turns out, talking is good for your health! Read on to learn about the therapeutic side of talking.*

Sharing feelings, speaking out a long-held worry, discussing a dilemma, or conversing about a concern—talking is beneficial to our well-being. Through talking, we can unburden our minds, unclutter our thoughts, and better cope with life's challenges. In this spring season of detoxing, I set out to explore why talking to counselling professionals—or to our friends and families—can be so helpful and healthful.

Research highlights that talking can be validating, especially when the listener expresses empathy. It can lower negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, all the while elevating positive emotions such as hope and self-worth. Talking can also clarify understanding, build trust between the speaker and listener, and help to motivate.

For insight, I interviewed clinical psychologist Dr. Diana Brecher. I also interviewed several counsellors from the innovative Toronto-based community of practice at Hard Feelings—psychotherapist Leslie Williams, social worker Sara Robb, and founder and president Kate Scowen, also a registered social worker.



What is talk therapy?

According to the Hard Feelings counsellors, talk therapy “is an opportunity to explore thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment, with a trained professional.”





Brecher adds that it's "a safe and confidential opportunity to reflect upon, express, and grow from life experiences, and while counselling approaches might differ, the underlying intentions and goals are usually quite similar." These might include recovery or shifting attitudes.

Caring and clarifying

Talking is healthy, says Brecher, because it helps us recognize and explore what is going on in our thoughts and emotions in a protected space with someone who "has a more objective perspective than we do."

She explains that "oftentimes, people get stuck ruminating over and over what has gone wrong—focusing on regrets and losses. It's only when we begin to unpack these experiences that we can break free from old patterns and make changes." And, as the Hard Feelings team says, quite simply, "as humans, we need to express ourselves so we can get our needs met."

Conversation for change

"Talking about feelings helps you move through them," says the Hard Feelings team. "In doing this, you can understand and learn to tolerate difficult emotions and work toward change."

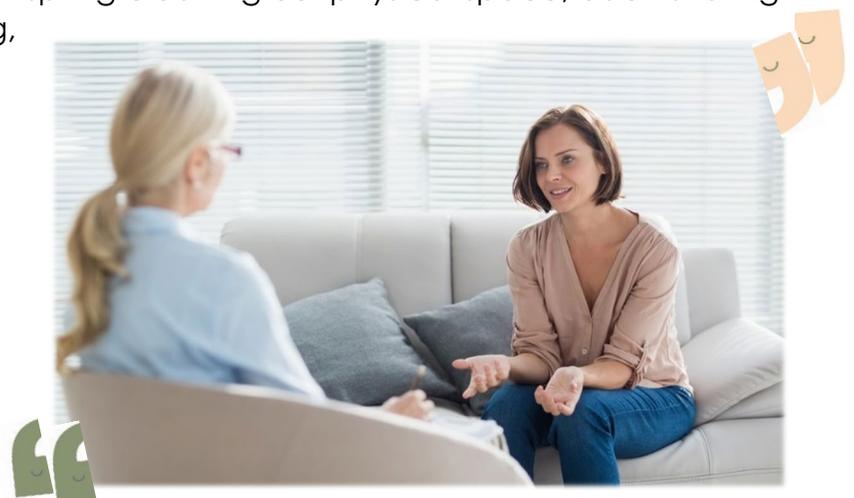
And while talking in a therapeutic context might look from the outside, Brecher points out, "like an unstructured conversation, it is actually directive and intentional, with specific aims in mind."

For instance, Brecher says that through talk therapy we can identify our emotional reactions, hear more clearly our distorted cognitions, unravel our interpretations, and cultivate different patterns and actions. Talking, Brecher sees again and again, can "lead to behavioural and emotional transformation."

Talk to detox

We usually practise detoxification through food choices, exercise routines, body-based practises such as massage or sauna, or spring cleaning our physical space, each sharing an intention of letting go—of releasing, lightening, or simplifying.

The Hard Feelings team says that "when we don't talk about our hard feelings, they can create a logjam, which can show up as tension in the body, physical illness, unhelpful thinking patterns, and harmful coping strategies. Talking through issues with a therapist can loosen the tension and help clear the path toward positive change."





Talking through trauma

Brecher explains, “there are times when describing a traumatic event in considerable detail, for example, can be very therapeutic for relief and recovery. It can be part of the exposure therapy used after trauma. Usually after a catastrophic event, we avoid thinking about it as much as possible and avoid going to places that trigger and remind. When we actually spend the time to describe it, we’re then better able to let it go.”

Culture and communication

While there is a growing “cultural acceptance of the notion that it’s good for one’s health to talk,” it is important to remember that there is no universal or right way about if, when, where, and how to communicate. Individual and community context and culture must be respected.

Sustainable support

When looking for a talk therapist, check your benefits for coverage.

Trusted sharing

“If you choose to talk to friends or family about very personal and private experiences,” says Brecher, “kindness, respect, consideration, and, most importantly, complete confidentiality are essential. Think of it as sharing a secret.”

Support for supporters

The Hard Feelings team also adds, for those supporting others, “be patient, and honest about your own boundaries and emotional energy.”

Seeking support

“For people looking for support,” explains the team, “talking with friends and family is important, as it builds and strengthens your social connections.” But, they acknowledge, it can “sometimes be hard for those closest to us to be objective; this is where a well-trained therapist can help.”

“Talking with someone who can help to investigate and manage difficult emotions safely and without judgment is really important.” A therapeutic talking relationship provides an individual with “a place where their own unique and personal experience is taken seriously.”

Are you interested in talking to detox? All Covenant Health employees and their families can access free, confidential counseling through Homewood Health. To book an appointment call 1-800-663-1142.



¹Deena Kara Shaffer, PhD. *ALIVE.com* (2019) Retrieved from: <https://www.alive.com/health/talk-to-detox/>