

Psychotherapy: Rent A Friend

Dawn Brown

At some point we are going to understand that it is all right to get help when we need it.

A friend called me a few months ago to chat. I knew what that meant. She would talk and try to put me in the role of her therapist. She had been depressed for sometime and had ignored all my hints that she might need to see a therapist. Now her depression had obviously increased and I told her that I cared about her but as her friend, I could not be her therapist. I really felt she needed to speak to someone professionally. She responded with shock and indignation, telling me she would never speak to a therapist as she was not crazy.

Several days later another friend called me and was feeling depressed. Again I refused to be her therapist but offered to give her the name of one whom I had found quite helpful. A few weeks later I called her and she sounded very upbeat. She quickly told me she couldn't speak as she was rushing out meet with 'Renafren'. Puzzled I commented that her friend's name was most unusual. She then spelt it out for me: Rent a Friend. Her nickname for the therapist I had recommended to her was Rent a Friend. She explained that she paid him for his time and he gave her unconditional acceptance and support; he was her friend. We had a great laugh at her concept of therapy!

I was reminded of the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet: *There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so*. Our perceptions create our experiences. To one person, receiving the benefits of psychotherapy meant she was insane; to another person the benefits provided her with the unconditional acceptance of a friend. One person's perceptions created roadblocks to her healing; the other person's perceptions cleared the way for her to accept assistance. What we choose to perceive makes all the difference.

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