



## **MS Learn Online Feature Presentation**

### **Mood Changes and MS: Mental Health Professionals and Resources Featuring: Sarah Minden, MD; David Rintell, PhD; Rosalind Kalb, PhD**

---

**Tracey:** During this video series we have explored some of the mood changes that can occur in people with MS. Clearly, these are very difficult and complex issues.

**Tom:** The good news is that there are a host of professionals who have the knowledge and experience to help you and your loved ones work through the emotional challenges that are part of living with MS.

**Tracey:** In our final installment, we'll learn more about who these people are, what they do, and how they can help you.

**Tom:** We continue our conversation about mood changes and MS with Dr. Sarah Minden, Dr. David Rintell and Dr. Rosalind Kalb.

**Dr. Rosalind Kalb:** You know, we've mentioned several times, all three of us, the mental health professionals who are involved in helping people manage these, and I think it would just be helpful to clarify who those people are, because I think it can get confusing. And, Sarah, you are a psychiatrist; can you describe what you do as a psychiatrist for people with MS?

**Dr. Sarah Minden:** Sure. A psychiatrist is a physician, has an M.D. degree, went to medical school, and I, like many psychiatrists, do two kinds of mental health treatments -- psychotherapy, counseling, talking with people, and also prescribing medication. Some psychiatrists will do different kinds of treatments, but by and large it's the prescribing of the medication along with the psychotherapy and the counseling that distinguishes a psychiatrist.

**Dr. Rosalind Kalb:** And you're a psychologist, David, and what's the role of the psychologist on the MS care team?

**Dr. David Rintell:** Right. Well, psychologists have a doctorate from graduate school. They may have a Ph.D., an Ed.D., or a Psy.D., these are just different names for the doctorates from the program for which they attended. The role of a psychologist can be to do psychotherapy or specialized types of psychotherapy, like we were talking about, cognitive behavioral therapy. Some psychologists are specialized and are neuropsychologists. They specialize on cognition and particularly on assessing cognition.

I'm not a neuropsychologist. I am a psychologist who works at an MS center. I see my role at the MS center as something of a midwife, because I help people who are going through a difficult life situation. Not necessarily people who have a mental health problem and come to me for that reason, but people whose life has presented them with challenge of a chronic illness. And I think in most cases it's a natural process to adapt to a chronic illness. But support and help can really be effective in getting through that process and along the way to determine whether or not a treatable condition also exists, like depression, so the person doesn't have to live with the disabling aspects of depression or anxiety, for which I will consult somebody like Sarah for medication, if it is indicated.

I would add that I'm also something of a student, because what I note in my work is that despite the challenges of MS, most people really do so well. I really would like to learn more about what helps people do well so I can pass on those practices and tips that people who are living well with MS are doing and using to the other people who may be struggling or may be newly diagnosed.

**Dr. Rosalind Kalb:** And so in addition to psychiatrists and psychologists, there are people who have different kinds of counseling degrees, and those professionals tend to focus primarily on offering psychotherapy, working with individuals or couples, developing coping strategies, helping sort out some of the issues that we talked about today.

**Dr. Sarah Minden:** There are also social workers, people with MSW or LICSW degrees, who are trained to do psychotherapy oftentimes with couples and families, who also can help with services. And there are psychiatric nurses who in some states can prescribe medication. So, there is a whole smorgasbord of different professionals. I think the most important thing is the fit between the person who is

coming and the person who is there, and it's okay to see a couple different people. To be able to say, "I like that person, that person likes me. I can talk with that person. We can work well together." Because it's that together, that fit, that really makes for a very productive relationship.

**Dr. David Rintell:** I would add that most people living with multiple sclerosis and their families find it useful to work with a mental health provider who has experience working with families living with multiple sclerosis, so you don't have to kind of teach that provider what it's like to live with MS, but that person has been educated, has attended training programs with the MS Society, attends conferences about MS, so is kind of up-to-date about some of the challenges that people with MS are facing. And I would almost choose a provider based on their experience working with people with MS and other chronic illnesses rather than if that provider is a social worker or a psychologist, or psychiatric nurse or licensed mental health counselor. Because often counseling for people living with MS involves the kind of -- almost like an active coaching about how to confront some of the challenges. And some traditional psychotherapies in which the counselor really doesn't contribute much may not be found to be quite as useful.

**Tracey:** Remember, if you have MS, it doesn't mean that you have to live with these painful mood changes. These problems deserve to be diagnosed and treated so that you can get on with life.

**Tom:** Thank you for joining us for this special edition of MS Learn Online. Be sure to check out the other programs in this series on Mood Changes in MS.

**Tracey:** If you would like more information on mood changes, or other issues relating to MS, go to [NationalMSSociety.org](http://NationalMSSociety.org). I'm Tracey Kimball.

**Tom:** And I'm Tom Kimball. Thank you for joining us!