6 Major Counseling Theories and Approaches

**Humanistic:**
Humanistic counseling theories hold that people have within themselves all the resources they need to live healthy and functional lives, and that problems occur as a result of restricted or unavailable problem-solving resources.

**Cognitive:**
Cognitive counseling theories hold that people experience psychological and emotional difficulties when their thinking is out of sync with reality.

**Behavioral:**
Behavioral counseling theories hold that people engage in problematic thinking and behavior when their environment supports it. When an environment reinforces or encourages these problems, they will continue to occur.

**Psychoanalytic:**
Psychoanalytic counseling theories hold that psychological problems result from the present-day influence of unconscious psychological drives or motivations stemming from past relationships and experiences.

**Constructionist:**
Constructionist counseling theories hold that knowledge is merely an invented or “constructed” understanding of actual events in the world.

**Systemic:**
Systemic counseling theories hold that thinking, feeling and behavior are largely shaped by pressures exerted on people by the social systems within which they live.