

Tips for Therapy Success

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Whether you're new to therapy or you've had experience with mental health services before, here is a helpful introduction or reminder of some common therapy challenges and how to make the most of them. This is by no means a comprehensive guide and it's important to note that these are all normal experiences with therapy that may arise as part of the process. Please read the following and feel free to bring up any questions or thoughts that come up during our session together:

1. Everything about the counseling/therapeutic environment (including schedules and time) is carefully prepared by the therapist and contributes to the healing process. We call the overall set-up of therapy the "therapeutic framework".
2. Consistency and constancy of time supports the process of treatment. It's important to show up regularly for sessions. Sessions are scheduled to maximize the application of learnings and insights between therapy sessions. Sometimes life happens and you may have to cancel or reschedule, and that's okay too. Part of therapeutic growth is increasing communication skills when things don't go to plan.
3. At some point you may feel "bored" or you "may not have noticed any gains or progress". This is important to bring up with your therapist. Psychotherapy is not like medicine nor is it a cure. It's a process. Problems don't just go away by taking a pill. Psychological and relational problems are different from physical problems and they require different methods of healing and different time frames.
4. At some point you may feel like "dropping out" of therapy. The feelings that come up in therapy can be difficult to work through. Sometimes it may feel worse before it gets better and there is a possibility that you may feel like "escaping from therapy". Often, it is the painful feelings and experiences you are working through that are bringing up this desire to avoid that space. This is normal and is part of healing. It can be helpful to discuss this with your therapist.
5. You may feel yourself wanting to cancel or not show up to your appointment as a "reaction formation", which is a type of defense mechanism (or a form of emotional defense) in which we anticipate rejection and end up "avoiding". Subconsciously we may be protecting ourselves by thinking, "I'll leave first". This is also a normal response and it may be useful to bring up in therapy the feelings that may be coming up. Paying attention to how you are feeling about therapy as it progresses may be a key to helping to understand your own relational patterns!
6. Therapy is a "sacred space". It's a place to reflect on yourself and to find meaning and healing.
7. Sometimes it's just not a good fit or your needs may have changed. That's okay too. It's healthy to advocate for yourself and to find a therapist that may work better for your needs. Part of therapy is learning to trust yourself to make good choices, set good boundaries, and communicate when you are ready to move forward.
8. Therapy has an end, or a "Termination". Your therapeutic goals also have an end goal which is for you to feel better, to have reduced the symptoms and concerns that brought you to therapy and to return to living life with increased awareness and functionality.

Adapted from: <https://psychot Tyler.wordpress.com>