

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone Workbook: A Guide to Considering Therapy

Introduction

*Note: You're currently viewing a condensed version of this workbook. If you find it helpful, the complete version is available for \$5.

Therapy and mental health awareness have become more prevalent recently, with many people embracing these topics in their everyday lives. You may be noticing friends, family, and social media posts discussing therapy, practicing "reparenting," gentle parenting, or using therapeutic language in casual conversation. If you find yourself thinking, "Maybe I should talk to someone," this mini workbook is designed to help you reflect on important considerations as you navigate next steps in your mental health journey.

As someone who has been a therapist for 10 years and is in therapy as well, I have witnessed and experienced the many moving parts of getting started. I also notice that many people, myself included, tend to put off starting therapy for months or even years. Research supports this trend, stating that mental health diagnoses are typically made about 10 years after symptoms originally started! There are many complex reasons for this. It can be overwhelming to narrow down specifically what issues are bringing you to therapy, what you hope to gain from sessions, and which therapist would be an ideal match in terms of affordability, scheduling, specialization, therapeutic approach, and/or personality.

I have always been passionate about making sense of my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences- and feel honored to walk alongside my clients as they do the same. My hope is that when you finish this workbook, you will have a better understanding of how any current mental health challenges are impacting your life, whether therapy could be beneficial to you, and how to get started in searching for a provider.

This workbook can be helpful to anyone who has:

- No therapy experience and is interested in/unsure about starting
 - Therapy experience and considering restarting
- Therapy experience and it affected them in a negative or unhelpful way

Could You Benefit From Therapy?

There is a wide range of mental health challenges that therapeutic support can help with. Maybe there was a big life event from years ago that you never fully processed. You might be experiencing a big life change and having trouble sorting through the emotional and practical aspects that come with it. Maybe you're struggling with addiction or other unhealthy behaviors that are impacting your work and relationships. The list goes on.

Using the chart below:

- 1.) In the far left column, list any mental health challenges you've experienced over the past month.
- 2.) Rate on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as the most) how severe each issue has been for you. Consider how intense it is, how often it happens, and how long it lasts.
- 3.) Rate on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as the most) how much this issue impacts your life (ex: school/work performance, relationships, etc)
- 4.) Rate the top 5 (with 1 as the most important) issues that you would like to see improve

(Either print out this guide or write your responses on a separate sheet of paper.)

1-2 words to describe the symptom or issue	How severe? (1-10)	How much does this issue affect your life? (1-10)	Priority to improve (1-5)

*Safety note: This workbook can serve as a general guide for individuals considering therapy. If you are experiencing symptoms that put you or others at risk of harm, I do not recommend this resource alone as a solution. This workbook is not a replacement for mental health assessment or treatment. Please address these issues with a mental health provider. Three options for mental health crisis support are:

- Call 911 and/or go to the nearest emergency room
- Call or text the National Suicide Hotline at 988
- Call and/or go your local crisis center or inpatient psychiatric care facility

Miracle Question:

With those challenges in mind, consider what your life would look like if they improved. Picture this... You're having a typical day and then go to bed for the night. When you wake up in the morning, you realize a miracle happened while you were sleeping. All of those issues you described above are nonexistent. How do you feel? What is the first difference you notice?

Would the absence of those challenges free up more energy to put toward important things in your life? Write what comes to mind below:

As you come to the end of this section, you should have a good idea of how these mental health challenges are showing up in your life at the moment. Based on your responses, do you believe you could benefit from support in those areas?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ No

What To Expect

If you answered “yes” or “maybe” in the previous section, you have likely decided that you could benefit from support. Now what? As I mentioned in the introduction, many people don’t get mental health support until a decade after their challenges began. A few common barriers that can get in the way of getting support are:

- **Stigma** (Some communities/cultures associate therapy with being “crazy,” weak, and/or view therapists as untrustworthy)
- **Limited resources** (like money, time, and energy)
- **Previous negative or traumatic experiences with therapy***
- **Privacy concerns**
- **Access issues** (It can be harder to find healthcare providers in rural areas)
- **Misunderstanding therapy and mental health** (people might believe their challenges are not “bad enough” to benefit from help, therapy is merely venting/not helpful, etc.)

Which one of these issues have you faced and/or are most concerned about? Expand on how this affects your decision to move forward with therapy.

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most), how open are you to working through this hurdle in order to get started?

If this rating is low, your feelings are completely valid. These are just some of the many factors that can make seeking therapy a deeply complicated and personal decision. While there is no true replacement for therapy, it is not the only way to support your mental health. There are endless holistic wellness approaches that have benefits of their own. Some of these include mindfulness exercises, physical exercise, music/art, etc. See the resources section at the end of this workbook for some examples, as well as free/lower cost mental health options.

***A note on good vs. bad therapy:** Unfortunately, inappropriate and unethical behavior exists in the healthcare field- and mental health is no exception. With that said, be sure to remove yourself from any unsafe therapy space and consider reporting any unethical behavior to your therapist's state licensing board. You deserve to be treated with decency and respect everywhere- especially in therapy!

It is not ok for therapists to:

- Promise quick fixes, cures, or a total elimination of negative or uncomfortable emotions
- Initiate an inappropriate or conflicting relationship with you outside of session (befriending you on social media, inviting you to social outings, or making sexual advances)
- Excessively pressure you to disclose information you're not ready to share
- Judge/shame you, or push you beyond what you're capable of
- Excessively share information about their personal lives
- Multitask with unrelated things during a session (or fall asleep!)

Your Ideal Therapist

If you're ready to dive in, let's envision your ideal therapist. This is a snapshot of useful information to have while searching provider directories, websites, doctor's office referrals, etc. Sticking to this criteria will filter your search and minimize the chance of wasting time, energy, and money on therapy that doesn't fit your needs.

I need a therapist who:

- Specializes in providing support for:
(refer to the top 5 issues you identified in previous section)

- Provides _____ appointments during _____
(telehealth or in-person) (week days, evenings, weekends)
- Accepts _____ for payment
(insurance type or cash pay rate)
- Can be described as:
(top 5 qualities you'd like your therapist to have. For example, "collaborative," "attentive," "a person of color," or "LGBTQ+/Gender affirming")

- Can support me in sessions to focus on life experiences from the

(Past, present, and/or future)
- Other notes

Resources

Therapist directory listings

- Psychology Today
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>
- Alma
<https://helloalma.com/>
- Headway
<https://headway.co/>

Lower cost therapy options

- Open Path Collective
<https://openpathcollective.org/>
- The Loveland Foundation
<https://thelovelandfoundation.org/therapy-fund/>
- Bloom Psychology & Wellness (Canada based):
<https://bloompsychologyto.com/affordable-therapy>
- Ask local therapists if they offer sliding scale appointments (a discounted session rate based on your income or a “pay what you can” agreement)
- Ask local therapists about group therapy options (this can be more affordable than individual)

Free or affordable community support

- NAMI Peer to Peer
<https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Peer-to-Peer/>
- Pay What You Can Peer Support Group
<https://www.paywhatyoucanpeersupport.com/>

Mental health worksheets, guides, and journaling prompts

- www.therapistaid.com

Physical exercise

- Research shows that as little as 15 to 30 minutes of low- to moderate-intensity exercise three times a week can help lower stress and anxiety. Walking counts! (consult with your doctor as needed)

Mental health apps

- Calm
- Headspace

- MoodFit
- MoodMission
- Happify
- Shine

Volunteer opportunities

Helping others can activate reward centers in your brain! Some examples of places in your area that may have volunteer opportunities are...

- Animal shelters
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Community Gardens
- Food banks
- Churches

...just a few of the many options in continuing your mental health journey! Getting started can feel overwhelming, so I hope this workbook has helped you identify specific areas where you might need support and determine your first steps toward positive change. :)