

# Communicating With Your Therapist

## **Tell your therapist your expectations**

It is important to share your expectations with your therapist as early in the process as possible to avoid frustration and misunderstandings. For example, if you expect to go back to your childhood to find the root of your problem but haven't communicated that to your therapist, your therapist might instead focus on the present. Also, it might be helpful to share how long you anticipate attending therapy, and how often, to make sure you and your therapist are on the same page.

## **Tell your therapist your goals for therapy**

Your therapist wants therapy to be helpful for you, but he or she may not know what goals you have for therapy if you don't share that aloud. If you have a specific goal, let your therapist know. If you're not sure, also share that with your therapist so you and your therapist can collaboratively determine what direction to take.

## **Tell your therapist what works and has worked for you**

Each person is unique, and you can help your therapist tailor his or her approach for you by sharing about the style and questions that work best for you. That does not mean that you run the therapy process. Your therapist has expertise and good reasons for doing what he or she is doing, but an effective therapist also has some room for flexibility. If you have been in counseling before and found some aspect or method particularly helpful, let your therapist know.

## **Tell your therapist what doesn't work**

In the same way that it is important to tell your therapist your expectations and what has been helpful in therapy, it is just as important to let him or her know when something isn't helping. This includes what is happening at home as well as during your therapy sessions. This gives the opportunity for mid-course corrections in the therapy process. Your therapist would prefer to hear if something is not working and have a chance to correct it, rather than risk you dropping out of therapy without having voiced your concerns.

## **Tell your therapist if you object to their suggestions**

You may think that you do not have the right to speak up when you have a worry or objection about your therapist's suggestions. However, every client has the right to a free and frank discussion about any misgivings. This provides the best chance for your therapist to address your concerns and make any adjustments to improve your chance of getting the help you desire.

## **Ask questions**

You have complete freedom to ask questions about the therapy process, fees, suggestions or methods, the therapist's training and qualifications, etc. It is important for you to be informed about your therapist and the therapy process, so you can set reasonable expectations and goals.

However, if you ask questions that the therapist considers too personal or intrusive, he or she will let you know. Please understand that this protects both of you throughout the therapy process, and it is not because your therapist does not care about you or value the therapeutic relationship that both of you have built.

## **Request that your therapist use everyday terms that you can understand**

All professions have jargon and buzzwords. For example, if your therapist suggests an MMPI to check out whether you have MDD or ADHD, you have a perfect right to have a translation into everyday language you understand!



**Counseling Center**

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