

# Communicating With Your Therapist

## **Tell your therapist your expectations**

As early as possible during therapy, share your expectations—it'll help avoid frustration and misunderstandings later on. For example, if you suspect the roots of your struggles lie in childhood events but haven't communicated that to your therapist, you might find your sessions focusing only on present situations. Or if you specifically want to reduce stress, your therapist needs to know in order to adjust the focus of your sessions.

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

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 being honest about what style and questions work best for you. 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**

It's just as important to let your therapist know when something isn't helping. A mid-course correction in the therapy process is warranted when a particular tool or technique is ineffective for you. Your therapist would prefer to know 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**

Every client has the right to a free and frank discussion about any misgivings during therapy. You may think that you do not have the right to speak up, but voicing your concerns provides the best chance for discussion and making 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, methods, the therapist's training and qualifications, etc. Answers to your questions help both of you 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 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 ask for translation into everyday language you understand!



**Counseling Center**

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