

# Tips for Success in Therapy

**Therapy works.** Science has clearly shown that therapy is helpful. Therapy is even more helpful (relatively speaking) than a surprising number of medical treatments. For example, did you know that therapy helps with psychological problems/concerns more than angioplasty helps heart problems?!

**So why does therapy work so well?** Therapy works for a number of reasons. One reason is that the strategies your therapist uses are likely to be evidence-based (i.e., developed and supported by research). But equally (and frequently even more) important are you, your relationship with your therapist, and your goals.

**How do I make sure therapy will work for me?** Well, we cannot absolutely guarantee that therapy will work for you, but just like you, we want you to succeed. And believe it or not, many people do not need to spend years in therapy to notice significant change: Sometimes eight sessions is enough (this doesn't apply to everyone, however; some people need longer-term therapy). Here are some critical factors that influence the success of therapy:

**You.** Personal change is hard work. Success in therapy requires a time investment: In addition to regular meetings with your clinician, the time you spend working on things outside of therapy is important. Success in therapy also requires an emotional investment: This can mean feeling uncomfortable, talking about painful information, working on difficult exercises/tasks with your therapist, and of course being honest about your concerns (which can be very hard). Many people who enter therapy are anxious about it, and may even question whether it will work or not. If you have these concerns, please bring them up with your clinician-- Motivation to change, belief that change is possible, and willingness to work hard are critical for successful change.

**Your relationship with your therapist.** Although there is probably more than one person on our staff who has the background and skills to help you, the match between you and your therapist is critical. Think of it like a power tool—your therapist's skills may be the tool itself that will help you change, but the power that fuels the tool comes from your working relationship. And that relationship can improve, even if you don't hit it off right away (or even if you do!) This is why we will ask you for your feedback at the beginning and end of each session using scientifically validated feedback tools. Your ongoing feedback about your experience is essential, and helps to improve your working relationship (if it doesn't, we will work to find you the clinician who is right for you). Your therapist can tell you more about how and why ongoing feedback works.

**Your goals.** Setting realistic, specific goals is important. Your therapist will help you define your goal(s) for therapy, along with timelines for achieving them. There are often multiple ways to achieve the same goal (such as reducing depression). Your therapist will review specific strategies that are shown to help achieve your goal, and will also want to know what you think will help. Together, you will come up with strategies, steps, and tools to achieve your goals. Your ongoing feedback will help you & your therapist determine what works best for you.

**Your strengths.** People struggling to solve a problem and/or feeling distressed often lose perspective about their strengths and skills. In fact, some people who enter therapy firmly believe that they have few, if any, strengths or skills. Part of our job is to help you identify and build on/expand your skills, and find ways to use these to your advantage to reach your goals.

**We look forward to working with you.** Your therapist has strong expertise, and so do you (you are the expert on you, after all). Together, we can collaborate and succeed in achieving your goals.