

10 Things I Wish Everyone Knew About Therapy

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Being a therapist can be an amazing profession full of challenges, heartaches, and celebration. We see you at your worst and see you at your best, but there is no better reward than to see you succeed. Here are 10 aspects of the therapeutic relationship that are either unknowns or common misconceptions. I hope this clarifies what you can expect from working with a therapist.

1. I don't think you're crazy.

I think you are amazingly unique trying to find your way in the world. None of us is perfect and I surely don't expect you to be anywhere close to mastery when you're learning new skills to change your life. Effective change usually requires trial and lots of errors. It means you're trying! Plus, if I think you're being irrational, I'll tell you.

2. Trust is everything.

Your ability to connect with me will be the number one factor determining how well we work together. If you don't feel like you click with me after a few sessions, it's OK to let me know and seek out a different therapist. We all need different things and my main priority is for you to achieve your goals.

3. My job is not to psychoanalyze you.

My job is to be curious and to help you gain more understanding. A good therapist doesn't claim to have all the answers for why you are the way you are although we may have some ideas that we will willingly share with you. When it comes to getting answers and more understanding, we will form hypotheses together and you will come to your own conclusions. A therapist facilitates that process. They don't tell you how to think/believe/act.

4. I'm not here to give you advice.

I'm here to share my knowledge with you and help you make your own decisions that are balanced, rational, and well-explored. Strengthening your own reasoning and decision-making skills will increase your independence and self-esteem. Win-win!

5. Work through your emotions with me instead of quitting, anger included.

Therapy is the perfect place to learn how to express your feelings. That's what I'm here for, to give you a space to try out new ways of being, thinking, and feeling. Take advantage of this. When we learn how to work through our negative emotions with others, it increases our relationship skills and makes us more comfortable with voicing our hurts. This is a necessary component to maintaining relationships and managing your emotions in a healthy way.

6. I expect you to slide backward to old behavior patterns and I'm not here to judge you.

Most people judge themselves enough for at least two people. I encourage my clients to come clean. It's only through acknowledging our steps backward that we can figure out what's standing in the way so that you can catapult forward. Relapse is VERY common and it's nothing to be ashamed of.

7. You deserve to be happy.

Happiness is not reserved for special people. Everyone has regrets, things we wish we never would have done, people we've hurt along the way, people who have hurt us either intentionally or unintentionally. I'm a firm believer that we can heal our wounds and step into happiness. You deserve it just as much as the next person.

8. I can't "fix" your life or your problems. Only you can.

I can help you gain more clarity, more understanding, and form a plan of action, but therapy is not a magic pill that erases all issues. It takes work, but if you're up for the challenge, I'll be there every step of the way!

9. The quickest way from point A to point B is action.

If you continue to come to therapy without putting any new behaviors or thoughts into action, progress will be a slow process for you. The path to action is different for everyone, but if you never do anything different, you'll never get a different result. You're the only one who can decide to take action. You hold all the power.

10. I want you to have the life you want.

I know your struggles, your dreams, your insecurities. There is nothing I want more for you than for you to bring your dreams into reality, push through your fears, and have the life you want. Your success is the ultimate gift to a therapist!

People come to therapy for all kinds of reasons. Usually people are experiencing a moderate level of discomfort in their lives and have noticed a toll on their work/school performance and in their relationships. Beginning therapy can be scary for some as they are showing a willingness to face tough topics, but for others, it's a huge relief to finally be taking action to move in a different direction.

Therapy isn't always easy, but I think it's the most worthwhile gift you can give yourself. Find someone you trust and who puts you at ease. The relationship you build with your therapist is the most important aspect of all.

If you have any questions or thoughts about this handout, please feel free to ask!