

Getting the Most Benefit from Therapy

- 1. Make your counseling sessions a priority.** Therapy works best when there's continuity and a feeling of momentum to the work you're doing. If you have a scheduling conflict, try to work with your therapist to reschedule as opposed to canceling whenever possible.
- 2. Co-create an authentic relationship with your therapist.** Many years of research has shown that the connection forged between you and your counselor is crucial to the healing process. Strive to be as open, honest and direct as you can be. Truthful communication is essential. Any thought, no matter how trivial it may seem, is grist for the therapeutic mill.
- 3. Keep the focus on yourself.** Remember that the only person you have any power to change or control is *you*. You've entered counseling because there are aspects of your life that require your attention. Therapy is primarily inner work; changes in your outlook and behavior come from within.
- 4. Know that all the parts of your personality are welcome in the therapy room.** We all have certain aspects of our selves that get activated at different times. Some of these parts we think are desirable, others we prefer to hide. Therapy works best when you are able to allow all of your various 'selves' to be seen and heard during your sessions.
- 5. Allow yourself to express whatever emotions arise.** Fear, anger, shame, joy – emotions are neither right nor wrong. Your feelings are a window into your inner life; they contain all kinds of useful information. Much self-knowledge can be gained by noticing which emotions you're comfortable expressing and which ones you try to avoid. Once again, all feelings are important and worth bringing up during your therapy session.
- 6. Use your therapy sessions to identify themes and patterns in your life.** We've all developed strategies for survival - some are more helpful than others. Be curious but non-judgmental about why you are the way you are. Perhaps some of your habits were useful in the past but are getting in your way now.
- 7. Take responsibility for your behavior, but not for things that are out of your control.** There is a huge price to pay for imagining that you can control things you can't. Depression and anxiety are two mental health issues that often arise from this dilemma. On the other hand, if you spend your therapy sessions blaming other people for how you're living your life, making progress will be difficult.
- 8. Continue your therapeutic work outside of sessions.** As you begin to develop some insight into your thoughts, feelings and behaviors, start using the challenges of everyday life as opportunities to practice what you've learned. Your therapist may give you specific exercises or assignments to work on between sessions, and you can also take the initiative to seek out ways to actualize the changes you've been discussing during your sessions. Whatever problems arise during the week can be brought right back into your next appointment.