

## **Some Things I Want You to Know About the Process of Therapy**

Starting therapy, especially if you've never done it before, can feel a bit scary. You're coming to see me – a virtual stranger – to talk about things that are causing distress in your life. Some of these things may be quite personal. You may need to talk about stuff that you've never shared with anyone else before – and that's anxiety producing for most people. So I want to give you an idea about what the process is like and to suggest a few things that might make it a little easier.

1. My office is a judgment-free zone.

The prime directive in my profession is to provide an environment of 'unconditional positive regard', which is psych-talk for non-judgment. In order to do this work you will have to feel comfortable enough to speak freely, which means we will have to trust each other. If you're worried that I'm going to impose my personal values on you or otherwise judge you, how can you trust me?

2. Seeking counseling is an act of strength, not weakness.

People who enter therapy aren't crazy or failures; they're normal folks who've run into some roadblocks that they can't navigate themselves. I'm here to help you find your way.

3. It might get worse before it gets better.

Sorry, but that's the way it is sometimes. Because we're often dealing with emotional issues that may stretch back over your lifetime, some things may get stirred up that are uncomfortable or disconcerting. That's normal (but not necessarily fun).

4. I don't generally recommend medication as a first-line treatment.

I'm neither trained nor licensed to prescribe meds. Unless you're experiencing severe and/or life-threatening symptoms, I will not assume that you need to use antidepressants or any other drugs.

5. You can talk to me about anything.

In fact this probably won't work very well if you don't. (See #1)

6. I will not tell you what to do about your problems.

Sadly, I don't have any kind of magic that will make things better immediately. I believe that, ultimately, YOU are the expert on you. My job is to ask the right questions, hold up the metaphorical mirror for you and offer you my honest and respectful feedback.

7. You might get angry with me sometimes – and that's OK.

The process of therapy can be intense. Due to the personal nature of the work, it's possible that you will come to view me in much the same way that you saw a parent, sibling or other influential person in an earlier part of your life. This process is called 'transference' and it can be a powerful catalyst for growth.

8. It'll be better for both of us if you keep your account with me up to date.

Money is a therapeutic issue for many people and I am always open to discussing financial matters with you. I'm also a human being who has to make a living, just like you. It'll be much easier for us to concentrate on our work if I'm not distracted (or feeling resentful) about money.

9. Your session is your time to use as you wish.

You're welcome to text or check FB or Instagram while you're in my office, but I believe you'll be far better off if you silence your device so we can focus on the issues at hand.

If you have any lingering worries or questions about beginning therapy, no matter how insignificant you think they might be, go ahead and ask me. I want you to feel as secure and comfortable as possible as you begin your healing journey.