

Getting the Most out of Therapy

Therapy is a significant investment of time, money and effort. With these costs comes the potential for meaningful change and growth. Consider the following strategies to increase your chances of getting all you can from therapy. *These tips are for remote telehealth sessions.*

Set goals. What changes are you hoping to see? Therapy goals often involve psychological skillbuilding, making behavior changes, or gaining insight and support on difficult topics.

Evaluate progress. Periodically review your goals, discuss progress and set new goals. If sessions don't feel clearly connected to your goals, or otherwise feel unhelpful, discuss with your therapist. You may also fill out questionnaires regularly to track progress.

Pick an environment conducive to therapy and minimize distractions. Try to be somewhere relatively quiet and orderly. Use a computer if possible (instead of your phone), so you can see better and your hands are free. Snooze notifications on your phone and computer.

Get settled in a few minutes early. If possible, before each session take a moment to reflect on updates you wish to share (e.g., progress or challenges over the past week) and any priorities for the agenda.

Set an agenda. A typical agenda includes homework review, learning or troubleshooting skills, topics for discussion, and setting goals for the upcoming week.

Take notes (sparingly). Try keeping a therapy notebook. Don't write constantly, which can make it difficult to stay engaged; but do make note of important themes, questions or action items. Taking notes on your computer works too, but runs the risk of distraction.

Ask questions and give feedback. "Press pause" to check in if you're confused, disagree with something or you're noticing a strong reaction (which is natural and expected). These moments are opportunities to tune into your experience and practice responding thoughtfully.

Reserve time for wrap-up. Reserve ~5 minutes at the end of the session to recap takeaways, ask questions, give feedback, decide on homework and identify items for further discussion. Plan in advance how you will follow through on homework: set an alarm or calendar event, identify a friend you'll recruit for accountability, or set out a visual reminder.

Export therapy skills to "real life." Changing habits and cashing out insights happens in the 99% of your week not spent in therapy. Stay on the lookout for opportunities to apply what you're working on in session to the situations that matter most to you.

Other ideas? If you think of any other approaches that would make therapy as helpful as possible for you, please share!