

Communicating With Your Therapist

Tell your therapist your expectations

As early as possible during therapy, share your expectations. It will help avoid frustration and misunderstandings. For example, suppose you suspect the root of your struggles lies in childhood events but haven't communicated that to your therapist. In that case, your sessions might focus only on present situations. If you specifically want to reduce stress, your therapist needs to know how to adjust your sessions' focus.

Tell your therapist your goals for therapy

If you have a specific goal, let your therapist know. If you're unsure, share that with your therapist so you and your therapist can determine what direction to take.

Tell your therapist what works and has worked for you

Each person is unique, and you can help your therapist tailor their approach for you by being honest about what style and questions work best for you. Your therapist has expertise and good reasons for doing what they are doing, but an effective therapist also has some room for flexibility. Let your therapist know if you have been in counseling before and found some aspect or method particularly helpful.

Tell your therapist what doesn't work

Letting your therapist know when something isn't helping is just as important. A mid-course correction in the therapy process is warranted when a particular tool or technique is ineffective for you. Your therapist would prefer to know if something is not working and have a chance to correct it rather than risk you dropping out of therapy without having voiced your concerns.

Tell your therapist if you object to their suggestions

Clients have the right to a free and open discussion about any misgivings during therapy. Be comfortable speaking up. Voicing your concerns provides the best chance for discussion and adjusting to improve your chances of getting the desired help.

Ask questions

You can ask questions about the therapy process, fees, methods, the therapist's training and qualifications, etc. Answers to your questions help both of you set reasonable expectations and goals. However, they will let you know if you ask questions that the therapist considers too personal or intrusive. Please understand that this protects both of you throughout the therapy process, and it is because your therapist cares about you or value the therapeutic relationship that both of you have built.

Request that your therapist use everyday terms you can understand

All professions have jargon and buzzwords. For example, if your therapist suggests an MMPI to check whether you have MDD or ADHD, you have a perfect right to ask for a translation into the everyday language you understand!