



What to Expect in Psychotherapy

6 Must-Knows Before Starting Talk-Therapy at [Creative Pathways Counseling](#)

There are many forms of talk therapy, each with the same goal of reducing symptoms and develop well-being. Before you start your journey of self-awareness, there are some fundamentals you need to know.

1. Psychotherapy cannot be successful unless you want to be there. Though I believe everyone can benefit from psychotherapy, you can't heal if you don't come on your own accord. When partners, friends, or relatives pressure you to get into treatment, you can feel coerced into going to therapy. Often, I detect when this has happened and rework the session to give the decision-making power back to the patient. Therapists are nurturers and helpers, but not mind readers, so don't hold in your reluctance.

2. Psychotherapy will not fix you. YOU will fix you. The job of a psychotherapist is *to help you help yourself*. Advice-giving creates dependency, whereas helping you discover your patterns that keep you stuck or undermine your well-being creates self-awareness. The goal of psychotherapy is to empower you with ways to deal with life issues, learn the triggers, and build resiliency, so you can find well-being.

3. Psychotherapy does not always make you feel better. Making a breakthrough in therapy is always exciting and meaningful. However, achieving awareness sometimes requires you to be brave and fearless. Recalling memories and experiences, or changing a behavioral style, can be trying, upsetting—even overwhelming. Being in therapy will reduce your symptoms and help you feel better, but it's beneficial to know that the journey can sometimes be bumpy. So, for psychotherapy to be successful, you have to crave change, possess a curiosity of your inner world and an interest in understanding what motivates you, and tolerate a moderate degree of frustration. This is where the myth that only crazy people—or weak-minded individuals—go to therapy gets the boot. Talk therapy is a valiant undertaking. And anyone who says otherwise is foolishly misinformed.

4. Psychotherapy will not work if you have unrealistic expectations. Setting realistic goals can make psychotherapy a winning experience. Change does not happen overnight. Faulty-thinking will be challenged, which helps the development of insight. Hardest of all is replacing old behaviors with new ones. It takes time. Talking with a therapist helps you realize if you are being unrealistic—realize you may have other hurdles to cross. As time progresses, you can review these targeted goals and redefine them if necessary.

5. Psychotherapy is not like talking to a friend. Therapy is the forming of an alliance to bring about change in your life. This is done with a therapist who is caring, empathic, and skilled in the symptoms and/or illness you experience. Psychotherapists train many years in the art of listening and, unlike a friend or family member, listen not only with the intent to understand, but also with the goal to identify and analyze. Being an active listener enables a therapist to use theory and techniques to stir your observations as treatment proceeds. Combined with your therapist's clinical objectivity, enables you to get a balanced, unbiased frame of reference in treatment.

6. Psychotherapy requires you to be comfortable with your therapist. There's a lot of chemistry in talk therapy. The kind in which you and your therapist click, and you find a sense of ease. Without this connection, it may be difficult to feel comfortable talking about difficult issues and to feel safe letting go of fears or trying out new behaviors. Once you've done your research on finding a therapist, let your phone call be the first litmus test for this chemistry connection. Let your gut instincts take over at the consultation. If you don't feel comfortable, it's perfectly fine to seek out another professional. Finding a "good fit" in therapy is more important than in *any other kind* of professional relationship you'll have in your life.

NOTES/QUESTIONS: