

The 7 things
NOBODY
told you about
Therapy but
SHOULD HAVE....



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We often fear the unknown, which is why so many of us shy away from therapy. It can be intimidating walking into a therapist's office for the very first time, not knowing what to expect. People have actually told us that they have driven around the block multiple times before they got up the courage to come in to see us.

The thing is, although therapy is not as stigmatized as it once was, it is still not talked about in most social circles. Because it is not openly talk about it, we have found that a lot of people have the wrong ideas about it. If you've been considering seeking help from a mental health professional, you most likely have a million questions as well. So you've come to the right place!

Here is what no one tells you about therapy – but should!

1. It's Not Like on TV



Hollywood would have you believe the minute you step foot into a therapist's office, he or she will have you looking at Rorschach tests (those cards that have funny looking ink blots on them), talking about your dreams, and insisting you talk all about your childhood.

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The reality is that Rorschach tests (while useful and valid) are rarely ever used in treatment; Dream interpretation isn't very reliable and is outdated; and questions about your childhood ... well, that part is kind of true. However, the *entire* session is NOT devoted to discussing your early childhood years and the effect your parents have had on your life. The reality is that most therapists will want to get your history to uncover specific behavioral patterns and emotional memories that have helped wire the brain, but that probably won't be the focus and the purpose isn't to blame your mother for all your problems. There is no real therapeutic value in that!

Rather than sitting with a therapist who is jotting notes on a notepad about every word you say, therapy is a collaborate relationship built between you and your therapist where he/she is working to understand you to ultimately help you get unstuck, to heal, or to make changes that you are wanting to make. We have very specific skills in helping facilitate change, but you are the expert on your own life. We honor that.

2. You Won't Feel Better Immediately

Though the end goal of therapy is to create better habits and behaviors that lead to creating a happy and fulfilling life, the process of getting there *will be* uncomfortable. It is unrealistic to expect you will feel better immediately. Therapy takes time and commitment.

Think about other ways in which people work to improve, even though it is painful. Think about chemotherapy. Chemo can be a critical treatment for cancer, allowing the person to survive. Yet, the chemo itself is difficult and tiring. There is an understanding that the pain of the treatment is worth it in the end. Think also about physical exercise and improving health. Starting a new exercise regiment is painful. Your body aches, muscles are sore, joints might be creaky. However, after doing it for some time, your body settles in and gets used to the new routine as well as the fact it is improving and getting stronger.

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Treat your therapy like the stock market. If you look at the trend of the stock market over time, you can absolutely predict that the market will go up. However if you look at any small section, you may find yourself "losing". Take the bigger picture approach. Anything really worthwhile in life will take effort and energy. Therapy isn't going to be different.



3. You Have to Want to Change

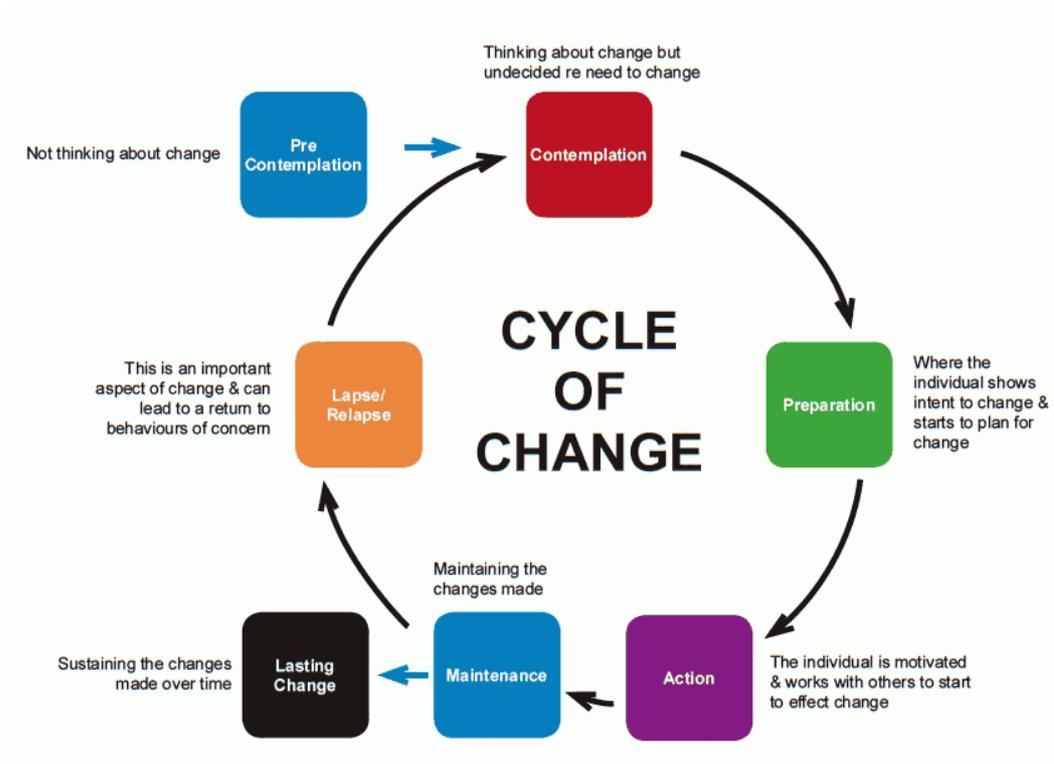
The joke goes, "How many therapists does it take to change a light bulb? One, but the light bulb has to want to change," Therapy doesn't automatically make you better. Just like seeking advice from a nutritionist or personal trainer for tools to be fit and health, if you don't actually follow the plan, you won't see the results.

The way people get better is to face their own behaviors, recognize the patterns, and make healthier choices. Sounds easy, but it is REALLY hard. If it was easy, therapy wouldn't even be a thing. However, don't worry about it being hard. That is what your therapist is there for- to help you every step of the way, supporting you in the ways you need.

Your therapist will be gentle and kind and go at a pace that feels comfortable for you, but ultimately you have to want to get better, to take action, to change the situation. Or sometimes it is learning to accept things that can't change. Irregardless, it takes work from you to get there.

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Here are the predictable motivational stages of change in which people go through before therapy and during therapy. If you are in the first stage (Pre-Contemplation), you are probably not going to get much from therapy.



4. Therapy isn't giving advice

We frequently hear clients specifically ask their therapist what they should do in situations or they are frustrated because the therapist hasn't told them what they should do. Have you ever hear the Chinese Proverb, "Give a Man a Fish and You Feed Him for a Day. Teach a Man To Fish, and You Feed Him for a Lifetime"? It is to your advantage that your therapist helps YOU determine what the "right" answer is for you. You are the expert on your own life. If you leave life decisions solely up to others, they are inevitably going to miss some important details from your life. Your therapist will teach you new ideas, perspectives, skills and whatever else might be useful, but their job isn't just to tell you what to do. Therapy isn't going to magically change or fix things quickly, but it does provide you with the tools for lasting change.

5. Finding a "perfect" fit with a Therapist is important, but it's not everything

Finding a good therapist can feel overwhelming. What if you don't like them? What if you don't think they can help you? What do all the letters after their name mean? What if you have an idea on how old or young your ideal therapist should be?

To start off, therapists are like everyone else, in that they have different personality. Not every therapist is going to be an automatic good fit with every client. That being said, therapists are trained to understand and effectively work with a broad range of people, so you are probably going to find a good fit fairly quickly.

What you want to look for in a Therapist is someone who listens, is able to ask good questions and make accurate assessments on what is going on, and who knows how to work with you for change. They are not your best friend, they are consultants for a period of time.

6. Find a Therapist who isn't a Lone Ranger

When you are on the hunt for a therapist, one major thing to pay attention to is the group environment in which they work. Why does this matter? Two reasons: 1) You want your therapist to be emotionally healthy so they are very focused on only your challenges (rather their own), and 2) you need your therapist to be able to collaborate with other professionals to your benefit.



In order for therapy to genuinely be about you and your struggles, you need your therapist to be reasonably emotionally healthy. For example, if I have a major argument with my spouse before an appointment, I may be very distracted in a session, I might be more negatively reactive to a male client, and I might have a pessimistic attitude about a marital counseling appointment. Life happens and therapists cannot avoid these types of things from happening. However, the benefit of working in a collaborative group is that therapists talk with each other, support each other, hold each other accountable, and provide resources for ensuring that personal issues in the life of the therapist don't interfere with their professional work.

Therapists that work alone or that function alone (meaning that they may technically work around other but don't have a supportive team), are in danger of not being able to do their best work, what you deserve to have.

7. Therapy is expensive, but the alternative is more expensive.

Therapy is expensive. Most people have to pay for therapy- be it through copays or paying fully out of pocket. Even for folks that have an insurance plan that covers treatment 100%, there is still a TIME cost to therapy. The reality is that for some people, the cost of time (1 hour plus travel time) is even more valuable than the financial cost (i.e. \$150/hour).

However, think about the cost in your life should you NOT get help. In situations of marital problems, divorce is hugely expensive and takes an immense amount of time, money and energy out of life to deal with. Even if you have to pay \$150/hour for weekly appointments for a year, you'll probably still be saving money over the cost of hiring attorneys for divorce, mediation, having to support multiple households through child support/alimony, and then having to pay for therapy for your kids because they are now emotionally struggling from the divorce. There are always more unintended consequences to our decisions than we can anticipate.

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The last Golden Nugget that I'll leave you with is that the journey of therapy is worth more than I can possibly say. Learning from your mistakes, from your life circumstances, and/or from your pain, is worth more than Gold. It is an education that you couldn't even begin to get at Harvard.

I trust that you learned something from reading these 7 principles of Therapy: things that nobody has told you but should you know! If you are ready to give Therapy a try, call Mind Spa at [307-509-0772](tel:307-509-0772). We would be honored to work with you!

