
Going to a Therapist

What Is Therapy?

Therapy is a way to get help with a mental health problem or get extra support if you are going through a tough time.

If you go to therapy, you'll have meetings with a therapist to talk and learn. You'll learn skills to cope, feel better, and get help with the problem you're having.

What Problems Do Therapists Help With?

Therapists are trained to help people with all kinds of problems. For example:

They help people who are going through tough times like:

- family problems
- school problems
- dealing with a health condition

They help people who have been through things like:

- trauma
- abuse
- bullying and peer pressure

They help people work out difficult feelings like:

- sadness, depression, or grief
- anger
- stress, anxiety, or worry
- low self-esteem

They help people with conditions like:

- ADHD
- depression
- OCD
- anxiety disorders
- eating disorders
- self-harm behaviors
- autism
- learning disorders

- sleep problems

What Happens in Therapy?

In therapy, people meet with a therapist to talk and learn ways to work out their problems.

At the beginning, the therapist asks questions about your problems. They also ask about other things in your life, such as family, school, and health. They listen to what it's like for you so they can understand you. They talk with you and with your parent — sometimes together, sometimes separately. They explain how they can help you. Together you decide on goals for your therapy.

You have more visits with your therapist to work on your goals. In therapy visits, you might:

- **Talk.** Therapists have people talk about their feelings. When you put your feelings into words, you learn more about yourself. When you talk through your difficult feelings, it helps you deal with them. It helps you pause instead of act on upset feelings. When you talk about your good feelings, and what's going well for you, it builds more good feelings. Therapists guide you to see how your feelings, thoughts, choices, and actions affect each other.
- **Learn things.** Therapists teach lessons about emotions, thoughts, coping skills, facing fears, and more. Parents and caregivers may learn ways to help you too. What each person learns about in therapy depends on what they need help with.
- **Practice new skills.** A therapist might teach skills like mindfulness, positive self-talk, and calm breathing. In your therapy visits, you'll practice the skills you learn.
- **Work out problems.** Your therapist will ask how problems affect you at home and at school. You'll talk this through. You'll use the skills you're learning to work out problems.
- **Find your strengths.** Therapy helps you build inner strengths like courage and confidence. It helps you see how capable you are. And that helps you feel happier in your life.

How Long Do People Do Therapy?

How long therapy lasts depends on your goals. Most of the time, a therapist will want to meet with you once a week for a few months.

How Can You Help Yourself?

If you're going to a therapist, here are things you can do to get the most out of it:

- **Be ready to grow.** Have a positive mindset. Believe in yourself. Tell yourself, "I can" instead of, "I can't."
- **Practice skills you're learning in therapy.** The more you practice, the more skillful you become. The skills you learn in therapy are tools for your everyday life. With practice, these skills start to come naturally to you. They're there for you when you need them.
- **Ask parents, teachers, and friends for support.** Spend time with people you feel good around, and who bring out your best. Let them help and show they care.
- **Work on your strengths.** Spend time doing the things you are good at. This helps you build your confidence. It helps your strengths keep growing.
- **Take care of your body.** Get exercise every day. Eat healthy foods and drink lots of water. Get plenty of sleep. Take time to relax. These things boost your mood and your mental well-being.

- **Take care of your mind.** Practice mindful breathing to help you be calm and focused. Practice self-talk that is positive, kind, and hopeful. The more you do this, the more it helps.

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Date reviewed: November 2021

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