

Benefiting From Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy requires a personal commitment of time, emotional energy, and money. Therefore, here are a few suggestions to help you derive the most benefit from your investment in therapy:

- It is important to say whatever comes into your mind without censoring your thoughts or feelings. You may feel vulnerable or embarrassed about sharing some of your thoughts and feelings, yet these are often the most important experiences to discuss. Dreams, fantasies, daydreams, memories, important daily events, significant interactions, feelings about yourself, and feelings about the therapist are all normal parts of the therapeutic dialogue.

- Dreams can be an important source of information in psychotherapy. If you decide to discuss your dreams, remember to leave a paper pad and a pen beside your bed. Attempt to write down your dreams first thing in the morning before the dream fades. Record the dream in as much detail as possible because even things that don't initially appear important can be critical to understanding the dream. Finally, make sure that you write down the various feelings that you experience, both during the dream and after awakening.
 - At times it may be helpful to keep a journal of your experiences. Keeping a journal can help you become more aware of patterns in your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. It may also help you remember important things to discuss in sessions.
 - It is difficult to predict how long therapy will take. For some, it will last several months; for others, it will last several years. However, it is important to remember that lasting change often takes time. People who stay in therapy for two years or more have the highest degree of satisfaction and the greatest improvement in their overall functioning.
- Consistency is an important part of benefiting from therapy. There will be days when you will not feel like coming to your scheduled appointment or will not feel like you have much to discuss. However, those days are usually when it is most important to come to the appointment and examine the underlying reasons for these feelings. Also, when sessions are missed or canceled, it gives the old pattern- the ones you are trying to change - a greater chance to re-establish.

**This text is adapted from Dr. Mark Winborn's Patient Handout: Benefiting from Therapy and Patient Information*

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