



# Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program  
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## Finding a Therapist Who Can Help You Heal

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**Finding the right therapist will probably take some time and work, but it's worth the effort. The connection you have with your therapist is essential.**

You need someone who you can trust—someone you feel comfortable talking to about difficult subjects and intimate secrets, someone who will be a partner in your recovery. Therapy won't be effective unless you have this bond, so take some time at the beginning to find the right person. It's okay to shop around and ask questions when interviewing potential therapists.

### Questions to ask yourself when choosing a therapist

What's most important in a therapist or counselor is a sense of connection, safety, and support. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it seem like the therapist truly cares about you and your problems?
- Do you feel as if the therapist understands you?
- Does the therapist accept you for who you are?
- Would you feel comfortable revealing personal information to this individual?
- Do you feel as if you can be honest and open with this therapist? That you don't have to hide or pretend you're someone that you're not?
- Is the therapist a good listener? Does he or she listen without interrupting, criticizing, or judging? Pick up on your feelings and what you're really saying? Make you feel heard?

### Common types of therapy

Most therapists don't limit themselves to one specific type of therapy; rather, they blend different styles in order to best fit the situation at hand. This approach gives the therapist many powerful tools. However, they often have a general orientation that guides them.

**Individual therapy.** Individual therapy explores negative thoughts and feelings, as well as the harmful or self-destructive behaviors that might accompany them. Individual therapy may delve into the underlying causes of current problems (such as unhealthy relationship patterns or a traumatic experience from your past), but the primary focus is on making positive changes in the present.

**Family therapy.** Family therapy involves treating more than one member of the family at the same time to help the family resolve conflicts and improve interaction. It is often based on the premise that families are a system. If one role in the family changes, all are affected and need to change their behaviors as well.

**Group therapy.** Group therapy is facilitated by a professional therapist, and involves a group of peers working on the same problem, such as anxiety, depression or substance abuse, for example. Group therapy can be a valuable place to practice social dynamics in a safe environment and find inspiration and ideas from peers who are struggling with the same issues.

**Couples therapy (marriage counseling).** Couples therapy involves the two people in a committed relationship. People go to couples therapy to learn how to work through their differences, communicate better and problem-solve challenges in the relationship.

**Online vs. in-person therapy.** Online therapy allows you to access professional help from anywhere you have a reliable Internet connection. While it's a relatively

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new form of therapy, evidence suggests that for many people it can be just as effective as traditional, in-person therapy.

Talking to a mental health provider from your own home using a live video chat can help you avoid the expense, travel time, and inconvenience of having to meet in-person at the therapist's office. Being in a familiar, comfortable environment can even make it easier for you to talk openly about your issues—whether individually or as a couple or family.

### What to expect in therapy or counseling

Every therapist is different, but there are usually some similarities in how therapy is structured. Normally, sessions will last about an hour, and take place around once a week. Although for more intensive therapy, they may be scheduled more often. Therapy is normally conducted in the therapist's office, but therapists also work in hospitals and nursing homes, and in some cases will conduct home visits.

- **Expect a good fit between you and your therapist.** Don't settle for bad fit. You may need to see one or more therapists until you feel understood and accepted.
- **Therapy is a partnership.** Both you and your therapist contribute to the healing process. You're not expected to do the work of recovery all by yourself, but your therapist can't do it for you either. Therapy should feel like a collaboration.
- **Therapy will not always feel pleasant.** Painful memories, frustrations or feelings might surface. This is a normal part of therapy and your therapist will guide you through this process. Be sure to communicate with your therapist about how you are feeling.
- **Therapy should be a safe place.** While at times you'll feel challenged or face unpleasant feelings, you should always feel safe. If you're starting to feel overwhelmed or you're dreading your therapy sessions, talk to your therapist

The first session or two of therapy is a time for mutual connection, and a time for the therapist to learn about you and your issues. The therapist may ask for a mental and physical health history.

It's also a good idea to talk to the therapist about what you hope to achieve in therapy. Together, you can set goals and benchmarks that you can use to measure

your progress along the way.

This is also an important time for you to evaluate your connection with your therapist. Do you feel like your therapist cares about your situation, and is invested in your recovery? Do you feel comfortable asking questions and sharing sensitive information? Remember, your feelings as well as your thoughts are important, so if you are feeling uncomfortable, don't hesitate to consider another therapist.

### How long does therapy last?

Everyone's treatment is different. How long your therapy lasts depends on many factors. You may have complicated issues, or a relatively straightforward problem that you want to address. Some therapy treatment types are short term, while others may last longer. Practically, your insurance coverage might limit you.

However, discussing the length of therapy is important to bring up with your therapist at the beginning. This will give you an idea of goals to work towards and what you want to accomplish. Don't be afraid to revisit this issue at any time as therapy progresses, since goals often are modified or changed during treatment.

### Making the most of therapy and counseling

To make the most of therapy, you need to apply what you're learning in your sessions to real life. Fifty minutes in therapy each week isn't going to fix you; it's how you use what you've learned in the rest of your time. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your sessions:

- **Make healthy lifestyle changes.** There are many things you can do in your daily life to support your mood and improve your emotional health. Reach out to others for support. Get plenty of exercise and sleep. Eat well. Make time for relaxation and play. The list goes on...
- **Don't expect the therapist to tell you what to do.** You and your therapists are partners in your recovery. Your therapist can help guide you and make suggestions for treatment, but only you can make the changes you need to move forward.
- **Make a commitment to your treatment.** Don't skip sessions unless you absolutely have to. If your therapist gives you homework in between sessions, be sure to do it. If you find yourself skipping sessions or are reluctant to go, ask yourself why.

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Are you avoiding painful discussion? Did your last session touch a nerve? Talk about your reluctance with your therapist.

- **Share what you are feeling.** You will get the most out of therapy if you are open and honest with your therapist about your feelings. If you feel embarrassed or ashamed, or something is too painful to talk about, don't be afraid to tell your therapist. Slowly, you can work together to get at the issues.

### Is therapy working?

You should be able to tell within a session or two whether you and your therapist are a good fit. But sometimes, you may like your therapist but feel that you aren't making progress. It's important to evaluate your progress to make sure you're getting what you need from therapy.

A word of caution: There is no smooth, fast road to recovery. It's a process that's full of twists, turns, and the occasional backtrack. Sometimes, what originally seemed like a straightforward problem turns into a more complicated issue. Be patient and don't get discouraged over temporary setbacks. It's not easy to break old, entrenched patterns.

Remember that growth is difficult, and you won't be a new person overnight. But you should notice positive changes in your life. Your overall mood might be improving, for example. You may feel more connected to family and friends. Or a crisis that might have overwhelmed you in the past doesn't throw you as much this time.

### Tips for evaluating your progress in therapy

- Is your life changing for the better? Look at different parts of your life: work, home, your social life.
- Are you meeting the goals you and your therapist have set?
- Is therapy challenging you? Is it stretching you beyond your comfort zone?
- Do you feel like you're starting to understand yourself better?
- Do you feel more confident and empowered?
- Are your relationships improving?

Your therapist should work with you, reevaluating your goals and progress as necessary. However, remember

that therapy isn't a competition. You are not a failure if you don't meet your goals in the number of sessions that you originally planned. Focus instead on overall progress and what you've learned along the way.

Whether you know exactly what you're looking for or you are just starting the therapy journey, the EAP is here to help. Please call us at (800) 777-4114 to start the process of getting connected to a therapist.

### References:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/finding-a-therapist-who-can-help-you-heal.htm>