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# How to Make Therapy Rewarding and Successful \*

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This memo contains information vital to the success of your therapy. Please read it carefully, fill out the multiple choice items, and return it to your therapist at the next session. He or she will be happy to discuss any questions you may have.

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## HOW CAN I TELL IF THE THERAPY IS HELPING ME?

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You can monitor the effectiveness of your treatment and the rate of your improvement with brief, accurate, self-assessment tests. These tests measure feelings of depression and anxiety and several other symptoms. Your therapist will provide copies of these tests for you to fill out in the waiting room prior to each appointment. This will only take a couple minutes.

Show the results to your therapist at the beginning of every session. Your therapist may also ask you to take these tests again at the end of each session to measure your improvement. Leave the test for your therapist before you go home. That way, you'll both be aware of how you're responding to therapy and what techniques are working, as well as what techniques are not helping. This information will help guide the treatment in a positive direction.

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## HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MY THERAPIST?

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In therapy, it's important to know that your therapist respects you and understands you. This doesn't mean that therapy will always be smooth and free of conflict. In fact, a certain amount of conflict is a normal part of therapy. Sharing negative feelings openly and respectfully is invaluable and can lead to a greater sense of understanding and teamwork.

The Report of Therapy Session asks you to indicate how much warmth, trust and understanding you felt from your therapist during your most recent therapy session. You can also indicate how helpful the session was and whether you had any negative feelings that you didn't get a chance to mention. Please complete the Report of Therapy Session in the waiting room after each session along with the mood tests described above. You and your therapist can discuss the results at the beginning of the next session.

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## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL STUCK OR IF I'M UPSET WITH MY THERAPIST?

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There probably will be times when you feel stuck and convinced you aren't making any progress. You may get annoyed with something your therapist said or feel convinced that she or he doesn't really understand how you feel inside. Frequently, these reactions will be quite justified!

It can be extremely helpful to talk these feelings over with your therapist, even though it isn't always easy. You may be afraid of conflict or concerned about hurting your therapist's feelings. If you don't tell your therapist how you feel, the feelings may sabotage your progress. Most good therapists have enough self-esteem and objectivity to listen without getting defensive. A frank discussion of your feelings will often lead to an unexpected therapeutic breakthrough.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET TURNED OFF AND DECIDE TO DROP OUT OF THERAPY BETWEEN SESSIONS?

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Unfortunately, some people drop out of treatment prematurely and do not receive the benefit of the treatment. Persistence is the key to success. If you get upset and decide to drop out between sessions, it would be valuable to come for one additional session to discuss your concerns. These moments when therapy seems to be failing are often the greatest opportunities for personal growth. Frequently, you'll feel better and the therapy will get back on track. If you're still not satisfied, your therapist can help you find a referral to another therapist.

**Instructions.** The following questionnaire describes a number of reasons people end therapy prematurely. Please use checks (✓) to indicate how you usually think and feel, and return it to your therapist at the next session.

### Conflict Phobia

Some people avoid conflict and sweep their feelings under the carpet. Is it hard for you to talk things over when you feel upset with someone?

1. \_\_\_\_ I do not find it difficult to express negative feelings.
2. \_\_\_\_ It's somewhat difficult for me.
3. \_\_\_\_ It's moderately difficult for me.
4. \_\_\_\_ It's extremely difficult for me.

If you felt mistrustful or upset with your therapist, would you be inclined to drop out of therapy between sessions?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would not drop out between sessions if I felt upset.
2. \_\_\_\_ There is a slight chance I'd drop out if I felt upset.

3. \_\_\_\_ There's a moderate chance I'd drop out.
4. \_\_\_\_ It's very likely that I'd drop out.

### **Therapeutic Niceness**

Your therapist may be very caring, but the treatment may not be effective. Would you find it hard to criticize a therapist who was friendly and nice to you?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would not find it difficult to criticize a therapist who was overly nice to me.
2. \_\_\_\_ I would find it somewhat difficult.
3. \_\_\_\_ I would find it moderately difficult.
4. \_\_\_\_ I would find it extremely difficult.

If you felt you weren't getting anywhere and your therapist was "too nice," would you drop out of therapy and avoid discussing this?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would not drop out of therapy.
2. \_\_\_\_ There's a slight chance I'd drop out.
3. \_\_\_\_ There's a moderate chance I'd drop out.
4. \_\_\_\_ It's very likely that I'd drop out.

### **Financial Problems**

Could financial concerns make it difficult to continue your therapy?

1. \_\_\_\_ The cost of therapy will not be a problem for me.
2. \_\_\_\_ It's somewhat likely that the cost will be a problem.
3. \_\_\_\_ It's moderately likely that the cost will be a problem.
4. \_\_\_\_ It's extremely likely that the cost will be a problem.

If the cost of therapy became a problem, how inclined would you be to drop out of therapy between sessions without talking things over?

1. \_\_\_\_ Not at all likely
2. \_\_\_\_ Somewhat likely
3. \_\_\_\_ Moderately likely
4. \_\_\_\_ Extremely likely

### **Shame**

Many people have problems it's hard to talk about, such as sexual difficulties or fantasies, sexual or physical abuse, violent or suicidal impulses, drug or alcohol abuse, rituals or habits such as binge-eating and vomiting, or illegal activities, to name just a few.

Feelings of shame may make it hard to discuss these difficulties. You may be afraid that your therapist will judge you. You may fear that your therapist will not protect your confidentiality and will disclose your feelings to others. You may believe that if you don't talk about your problems, they will go away sooner or later and you won't have to face them. Do you have problems that might be hard to talk to your therapist about?

1. \_\_\_\_ Yes
2. \_\_\_\_ Maybe
3. \_\_\_\_ No

How inclined would you be to drop out of therapy so that you don't have to discuss these difficulties?

1. \_\_\_\_ Not at all likely
2. \_\_\_\_ Somewhat likely
3. \_\_\_\_ Moderately likely
4. \_\_\_\_ Extremely likely

How helpful do you think it would be to discuss all of your problems with your therapist?

1. \_\_\_\_ Not helpful
2. \_\_\_\_ Somewhat helpful
3. \_\_\_\_ Moderately helpful
4. \_\_\_\_ Extremely helpful

### Low Motivation

Some people want to be in therapy, while others have mixed feelings about it. If you're not motivated to be in therapy, you may be inclined to drop out of therapy between sessions.

There are many reasons that you might not want to be in therapy. You may feel skeptical that the therapy could help. You may feel that others are to blame for your problems and resent the fact that you should have to change. You may feel pressured by family members or authorities to come to treatment. You may feel that coming to therapy makes you appear weak or sick, and think you should be able to work out your problems on your own. You may be afraid that therapy will be upsetting, or think that you will have to give up something, like violence, overeating or alcohol abuse, in order to get better.

How strongly do you want to be in therapy?

1. \_\_\_\_ In all honesty, I do not feel particularly motivated to be in therapy right now.

2. \_\_\_\_ I feel somewhat motivated to be in therapy.
3. \_\_\_\_ I feel moderately motivated to be in therapy.
4. \_\_\_\_ I feel extremely motivated to be in therapy.

If you suddenly lose the motivation to be in therapy, how inclined would you be to drop out of therapy between sessions?

1. \_\_\_\_ Not at all likely
2. \_\_\_\_ Somewhat likely
3. \_\_\_\_ Moderately likely
4. \_\_\_\_ Extremely likely

### **High Expectations**

Some people expect therapy to work rapidly and dramatically. Although this sometimes happens, most people need longer periods of time to overcome their problems. If you don't get positive results as quickly as you hoped, you may think that the therapy cannot help and have the urge to drop out.

How many sessions and months do you expect your therapy will require? Take your best guess.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ sessions
2. \_\_\_\_\_ months

What's the maximum number of sessions and months you'd be willing to participate in therapy?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ sessions
2. \_\_\_\_\_ months

If you felt you weren't making progress fast enough, would you be tempted to drop out between sessions without talking things over with your therapist?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would not be tempted to drop out between sessions.
2. \_\_\_\_ I would be somewhat likely to drop out.
3. \_\_\_\_ I would be moderately likely to drop out.
4. \_\_\_\_ I would be very likely to drop out.

### **Hopelessness**

Many individuals feel hopeless at times. Your problems might seem overwhelming and impossible to solve. You may be tempted to drop out of therapy because you believe that the treatment cannot possibly help. Do you sometimes feel hopeless and pessimistic that things could ever get better?

1. \_\_\_\_ I rarely or never feel hopeless.
2. \_\_\_\_ I sometimes feel hopeless.
3. \_\_\_\_ I often feel hopeless.
4. \_\_\_\_ I nearly always feel hopeless.

If you suddenly felt hopeless between sessions, would you feel tempted to cancel your next session and drop out of therapy?

1. \_\_\_\_ No, I would not drop out if I felt suddenly hopeless.
2. \_\_\_\_ I would be somewhat tempted to drop out.
3. \_\_\_\_ I would be moderately tempted to drop out.
4. \_\_\_\_ I would be extremely tempted to drop out.

### Relapse

After you improve, you may suddenly relapse and sink back into depression again and conclude, "My improvement was just a fluke. I'm basically hopeless after all. I might as well give up." Nearly all patients experience this. It's crucial to persist at these times, and to continue to apply the skills you are learning. If you do, there will nearly always be a second wave of improvement and you will learn how to control your moods more effectively.

If you improved in therapy and then got suddenly worse, would you feel tempted to cancel your next session and drop out of therapy?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would not feel at all inclined to cancel my next session and drop out.
2. \_\_\_\_ I would feel somewhat inclined to drop out.
3. \_\_\_\_ I would feel moderately inclined to drop out.
4. \_\_\_\_ I would feel extremely inclined to drop out.

If you improved and then got suddenly worse, would you meet with your therapist to discuss this problem?

1. \_\_\_\_ I would probably not want to meet with my therapist if I suddenly got worse.
2. \_\_\_\_ I would be slightly willing to meet with my therapist.
3. \_\_\_\_ I would be moderately willing to meet with my therapist.
4. \_\_\_\_ I would be very willing to meet with my therapist.

**Premature Recovery**

Sometimes people feel suddenly better and then tell themselves, “Hey, I feel great. I don’t need any more treatment.” If this happens, it would be helpful if you would meet with your therapist for one final session to review what was helpful, to bring therapy to an appropriate closure and to make plans in case you need additional sessions in the future.

If you felt suddenly better, would you be tempted to drop out between sessions?

- 1. \_\_\_\_ I would not be tempted to drop out of therapy between sessions if I suddenly felt happy.
- 2. \_\_\_\_ I would be somewhat tempted to drop out.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ I would be moderately tempted to drop out.
- 4. \_\_\_\_ I would be extremely tempted to drop out.

If you felt suddenly better between sessions, would you meet with your therapist again?

- 1. \_\_\_\_ I would not meet with my therapist.
- 2. \_\_\_\_ I would be somewhat inclined to meet with my therapist.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ I would be moderately inclined to meet with my therapist.
- 4. \_\_\_\_ I would definitely meet with my therapist.

**Other**

Can you think of any other problems which might make you feel like dropping out of therapy between sessions? Please describe them here:

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## SUMMARY

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If you were dissatisfied with your auto mechanic, you would have every right to stop going to that person, and you would have no obligation to explain why. Therapy is a little different because discussing your negative feelings can be an important part of the therapeutic process. We respect your right to terminate at any time for any reason, but hope that we will have a chance to resolve any problems before you finalize your decision.

Prior to the last session, your therapist may ask you to complete a form called the Patient's Evaluation of Therapy. On this form, you can indicate what you liked and disliked about the treatment, how much you have improved, and what further work needs to be done. Reviewing your responses with your therapist during the last session will give both of you a chance to review the therapy and bring the treatment to an appropriate closure.

Perhaps you feel ready to make a commitment to talk things over with your therapist if a problem comes up between sessions. Or perhaps you still feel unsure and need to discuss this issue with your therapist. Which statement best describes how you now feel? Put a (✓) in one of these three boxes to indicate how you feel:

1. I'm willing to make a **definite** commitment to speak with my therapist in person during a regularly scheduled therapy session before I make any decision to end therapy.
2. I'm not sure whether or not I'm willing to make that commitment.
3. I'm not willing to make that commitment. I want the right to drop out of treatment at any time for any reason without discussing this decision with my therapist.

Keep in mind that it can sometimes be difficult to keep this commitment. If you feel upset with your therapist, you may have an overwhelming temptation to avoid talking things over face-to-face. It can require determination not to give in to this urge. The benefits of confronting the problem instead of walking away from it can be considerable.