
The Concept of Self-Help *

The purpose of treatment is to *feel* better, to *understand why* you got depressed or anxious, and to *learn to cope* more effectively in the future.

There are several reasons why you may feel better during therapy:

1. You may experience an emotional uplift because you solve a personal problem.
2. You may appreciate the support of a therapist who understands you and approves of you.
3. You may benefit from an antidepressant medication.
4. You may do things to help yourself between therapy sessions, such as scheduling more productive and rewarding activities, becoming more assertive with people, or recording the negative thoughts that upset you.

Some of the newer forms of therapy emphasize a structured self-help program as a part of the treatment. People who do these self-help assignments between therapy sessions usually make the most rapid gains. In contrast, people who are unwilling to help themselves between sessions are often slow to improve.

For this reason, it's crucial for you to decide whether you are willing to make an effort to help yourself as a part of your treatment. Please answer the following questions and return this memo to your therapist at the next session so you can review it together.

Put a check (✓) in the box to indicate the way you think and feel.	yes	no	needs discussion
1. I understand that my therapist emphasizes a self-help program as a key to personal growth.			
2. I am willing to do things to help myself between therapy sessions.			

Please indicate how frequently you will do the self-help assignments:

Self-Help Contract	
In the boxes to the right, indicate how much time you will spend on the self-help assignments between sessions.	
1. How much time do you agree to spend on self-help assignments between sessions each day? (please fill in the time to the right).	_____ (minutes per day)
2. How many days per week are you willing to do self-help assignments between sessions?	_____ (days per week)
3. How many weeks will you continue doing the self-help assignments while you are in therapy?	_____ (weeks)

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SELF-HELP FORMS AND METHODS

The following is a review of some self-help methods your therapist may use.

1. **Activity Schedules:** A variety of forms are available to help you organize your time more productively.
2. **Daily Mood Log:** A journal for recording negative feelings and thoughts.
3. **Checklist of Cognitive Distortions:** A list of the ten types of twisted thinking that lead to depression, anxiety, guilt and anger.
4. **The Pleasure Predicting Sheet:** You predict the amount of satisfaction you will get from activities with the potential for pleasure, learning or growth.
5. **Bibliotherapy:** Your therapist may assign chapters from a self-help book.
6. **Self-Assessment Tests:** Your therapist may ask you to take self-assessment tests between sessions to evaluate the severity of depression or anxiety as well as the satisfaction you feel in your closest relationship. These tests can help you track your progress in therapy.
7. **Therapeutic Empathy Scale:** You rate your therapist's warmth, understanding and genuineness after each session, and review this information with him or her at the beginning of the next session.
8. **Communication Training:** Your therapist may teach you the **Five Secrets of Effective Communication**. These skills can help you deal more effectively with problems in personal or professional relationships.
9. **Decision-Making Form:** This helps you weigh the advantages and disadvantages of various options when you face difficult personal decisions.
10. **Taping Sessions:** Your therapist may ask you to tape your sessions so you can listen to the tapes at home between sessions. During a productive session you may discover many exciting insights which all seem perfectly clear. An hour or two later, you may have trouble remembering what the session was about. When you listen to the tape, it all becomes clear again. Many patients report that the tapes are more helpful than the actual sessions.