

Making the decision to seek help from a professional is not easy. There is uncomfortable vulnerability and humility in admitting "I need help." & If you haven't made the move yet, I hope you do only when YOU are ready. That is when real change has the potential to take place.

Below are a few ways to get the most out of therapy when you do decide to go:

1. Find a Therapist you connect with.

When you are searching for a therapist look at their qualifications & specialties. Most therapists have professional profiles on their website or on therapy finder websites.

2. Brainstorm possible goals.

Having goals before entering into therapy isn't mandatory. But having a good idea of what you are wanting to change in your life or work on could be very helpful to the therapeutic process. Productive goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant & Time-bound). Your therapist can help you with this in case you feel stuck.

3. Show up.

Have a level of commitment even before you start. Be mindful that change takes time. Consistency with sessions is a part of the process. Life happens and barriers exist. But when you are committed, it helps you to be accountable & responsible for your success.

4. Take notes during your sessions.

It's not a necessity to write down everything you discuss with your therapist. Nor is it possible. But make sure you have a notebook or notepad available to jot down thoughts, conclusions, homework or concepts you may want to revisit at a later date.

5. Ask questions.

Speaking of note taking, write down a few questions that may come up prior to therapy and make a note of questions that may arise after your sessions. Remember to ask these questions before or after your session.

6. Be honest with your Therapist.

I would suggest you open up when you are comfortable. Only when you feel the atmosphere is safe enough for you. Also, don't feel like this needs to happen in the first session. Don't let your hesitancy to disclose every detail of your life, hinder you from starting therapy. It may take time. Your therapist will meet you where you are. But again, being honest is the best way to go if you want to increase your chances of getting the most out of the experience.

7. Have an open mind.

Be ready to be challenged in your thinking patterns and ideas. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Most likely what you've tried wasn't working. Otherwise, you wouldn't be seeing a therapist, right? Or maybe you just want validation or confirmation you are on the right track? Whatever the case-open your mind to the process.

8. Do the homework.

Half of the work you do involves showing up. The other half is the work you do outside of sessions. Read the books. Try the exercises. Practice the techniques. Take your medication as prescribed.

9. Communicate with your Therapist what doesn't work.

Speaking of doing your homework, if your therapist suggests something that's not helpful, let them know.

Bonus Tip: Find a new Therapist if you have to. One of the risks associated with therapy is meeting a professional you don't develop a connection with. If this happens and you don't see progress, it is okay to find a new therapist. In fact, it is a part of the process for some. Therapists know this & we are not offended when people make the best decision themselves.