What to expect from therapy

A short guide for anyone starting out.

It is normal to feel nervous about starting therapy, unsure what to say, or doubtful about whether it will help. You do not need to prepare anything or have it all worked out.

What happens

- **The first session or two** are about getting to know you: what has brought you, what is going on in your life, what you are hoping for. You can say as much or as little as you want.
- **After that,** we work on what matters to you. Sometimes that is talking and making sense of things. Sometimes it is learning and practising something specific.
- **We review as we go.** I will ask how you are finding it. You can tell me at any time if something is not working for you.

What helps therapy work

1. **Being as open as you can.** Including about things that seem small, embarrassing or unrelated.
2. **Saying when something does not fit.** If I get it wrong, or go too fast, I want to know.
3. **Coming regularly.** Long gaps make it harder to build on the last session.
4. **Trying things between sessions.** An hour a week is a small part of your life. Most of the change comes from what you do in the rest of the week.
5. **Patience.** It is common to feel a bit worse before feeling better, as things that have been pushed down come up.

Common worries

The worry	A response
"I will not know what to say."	That is fine. I will help. Silences are allowed.
"My problems are not serious enough."	If it matters to you, it is worth bringing.
"I might cry."	Many people do. Tissues are provided, and it is nothing to apologise for.
"What if I do not like it?"	Tell me. We can change how we work, or I can help you find someone who is a better fit.

Practical things

I will explain confidentiality and its limits, fees, and how to cancel or rearrange when we first meet. Ask about anything that is not clear.

What I am hoping for, and anything I am worried about

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Before my first session

A few notes to bring with you. Fill in as much or as little as you like.

Name _____ Date _____

What has led me to look for therapy now

How long it has been going on, and anything that made it start or get worse

How it affects my day-to-day life (sleep, work, relationships, mood)

What I have already tried

What I hope will be different

Who and what supports me at the moment

Anything I want my therapist to know about what helps me feel comfortable

Questions I want to ask

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My goals for therapy

What you want to be different, and how close you are to it now.

Name _____ Date _____

What has brought me to therapy now?

If therapy goes well, what will be different? What will I be doing that I am not doing now?

A useful goal

is specific, is about what you will do (not only how you will feel), and is within your own influence. "Go for coffee with a friend once a week" is easier to work towards than "be more confident".

Goal 1

How close am I to this today?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Nowhere near ... There

Goal 2

How close am I to this today?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Nowhere near ... There

Goal 3

How close am I to this today?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Nowhere near ... There

What might get in the way, and what would help?

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Getting set up for online sessions

A few practical things that make a video session work as well as one in the room.

Online therapy can be just as effective as meeting in person. A little preparation makes a big difference.

Your space

- [ ] Somewhere private where I will not be overheard or interrupted
- [ ] A door I can close. Headphones if others are at home.
- [ ] Tell the people I live with that I am not available for the hour
- [ ] If home is not private, the car (parked) or a walk with headphones can work
- [ ] A comfortable seat. Tissues and water within reach.

Your set-up

- [ ] Device charged or plugged in
- [ ] Camera at eye level, face well lit, with the light in front of me
- [ ] A steady connection. Close other apps and tabs.
- [ ] Notifications off
- [ ] Log in a few minutes early

Getting the most from it

- Give yourself ten minutes before and after. In person you would have the journey. Online, you go straight back to the kitchen.
- Do not schedule a session between two meetings.
- Tell me if you cannot see or hear well, or if something feels different from being in the room.
- If you are in a different place than usual, let me know where you are at the start.

If the connection drops

We will agree a back-up plan in our first session, usually that I will ring you on the phone number you have given me.

Where I will have my sessions

Anything that would make online sessions easier for me

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Session notes: what I am taking away

Fill this in straight after a session, while it is fresh.

Name _____ Date _____

The main things we talked about

What stood out, surprised me or hit home

What I want to remember

What I am going to try before next time

Questions, or things I want to bring to the next session

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Weekly review

A short review of your week, to fill in before each session.

Name _____ Date _____

My mood this week overall

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Very low — Very good

What went well this week, even slightly

What was hard

What I practised, and what I noticed

The main thing I want to use the next session for

Anything else I want my therapist to know

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