

# PSYCHOTHERAPY FAQs

***Are you considering therapy, but still have questions?*** Since people may not discuss their experience with therapy (or even tell people that they are going to therapy), it can be hard for people to know what to expect. There are also a few misconceptions about what therapy really is, based on people's experience seeing Psychologists in movies or on TV (*my personal favorite is [this one](#)*). I'd like to offer some of my insights on a few of the most frequently asked questions about therapy.

## **Is therapy just paying someone listen to me talk about my life or problems?**

In a word: NO! Realistically, you can do that with friends or family for free. Sure, your therapist will listen to what's been going on to really try to understand your perspective. However, **the therapist will also offer their conceptualization (or, professional perspective) on what the underlying issue(s) could be and help you gain the tools you need to address those issues.** That's the value of therapy.

## **Can the therapist/Psychologist prescribe a medication for me (for depression, anxiety, etc.)?**

No, Psychologists cannot prescribe medications. People often confuse them with Psychiatrists, who are medical doctors who *can* prescribe meds for things like depression, anxiety, and much more. Sometimes a Psychologist and a Psychiatrist may closely work together on your behalf, to help you better manage your symptoms. But, you'd still need to meet with a Psychiatrist regularly (or another medical provider, like your Primary Care Provider) to manage any medications that you want to try.

## **Will the therapist tell me what to do with my life?**

In another word: Nope! That said, if there are concerns about your safety, health, or well-being, of course the therapist will be direct in suggesting a plan to address those concerns. After all, the therapist ultimately wants to make sure you stay physically and emotionally safe. But, therapy isn't about just giving you advice. Again, we're sure you have *plenty of folks* in your regular life who do that. **We're here to reflect and challenge you into considering what you want for your life and assist you in creating the life that you want.** We can help you hoist the sails, suggest a map, or point at the compass, but we cannot steer your ship. You are the captain of your life.

## **Will the therapist keep what we talk about in therapy private?**

Yes, with certain limits. With the exception of certain concerns about your or others' safety and welfare, what you discuss with your therapist is confidential. They can't even discuss it with a loved one of yours without a release from you. It's important to know that I'm talking about therapy with adult clients. There may be different rules for minors.

## **Will I automatically feel better after therapy?**

Maybe so; maybe not. I sometimes compare therapy to weight training. When you work a new or weak muscle, you may feel really, really sore afterward at first. Then, as you continue training, you start feeling less sore, and notice that you feel better in other ways. In therapy, you may feel many uncomfortable feelings at first (like sadness, guilt, anxiety, or anger), since you'll likely be talking about things that you've been trying to avoid thinking about for quite some time. However, experiencing those thoughts and emotions may get easier and easier with time. You might start to notice other benefits too (like greater personal awareness, better relationships, and less distress). While there are no guarantees about what will happen, you can improve your outcomes by giving your full effort, challenging yourself, and working on things you and your therapist discuss outside of sessions. Simply put, you get out of it what you put into it.

## **This was good... but what if I have more questions?**

Glad it was helpful! Feel free to contact me by [email](#) or via my [website](#) to talk more. Make sure you don't put any information of a sensitive, personal nature on my social media pages though, for privacy.

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