

How to get the most out of counseling

No one wants to waste their time, and let's face it, those copays add up, so this article is meant to help you get the most out of your counseling. As a therapist, I love seeing clients get better. Some of the turnarounds I've witnessed have been simply amazing and I consider myself to be fortunate to have played a part in a person completely changing their lives for the better. Because I want all my clients to be able to experience this type of change, I started keeping notes on the characteristics of my successful clients. I asked myself, why is it that some clients improve so quickly and dramatically while others linger in therapy for years without making any real improvements? Was it something innate and unchangeable about the clients themselves?

As it turns out, the characteristics that make someone an "ideal" client are quite simple and anyone can implement them. I've found that just sharing the information with my clients has caused my clients overall to improve. Please continue reading if you too would also like to get faster and better results in counseling.

1. ***Make your appointments a priority.*** If you've ever tried to learn a new skill or get in shape at the gym, you know that consistency is the key. Frequently cancelling and rescheduling appointments are going to hinder or prevent progress in therapy. It is the reason why I will terminate counseling if missed or late cancellations become excessive. Our cancellation policy is at least 24-hour notice. If less than 24 hours, it is considered a late cancellation and subject to a \$30 charge not covered by insurance. A second late cancellation is subject to a \$60 charge. The clients that get better the fastest come to every appointment without exception. When you make appointments a priority, wonderful things start to happen.

2. ***You are willing to take risks and try new things.*** Anytime you learn new skills, it feels strange and unnatural. If you hired a coach to help you improve your tennis game, the way he teaches you to hold the racket would probably feel “wrong” at first but with practice it would become second nature and improve your game. I’m going to teach you skills and techniques that are going to sound weird at first, but trust me, with practice it will eventually become second nature and you won’t even think about it. But what I need from you is a willingness to at least try the skills I teach you. My ideal clients show a curiosity and an eagerness to try new things and follow through with recommendations outside of the office.
3. ***You take responsibility for your mental health.*** If you went to a doctor’s office and when the doctor asked, “So what brings you here today?” and you just shrugged your shoulders, naturally you would leave the office without having received any care. The same is true for when you visit the therapy office. Ideal clients come prepared to each session with an agenda of issues they would like to have addressed by the therapist in that session. Ideal clients make notes of the improving or worsening of symptoms between sessions. Ideal clients have clear goals of what they would like to achieve in their therapy, and actively work on those goals.
4. ***You give direct and honest feedback.*** The more feedback I get from you about what is working and what isn’t working, the more I can tailor my services to be more effective. I never want you to be afraid of hurting my feelings. I value honest feedback from my clients. It allows me to do my job better and it allows services to be made more effective to you so that you get better faster.