

10 Things Your Therapist Won't Tell You But Wants You to Know

Making the decision to see a therapist can be both scary and empowering. Knowing that you have issues to address, and having the strength to do so, is a great first step toward personal growth and healing. Sadly, fear of the unknown and a misunderstanding of the process often prevents people from seeking the help they need and desire. For those who would like to begin the therapeutic journey, but are hesitant to do so, it may be helpful to have some information provided by someone who sits in the other chair.

1. We wish we could be as blunt as Dr. Phil.

If you really desire change, you'll welcome honesty. And we *will* be honest with you, we just have to be careful in how we do so. Therapists are trained to be non-judgmental and non-offensive. In some cases we may know that the best way to get through to a person is to give a dose of good old-fashioned "in your face" truth, but we want you to come back.

2. We have our own problems, and you can benefit from them.

You don't want a therapist who has had a perfect life, free of conflict or turmoil. You don't want to be looking for guidance from someone who has never had to figure out the best way to handle a difficult personal situation. We won't tell you our life stories during your session, but you can benefit from our successful problem-solving skills just the same.

3. You should want us to talk about you...in private.

It benefits you when we talk about your case (confidentially, of course) to our colleagues and mentors. Sometimes we need to bounce things off of each other and brainstorm the best way to help you. This type of consultation really does help you in the long run. Let us know you're okay with this.

4. We don't always know the perfect solution.

Just as we should be humble enough to ask for advice from our colleagues, we should also recognize when the problems you are facing are beyond our expertise. We will always help you the best way we can, holding true to our code of ethics, but if we discover that you would benefit from talking to someone with more experience in your area of difficulty, we will likely recommend a referral.

5. We are not in it for the money.

Yes, there are practitioners who make a lucrative income practicing their professions. But don't forget the level of time, effort and money they have put into becoming qualified to do what they do. The truth is, a lot of helping professionals are not paid a generous amount to practice, but are there for you anyway because...

6. We do care about you.

We may appear to be detached at times, but we are trained to remain objective. We can't help you figure out your issues if we become as entangled in them as you are. But there is no way we could sit across from you day after day, witnessing your pain and suffering, if we didn't truly want to help you.

7. Not all of us are good at what we do.

As much as we'd like to think otherwise, we know there are therapists out there who are not qualified to counsel properly. These "helpers" may have questionable or inadequate training, or they may have chosen their career path for misguided reasons. Either way, they are harmful and will give you bad advice. *Do your homework!* Ask about educational background, areas of expertise, treatment philosophy and overall approach to the process. Make sure you are confident in the therapist's ability to help you.

8. It may take several tries to find the right therapist for you.

Not every match is perfect the first time around. Sometimes you need to search a little to find the right fit. Therapy should be slightly uncomfortable—discomfort breeds change—but that refers to the *process*, not the therapist. If anything about the therapist's beliefs or approach puts up a red flag for you, talk about it. Ask questions and share your concerns. A good therapist will welcome this discussion. If you cannot resolve the problem, it may be time to move on.

9. You may not be ready for therapy right now.

Just as you need to be sure you are working with the right therapist, you also need to be sure you are seeking help at the right time. If you are not truly ready to change, you are wasting both your time and ours. Nothing aggravates a therapist more than someone who reserves an appointment, and then either doesn't participate fully and honestly, or doesn't show up at all. How quickly you heal is ultimately up to you.

10. A lot of this information should be shared with you up front.

None of what is disclosed in this article is top secret. *Lots* of important information will be given to you in the beginning stages of your therapy, and you will be asked to provide *a lot* of information to the therapist as well. A good therapist will take time to explain the process, provide the reasons behind all of the initial questions, and to ease your worries as you embark on the path to greater personal achievement.