

Lakes Psychiatric Center

12 Tips for Clients in Psychotherapy

adapted from Ryan Howes, PhD

- 1 **Take the whole hour:** Get your money's worth by arriving 10 minutes early to catch your breath, collect your thoughts and prepare for your session.
- 2 **Forget the clock:** Show up early, but let the therapist be in charge of ending the session on time. Sessions last approximately 50 minutes but you've got enough to think about during the session, so let the therapist can be responsible for wrapping up.
- 3 **Make it part of your life:** Therapy works best when you take what you've learned and apply it to the rest of your life. Between sessions, notice areas in your life you'd like to explore.
- 4 **Journalism:** Use a journal to reflect on your sessions and jot down things you notice about yourself during your day to day life. Use it as a place to record thoughts feelings or topics you would like to address in session. Bring the journal to session is usually helpful.
- 5 **Business first:** Take care of payment and insurance issues prior to the start of a session. Nothing is more awkward than focusing on check writing and calendar searching after you have had an emotional session.
- 6 **Relationship next:** Following the business issues (see above), focus on issues related to your working relationship with your therapist. Having a good working relationship with your therapist usually indicates you will have a positive treatment outcome so make a point to address any issues you may have with your therapist at the start of a session.
- 7 **What do I want and how do I feel?** These 2 questions are home base for clients who feel stuck. If you find yourself lost and don't know what to talk about, revisit these questions and you are bound to find material to discuss.
- 8 **State of the Union:** Check on your status any time during your therapy. How are you and your therapist working together? How well do you understand each other? Ask yourself how therapy is benefitting you at the present time and discuss this with your therapist.
- 9 **Learn to fish:** A lot of people want advice from their therapist. Therapy is more about helping you come to your own conclusions than having the therapist make decisions for you. This benefits you in the long run but may seem disappointing at the time.
- 10 **Allow Change:** Some people seek out change but feel uncomfortable when it actually happens.
Accept that if you're seeking change, things will probably change and it might require more change than you thought. Some things may require a major life re-haul not just a little tweak.
- 11 **Don't fear the end:** From the beginning, talk about when you'll know you're ready to leave therapy. Rather than *cut and run* let therapy be one experience of a truly good ending.
- 12 **Engage and Enjoy!** Therapy is like enrolling in a course where you are the subject matter. If you are curious, teachable and motivated to do some work, it can be one of the most challenging and rewarding courses you ever take.