

# What to Expect During Your First Therapy Session

You Have the Right to Ask Questions, Too

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Updated December 10, 2018

You have an appointment with a counselor for your first therapy session and you don't know what to expect. This is the kind of thing you would normally ask your friends and family about, but you've decided not to tell them, yet, about your decision to see a counselor.

## First Things, First

When you get to the therapist's office, expect your initial experience to be similar to a doctor's appointment. You will sign in when you get there, sit in the waiting room, and wait for someone to call your name. If your therapist has a home practice, the scene might be a bit more casual.

While waiting, you will fill out some paperwork, including insurance information. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions on paper, you can wait until you are with the therapist and answer the questions orally.

## Your First Meeting

Your first session with the therapist will be different from future visits. The initial visit is a period for you and your therapist to get to know each other and get an idea of how to proceed. Future visits will be more therapeutic in nature.

Keep in mind that [psychotherapy](#) usually requires multiple visits, so don't expect any instant solutions to your problems the first day. Therapy is about equipping you with life-long solutions and not a quick fix.

During the first session, she will ask you:

- What brought you to therapy?
- What do you feel is wrong in your life?

- What are your symptoms?
- Some questions about your history, including your childhood, education, relationships (family, romantic, friends), your current living situation and your career.

You and your therapist should also come to an agreement about:

- The length of your treatment
- The methods to be employed
- The ins and outs of [patient confidentiality](#)

When the therapist finishes, she should ask you if have any questions.

## How to Choose a Therapist

No two therapists are the same. Asking the right questions will help you [choose the best therapist for you](#). The Ontario Association of Consultants, Counsellors, Psychometrists, and Psychotherapists, recommend asking the following ten questions.

Questions to ask before you make an appointment:

- What is your academic background and what has your training been to prepare you to practice as a therapist?
- What specialized training and/or experience have you had in working with the issue I am dealing with?
- What professional associations do you belong to?
- What are your fees? How will my insurance claim be handled?
- What type of therapy do you do? (Does the therapist do mostly talk therapy or include opportunities for role-playing, visualizing, hypnosis, artwork, "bodywork")
- What are your office protocols? (booking appointments, payment for missed appointments, emergencies, building access after hours, etc.)

Now that you have the preliminary information you need, it's time for your appointment. Questions to ask during your first session:

- I would like a brief explanation as to what I can expect to happen in my sessions.
- How long will each session last?
- How many sessions will it take to resolve my issue?
- How can you assure my confidentiality?