

INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT

DEPRESSION

What to expect during counseling or therapy?

Key Points:

- Sessions may last about an hour about once a week, although this depends on what is best for you and the person you see.
- You can decide in the first few sessions whether the person you see is a good fit for you.
- If, after two or three sessions, you do not feel comfortable or you don't feel you have a good working relationship with your therapist, it may be best to try someone else.
- A good therapist will work with you to develop goals. He/she should guide and support you, but also challenge you when are ready to be challenged. You should always feel comfortable and be able to talk honestly with your therapist.

What to expect during Counseling or Therapy

The first meeting:

- Your therapist may ask what brings you to therapy, your concerns, and any symptoms you experience. He/she may ask you to complete some questionnaires.
- Your therapist may want to learn about your childhood, education, work history, current relationships, and long term goals.
- Opening up can be hard, and it may take time for you to trust your therapist. It is OK to say that you do not feel ready to talk about something difficult right now.
- Your thoughts and feelings will help your therapist understand you and how to help. It is important that you feel comfortable enough to say what is on your mind.

INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT

DEPRESSION

Following meetings:

- The rest of therapy is devoted to helping you understand and resolve problems and to help you achieve the changes you want.
- Therapists take different approaches. Some will be more directive, providing feedback on your progress, homework exercises to practice some of the techniques learned in therapy or suggestions of what he/she thinks might be helpful. Others will give you more space to draw your own conclusions and direct the course of therapy.
- How much you get out of therapy will depend on the work you put into it. It is important to follow up on homework or goals between therapy sessions.
- Therapists may be willing to adapt their style to your needs, so it is important to discuss your preferences.
- Improvement is faster if your therapist can understand and relate positively to you, and you can work together on goals you both agree on.
- A good therapist will guide and support you, and challenge you when you are ready to be challenged.
- It is normal to disagree with your therapist from time to time. When this happens, it is important to honestly share your feelings or concerns. This will help you and your therapist to agree on how to handle this.

The goals of therapy:

- Keep in mind that therapy is designed to equip you with long-term solutions rather than a quick fix.
- Any change in life involves time and effort. Your commitment to attend meetings regularly, courage to look at yourself honestly, and willingness to make some difficult changes in your life will help you make progress.

Disclaimer: Information in this pamphlet is provided for educational purposes only. Always consult a qualified health care professional for your specific care.



INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT

DEPRESSION

How long does it take before therapy starts to work?

- Often people start to feel less depressed within the first few weeks of treatment.
- Many feel better once they know they are doing something to deal with their problem.

How long does therapy continue?

- The length of treatment depends on your situation, including the nature of your problems.
- Most people require eight to 20 sessions to reach their goals for treatment.
- Sessions are often weekly to start, then spread out more (for example, once every other week) to allow time between the sessions to work on the problem.

For more fact sheets and information about depression and its treatment please visit: <http://depression.informedchoices.ca>

You are free to copy and distribute this material in its entirety as long as: 1) this material is not used in any way that suggests we endorse you or your use of the material, 2) this material is not used for commercial purposes (non-commercial), 3) this material is not altered in any way (no derivative works). View full license at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca/>.

Source: This summary provides scientifically accurate information. It was prepared in a research review by researchers and young adults with the Mobilizing Minds Research Group. The researchers are based at six universities: Manitoba, York, McMaster, Brock, Brandon, and Université Laval. Our core community partner is mindyourmind.ca located in London, Ontario. Our young adult team members are located all across the country. Last revised: 12 March 2013.

Acknowledgement: Preparation of this material was supported by funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of these organizations.



INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT

DEPRESSION

References

Bockting, C. L. H., Spinhoven, P., Wouters, L. F., Koeter, M. W. J., & Schene, A. H. (2009). Long-term effects of preventive cognitive therapy in recurrent depression: A 5.5-year follow-up study. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 70*(12), 1621-1628.

Vittengle, J. R., Clark, L. A., Dunn, T. W., & Jarrett, R. B. (2007). Reducing relapse and recurrence in unipolar depression: A comparative meta-analysis of cognitive-behavioural activation's effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 75*(3), 475-488.

Vittengle, J. R., Clark, L. A., & Jarrett, R. B. (2009). Continuation-phase cognitive therapy's effects on remission and recovery from depression. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 77*(2), 367-371.