

TREATING DEPRESSION WITH PSYCHOTHERAPY

BEGINNING PSYCHOTHERAPY

Whatever the cause of your depression, talk therapy may help you understand your feelings and behaviors. Time spent in therapy can help you regain control over your life and your feelings. There are many types of talk therapy. Two have been shown to be effective for treating depression:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy focuses on your current thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Distortions in expectations and beliefs are thought to cause your depression.

Interpersonal Therapy focuses on your relationships with others, and how you think and act in these relationships.

In all kinds of therapy, your relationship with your therapist is the most important part of your treatment. Talking with your therapist won't always be easy. At first you may feel nervous about being in therapy. Most people find their comfort increases with time.

SUCCESS IN THERAPY

Therapy is not a magic cure. You must make a commitment and actively participate in the process. In therapy, it is normal for you to talk about the life events or problems that brought you into counseling. Some people begin to feel better as soon as they start talking about their problems. Others feel better in a few weeks. Some may find that changing feelings and relationships takes longer.

Make a commitment to the therapy process. During the therapy session you should focus on problems related to your depression that may be difficult or painful to talk about. It is natural to not want to talk about painful things, but it is exactly these painful feelings that may be related to your depression.

Learn about medication treatment and things that you can do outside of the psychotherapy session that can speed your recovery.

Attend appointments regularly. Therapy cannot happen if you do not keep your appointments.

Concentrate on the therapy before and after each session. Make some time each day to think about the things you talked about in the last therapy session.

Journal your thoughts and feelings. In any type of therapy, keeping a record can help you and your therapist identify thoughts and feelings that may be contributing to your depression. You may also come across other important insights that can help you find your way out of the depression.

Do any homework that your therapist assigns. At times you may think such assignments unimportant or not worth the effort. But take-home assignments are frequently essential to understanding your thoughts and behaviors.

Share your thoughts, feelings, and actions with your therapist. To understand your depression, your therapist must come to know you. Learning how you perceive and cope with problems will help your therapist to know what needs to be discussed in session. So too will understanding how you manage relationships in your life.

If you are uncomfortable or unhappy with your therapy, talk with your therapist about it. Discussing your feelings can help both of you understand why you feel this way, and what course of therapy would be the most effective. If therapy does not seem to be working, you may want to go to another therapist. But remember, depression can mislead you into feeling hopeless about your treatment, especially in the beginning.

Your relationship with your therapist can be an example of a successful relationship. Furthermore, you and your therapist can use the feelings that come up in therapy to understand how you think and feel in other relationships.