



SHIFT

Therapy Basics

A GUIDE BY SHIFT COLLAB

Change starts *with you*

**CONGRATULATIONS
ON YOUR DECISION TO
CONSIDER THERAPY! THAT'S
A BIG STEP. SERIOUSLY.**

In this guide, we will answer some of the most common questions people have when considering therapy.

We realize that your reasons for therapy are personal and unique to you. While at the same time, we want to reassure you that many of the questions or hesitations you may have can be quite common. For that reason, we created this guidebook to help address some of those early concerns.



What's inside *this guide*

When you set out on a journey, it's nice to have a map. Having a sense of direction helps us to feel safe, prepared and comfortable. Setting out on the journey that is therapy is no different.

This guide is meant to put all the knowledge you need in one little document, as accessible as a map. In these pages you'll learn what therapy is and what it's not, how to tell if it's right for you, and how to set out on the right path to maximize its benefits.

The path you take is up to you, but with this guide you can be sure you know where you're going.



TESTIMONIALS

What our clients have to say.

"I can't recommend them enough. The staff is extremely sympathetic and focused on helping you achieve your goals as well as make your life easier."

'J' ~ CURRENT CLIENT





How do I know if therapy is *right for me?*

GREAT QUESTION! PEOPLE COME TO US FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, IN ALL KINDS OF SITUATIONS:

Everything else is secondary: the therapist's training background or years of experience, whether the therapist has lived through experiences that relate to what you're going through. What the research says is all well and good, but it's not useful if we don't know what a good fit is. So, what is a "good therapeutic fit" and how can you tell when you find one?

- **Some come by recommendation**, some stumble upon us via Google search.
- **Some know what they're looking for** but many aren't sure what to do about their situations.
- **Some folks come because they feel unhappy**, stuck, angry, confused, stressed, or like they aren't feeling like themselves anymore.
- **Some come to us at a hard time in their lives**, or after going through a major life transition. These can include changes in their relationships, career, their health, or within their family.
- **Some come feeling like they're doing pretty well in life**, but there's something they want to improve in their lives.

Additionally, people start therapy to gain greater awareness or change their perspective.

- **People come when they want to be a better partner**, want to overcome a phobia, want to quit smoking or drinking, want to get over an expartner, want to feel better at work, assess their goals, etc.

Each reason is a valid one. It's important to not compare yourself to others or minimize your concerns. Like our team often says, "what matters to you, matters to us, because you matter to us".

Every person is worthy of support. One of the most important factors that determines whether your therapy experience is a positive one is you wanting to be there.

Often people mull over whether they should go to therapy for a while before they reach out. This window of time can be positive. It can help you consider whether it's right for you and whether you're ready for it.

We recommend taking some time to inform yourself and weigh your options ahead of time. That said, in many cases, it's harmful to hold off for too long before getting help. As it goes with any health concern, ignoring a problem will not make it go away! If you've been thinking about trying therapy for awhile and haven't taken the leap, ask yourself what's holding you back.



All too often it's the stigma around mental health that stops people from accessing the support they need and deserve. Stigma is rooted in ignorance and old judgments about mental health. Its effects can be subtle and dangerous.

While you've been considering going to therapy, have you had thoughts like:

- ☹️ What if people find out I see a therapist and think I'm crazy?
- ☹️ What if the therapist thinks I'm crazy?
- ☹️ What if I get emotional and embarrass myself in front of my therapist?
- ☹️ I'm a grown up, I should be able to handle my feelings on my own.
- ☹️ Nobody cares that I feel like this.
- ☹️ Why can't I just be happy with my life?

Shift *Tip*

When you're ready, the more you talk openly and positively about therapy, the more you help others see that they're not alone and the faster we break the stigma around mental health.

- ☹️ How selfish am I that I need to go and talk about my tiny problems when there is real suffering in the world?

Have you been told (or said) words like:

- ☹️ You'll be fine, just get over it
- ☹️ Other people have it much worse than you
- ☹️ People like us don't need therapy
- ☹️ You just need to relax and stop worrying
- ☹️ You don't need therapy, you just need to ____ (go shopping, start exercising, have a drink, stop procrastinating, etc...)

If you've experienced any of the above, you've experienced the effects of stigma. If it's mainly thoughts like these holding you back from seeking support, we encourage you to learn more, reach out to someone you trust, or reach out to someone anonymously.

Consider that almost everyone who sees a therapist or works in the mental health field has had to face stigma to some degree. It held many of us back for a time. The world is shifting, and as big as these worries may feel now, they are manageable and they will become more so.

We respect that the journey to therapy can be a long and arduous one, and when you first walk into the clinic, it's a big step. We do our best to honour that.



Do my benefits *cover therapy?*

WE WISH WE COULD GIVE YOU
A SHORT ANSWER BUT THE
TRUTH IS—IT'S COMPLICATED.

You'll have to do a little research. We suggest you follow these 3 steps:

- **Find your plan details.** Not sure where to look? Go to your manager or HR and ask where to look for details about your benefits.
- **Check your coverage.** You'll typically find psychotherapy or counselling under "Extended Health Benefits" in your plan, and it may or may not be under the subheading "Paramedical Services". There's often a fixed amount you can

spend each year in these categories (how much exactly varies plan-to-plan) and sometimes there are hoops to jump through, such as a physician referral, for example.

- **Consult the chart.** So, let's say your friend recommends you see a social worker at the clinic they go to. Pull up your plan and compare it with the social worker row on the chart below to see if you're covered for social workers.

Note: It's common that all "Paramedical Services" will draw from one pool of money. This means that if you use your benefits to see a naturopath, for example, there will be less money available in the pot for psychotherapy, massage, etc.

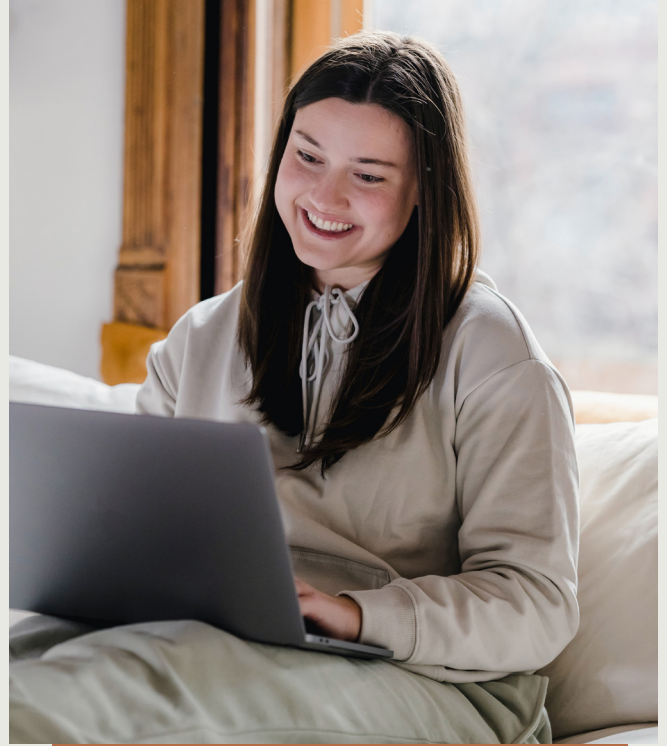
PROFESSIONAL	ROLE	EDUCATION	COVERAGE	CONS	PROS
Psychiatrist	Medical Mental Health Specialist	M.D.	OHIP	Long wait times	Can diagnose and prescribe medications
Psychologist	Educational assessments, insurance, courts / psychological services	Ph.D. or Masters	Fee for service / extended health insurance	Higher fees, can have longer wait times	Can diagnose, covered by most extended health care insurance
Social Worker (RSW MSW)	Psychotherapy	Masters	Fee for service / most extended health insurance	Cannot diagnose or prescribe medicine	Quick availability, lower fees
Registered Psychotherapist (RP)	Psychotherapy	Masters	Fee for service / most extended health insurance	Cannot diagnose or prescribe medicine	Quick availability, lower fees

What should I look for *in a therapist?*

RESEARCH CONSISTENTLY SHOWS THAT THE BIGGEST PREDICTOR OF SUCCESS IN THERAPY IS FINDING A GOOD THERAPEUTIC FIT.

Everything else is secondary: the therapist's training background or years of experience, whether the therapist has lived through experiences that relate to what you're going through. What the research says is all well and good, but it's not useful if we don't know what a good fit is. So, what is a "good therapeutic fit" and how can you tell when you find one?

- **You feel understood.** Even when your therapist doesn't fully understand, they make efforts to figure out what you mean and don't make any assumptions.
- **You don't feel judged,** ashamed, or embarrassed. Even with tricky topics, your therapist is able to make you feel as comfortable and respected as possible.
- **The focus is on you** and your life. If or when your therapist shares anecdotes or personal experiences it's relevant to your situation and ultimately helps you.



- **Your therapist offers new ways of** thinking about things and helps you gain greater insight by seeing how things are connected in your life.
- **Your therapist works at your pace.** Realizing change takes time, they

are able to manage the tricky balance of challenging you without pushing you too hard or too quickly.

Therapy can be challenging. It can be uncomfortable at first but it doesn't need to be. Finding the right support in therapy can take time but when it comes to getting better it can make all the difference.

At Shift, we take this very seriously. We invite you to consult with a number of therapists and discuss any concerns you may have with our care team before you start. We'll make sure your first session is with someone you feel good about. And if, after a few sessions, you don't feel it's the right fit, reach out to our care team and they'll support you.

What's therapy like?

How does it help?

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST PEOPLE CONSIDERING GOING FOR THERAPY, YOU PROBABLY HAVE SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT.

Your first session is a chance for you to share a bit about yourself and what brought you to therapy. Some therapists choose to use a structured assessment that asks a series of standard questions as a way to get a comprehensive understanding of you. Other therapists opt for a more flexible session during which they ask more general questions such as "what brought you in today?"

Whatever it looks like, keep the following points in mind when you're starting out:

- **Feel free to ask questions.** This is your time and it's important you feel comfortable.
- **Share your previous experiences.** What's helped before and what hasn't been as helpful? This can include lessons from past therapists or from personal relationships, as well as other strategies you've used to cope up to this point.





- **Give honest feedback to your therapist.**

Remember that this is your time. They are professionals whose duty and passion is to support you. It's important to let the therapist know how they can best help you.

- **There's no right way of doing therapy.**

You may show emotion during therapy or you may not. Some people feel embarrassed if they cry. Remember it's all understandable. You're intentionally focusing on topics that may be uncomfortable, painful, that make you feel vulnerable.

- **Don't expect your therapist to be your parent.**

A major part of the role of a therapist is to help you recognize just how much you already know. Therapy is not about being given the answers to your problems but helping you recognize and fine-tune your ability to answer them on your own.

- **Take your time when sharing.**

Remember that your therapist is not there to judge you, but to support you and your emotions.

- **Everything is voluntary.**

These are your sessions and you decide where they go. In an effort to get to know you better, your new therapist will likely ask you a lot of questions. If at any point you're uncomfortable with answering the question, it's perfectly acceptable to say you'd rather not talk about that topic or would like to wait until you feel more comfortable before answering that question. You don't have to bring up trauma if you're not ready to. You don't have to talk about sex if you're not comfortable going there. Your therapist can still support you. That said, it does help to share and you always can when you're ready!

Shift Tip

We encourage new clients to give themselves a little time and TLC after their first few sessions, if possible. It can be a strange experience talking openly to a stranger about difficult areas in your life. Expect that it may stir up a range of feelings. Do your best to go easy on yourself during this time.



TESTIMONIALS

What our clients have to say.

"The Shift team doesn't prescribe to one size fits all treatment and their approach to mental health & wellness is different than anything I've seen."

SHIFT CLIENT
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Is there something I can do to *prepare*?

**YOU CERTAINLY DON'T NEED TO
BUT YOU CAN.**

Here are four questions to pose to yourself before you get started. You'll gain some insight into yourself and even start to see what kind of changes you might be looking for.



- **Why now?** If this situation's been going on for a couple weeks, months, or years, what's happened recently that led me to seek therapy now?
- **What changes would I like to see in my life?** Try to be specific. Are you looking for new strategies to cope with a particular challenge? To strengthen my boundaries? To change a particular behaviour or mood? To gain personal insight?
- **What's helped me so far?** What did I try before coming to therapy? What are some of the ways I take care of myself or keep going? How have I been managing?
- **Who do I have in my corner?** Who are my supports? Who cares about me, and wants to see me healthy and happy? (Be creative! These can include your friends, family, and therapist, but also your doctor, colleagues, neighbours, online communities, and even your pet!)

Remember that when you leave after that first session, you'll be the same person who walked in. You won't leave as a certified crazy person and you won't leave cured.

We hope you'll feel a sense of relief and a little pride because you finally did it. But if it's not for you, or it's not the right time, that's okay, too!



Whenever
you're ready,
we're here.

WE'RE SIMPLY A MESSAGE AWAY WHEN YOU
ARE READY TO EXPLORE THERAPY. OUR TEAM IS
WELCOMING AND EXCITED TO SUPPORT YOU.



SHIFT