

What to Expect from Individual Therapy

A Guide for Starting and Participating in Therapy

Starting therapy can feel unfamiliar, especially when you are not sure what to expect or where to begin. Individual therapy offers a private, respectful, and non-judgmental space to explore concerns, better understand yourself, develop practical skills, and work toward meaningful change.

Therapy may focus on a specific concern, support you through a difficult period, or provide space for longer-term personal growth. Your therapist will tailor the process to your needs, goals, preferences, strengths, and circumstances.

Therapy is Personal, Collaborative, and Flexible

There is no single approach, pace, or timeline that is right for everyone. Your therapist will work with you to understand what is bringing you to therapy, what you hope will change, and which methods and session structure are likely to be most helpful.

The Individual Therapy Process

1. Finding the Right Therapist

You may review therapist profiles or contact the Client Services Team for help finding someone whose experience, therapeutic approach, availability, and appointment format fit your needs. You can also complete that matching form online and our Client Services Team will match you with the most appropriate therapist.

Prior to engaging in therapy, you also have the opportunity to complete a free phone or virtual consult with the therapist you are matched with to learn more about their services and if this match is right for you.

2. Initial Assessment

The first session focuses on understanding your concerns, relevant history, strengths, supports, current functioning, previous services, and what you hope therapy will help with.

The initial assessment may explore:

- what led you to seek therapy at this time
- how the concern affects your daily life, relationships, work, or school
- strategies or supports you have already tried
- relevant health, medication, counselling, or service history
- your strengths, priorities, and hopes for therapy

3. Goals and Treatment Plan

You and the therapist will identify priorities and realistic goals. The therapist may recommend a therapeutic approach, session frequency, and practical strategies that fit your circumstances.

4. Ongoing Therapy Sessions

Sessions are individualized and may include guided conversation, reflection, skill development, and exploration of thoughts, emotions, behaviours, relationships, and recurring patterns.

Sessions may focus on:

- understanding concerns, experiences, and recurring patterns
- building coping, communication, or emotional-regulation skills
- working through difficult emotions, relationships, or life changes
- identifying practical next steps and areas for continued growth

5. Practice Between Sessions

When helpful, the therapist may suggest reflection questions, journaling, coping strategies, communication exercises, or other practical ways to apply new skills in everyday life.

6. Reviewing Progress and Ongoing Support

You and the therapist will review what is changing, what remains difficult, and whether goals, strategies, or appointment frequency should be adjusted. Therapy may end, pause, or continue based on your needs and progress.



Direct Billing & Insurance

If you have extended health care benefits, your insurance plan may provide full or partial coverage for psychological services. You will be provided with an insurance information form to complete before direct billing can be arranged.

Your Counselling Ltd. directly bills more than 70 insurance companies. When direct billing is unavailable, or when an insurer does not cover the full session fee, detailed invoices and receipts will be provided so you can submit the expense to your insurance company.

Coverage varies between insurance plans. Clients and families are encouraged to contact their insurance company directly to confirm:

- Whether the therapist's professional designation is covered
- The amount or percentage covered per session
- Annual limits or remaining benefits
- Whether a physician's referral is required
- Any restrictions related to direct billing

Psychological services may also qualify as eligible medical expenses when filing your yearly income tax return. Please retain your receipts and consult the Canada Revenue Agency or a qualified tax professional regarding eligibility.

Contact the Client Services Team if you have questions about booking, completing the insurance form, or the direct-billing process.

Things to Consider When Starting Therapy

What Individual Therapy May Focus On

The focus of therapy is based on your goals and the therapist's areas of practice. Therapists have different training and areas of experience. If you are unsure who may be the best fit, the Client Services Team can help identify appropriate options.

Individual therapy may support:

- anxiety, worry, stress, or feeling overwhelmed
- low mood, grief, loss, trauma, or reduced motivation
- self-esteem, identity, confidence, or personal growth
- anger, emotional regulation, or coping difficulties
- relationship patterns, communication, or boundaries
- family conflict, work, school, caregiving, or burnout-related stress
- major changes, decision-making, or habits affecting daily life

What Sessions May Be Like

Therapy is not an interview that you need to prepare perfectly for. Some sessions may be structured and skills-focused, while others may be more reflective.

Your therapist may:

- listen, ask questions, and help clarify concerns
- offer observations or help identify patterns
- introduce coping, communication, or emotional-regulation strategies
- support you in setting goals and identifying practical next steps
- invite feedback and review progress with you

You are encouraged to share at your own pace, ask questions, and let the therapist know what is or is not feeling helpful.

Preparing for Your First Appointment

You do not need to have everything figured out before attending. It may be helpful to:

- consider what led you to seek therapy now
- identify one or two changes you hope therapy may support
- make note of relevant diagnoses, medications, past therapy, or current supports
- bring any insurance or payment information needed for administration
- arrive or sign in a few minutes early

Virtual Sessions

- choose a private, quiet location and test your camera and audio
- do not join while driving or from a place where privacy cannot be maintained
- share any accessibility, communication, or cultural considerations that may support your participation

Getting the Most from Therapy

- attend consistently when possible
- be as open as you comfortably can
- ask questions and request clarification
- share feedback about the pace and approach
- practice skills in realistic, manageable ways

- remember that progress is not always linear

Confidentiality and Privacy

Individual therapy is confidential and information is handled according to professional, ethical, and legal requirements. At the beginning of therapy, the therapist will explain confidentiality, its limits, how records are maintained, and the circumstances in which information may need to be shared.

You are encouraged to ask questions about privacy, communication outside sessions, documentation, third-party requests, or the involvement of another person in your care.

Important

Email, voicemail, online booking, and scheduled counselling appointments are not emergency services. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call emergency services or go to the nearest emergency department.

At Your Counselling Ltd., we are here to support you throughout the individual therapy process. For booking, billing, matching, or other administrative questions, contact us at info@yourcounselling.ca or 1-833-989-7561.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need a diagnosis to attend individual therapy?

No. Individual therapy can support diagnosed mental-health concerns, everyday stress, relationships, life transitions, self-understanding, skill development, and personal growth.

What if I do not know what to talk about?

That is common. You can begin with what led you to book, what has felt difficult recently, or what you hope will improve. The therapist can help guide the conversation.

How often should I attend?

Frequency is individualized. Sessions may be weekly, every two weeks, monthly, or arranged differently based on your needs, goals, progress, availability, and the therapist's recommendation.

How long will therapy take?

There is no fixed timeline. Some concerns can be addressed through short-term, focused therapy, while other goals may benefit from longer-term support. Progress will be reviewed with you.

How do I arrange direct billing?

We directly bill more than 70 insurance companies. You will be asked to complete an insurance information form so our team can confirm and set up direct billing where available.

Direct billing does not guarantee that the full session fee will be covered. You remain responsible for any balance not paid by your insurer. When direct billing is unavailable, we will provide a detailed invoice and receipt that you can submit for reimbursement.

Because coverage differs between plans, please contact your insurance company directly to confirm the details of your benefits. Our Client Services Team can assist with questions about our insurance form and billing process.

What if the therapist does not feel like the right fit?

You can discuss your concerns directly with the therapist or contact the Client Services Team. The team can help explore another therapist whose experience, approach, or availability may be a better match.

Is everything I say confidential?

Therapy is confidential, subject to professional, ethical, and legal limits. Your therapist will explain these limits at the beginning of therapy and answer questions about how information is handled.

Can another person attend my individual session?

Individual therapy is usually one-on-one. If a support person, family member, or another individual may be helpful, discuss this with the therapist in advance so the purpose, consent, and confidentiality expectations can be clarified.

What should I do if I need urgent help?

Scheduled therapy, email, voicemail, and online booking are not emergency services. If there is immediate danger, call emergency services or go to the nearest emergency department.