

WHEN THERAPY IS NOT WORKING

FIVE SIGNS IT'S TIME TO CHANGE YOUR THERAPIST

This article is inspired by a blog written by a family member. I am using their thoughts as well as my own. Through their therapy experiences they've learned what's helpful and what is not helpful.

Therapy is a wonderful vehicle for change and support during challenging times. There are many helpful strategies that offer new perspectives, increased self-awareness, and enable people to overcome hurdles they may otherwise find too difficult.

However, therapists are human. Some are better than others. A good therapist is not only a lifesaver, they also know when it's time to stop therapy or suggest other mediums to ensure progress. They know their limits and the limits of their clients.

Sometimes a therapist is not helpful and it is important to understand the signs. If you experience any of the following examples, you might want to consider having a conversation with your therapist or making a change to someone who can be more effective.

1. You are not making progress after going to therapy for a period of time. Remember, you may feel no better or even worse after the first few appointments. You are facing tough issues or dealing with life events that overwhelm you. Therapy can seem harder than avoiding, sleeping, or drinking those problems away. However, if you have stayed the course for several weeks and you leave appointments feeling disappointed, no different, or

questioning the provider's skill you may need to consider trying a different therapist.

2. The therapist does not respect your boundaries and does not expect you to respect theirs. Therapy is not a chat with a friend. The therapist is not your buddy. It is a professional relationship and the focus should be on you and your life. Boundaries are the lines drawn to protect that professional relationship. If the therapist talks about themselves, or invites you to spend time with them outside of the appointment, or talks to you in ways that are more like friends chatting instead of providing a skilled therapeutic interaction designed to help you, it's time to change therapists.

3. The therapist tells you what you should do. Remember, a therapist has the right to have their own values. For example, a therapist may not believe in abortion. However, they do not have the right to deny you that choice. They should remain neutral and help you make your own choice. If they cannot, they should offer to transfer you to a therapist who is able to help you. If you find your therapist insists that you do what they believe is right rather than offers you suggestions and options, you need to challenge this. If they continue, they are not right for you. Of course there are times when a therapist needs to take a stand, such as not tolerating child abuse or other dangerous circumstances.

4. If the therapist is always late, misses appointments, takes personal non-emergency

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calls during your appointment, cuts the sessions short, regularly forgets what issues you are working on, falls asleep, or does not maintain therapist/patient confidentiality you need to seek services elsewhere.

5. You have a well-trained and competent therapist, however they may not be a good match due to personality, treatment style, or perhaps you cannot bring yourself to open up to them due to their gender, age, etc. It is important you feel compatible with your therapist no matter how highly recommended and talented they are. For example: a person enters therapy to overcome trauma related to a sexual assault. The therapist looks like the person who assaulted them. They feel terrified to be alone in a room with the therapist and relive trapped and helpless feelings. It is essential to tell the therapist so they can transfer you to a therapist with whom you will feel safe with.

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