What to expect with therapy

Every therapist is different. What happens during therapy also depends on you. But, there are some common things you can expect:

• **First session:** Your first session is a time for your therapist to get to know you. It’s also a time for you to get to know your therapist. Tell him or her about your values and what your goals are. If it doesn’t feel like a good fit, don’t be afraid to ask for a different therapist.

• **Assessment:** During the first few sessions, you will talk about why you need help. Often, you just talk about your reasons. Sometimes, your therapist may have you write them down.

• **Role-playing:** Some therapists have people do role-playing. This is a safe time to practice some of the skills you may be working on. This could help in solving a conflict with a co-worker or family member, for instance. It could also help you practice ways to calm yourself down if you have a panic attack.

• **Honesty:** Above all, be honest and open with your therapist during your sessions. He or she will be honest with you, too. This is how you make progress.

Therapy sessions usually last 1 hour. They usually happen once a week. This can change based on your needs and what your therapist thinks will help you the most.

When you need help right now

If you are thinking about hurting yourself in any way, you may have depression. You need help right away. Go to the emergency room or call 911. The National Suicide Hotline also can help. Call 1.800.784.2433.

Depression is the number 1 reason that people kill themselves.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your doctor. There may be variations in treatment that your doctor may recommend based on individual facts about you.

MetroPlus Health Plan
160 Water St. 3rd Fl, New York, NY 10038
MetroPlus Medicaid: 1.800.475.METRO (6387) (TTY 1.800.881.2812)
MetroPlus Medicare: 1.866.986.0356 TTY: 711
Hours of operation: Monday–Saturday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
What is counseling?

If you have a problem, you might turn to your friends or family. It could be trouble with love or work. You might need help knowing how to deal with certain issues.

But what if you need help that your friends and family can’t give? Help with anxiety or depression? Help to control your emotions or overcome a traumatic event?

Professional counseling, or therapy, can help you understand what’s going on in your life. It can also help you make positive life changes.

Getting this kind of help doesn’t mean you’re “crazy,” and it doesn’t make you “weak.” There are many reasons someone might need therapy. Use this guide to learn about therapy and what to expect if you decide you need this kind of help.

Who gets therapy and how does it work?

Therapy is for anyone who wants to make his or her life better, and prefers to work with someone trained to help. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to therapy. If you decide to get help, you may need to work with your therapist to figure out the best approach.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most common forms of therapy. It helps you in 2 ways. It teaches you to think about your problems, and it gives you new ways to look at them (cognitive). It also helps you change the way you react to your problems (behavioral).

You and your therapist can set goals. These goals will help you track your progress. You can practice your new ways of thinking and acting at home. This helps you see how you are getting better. Therapy for some conditions like depression or anxiety often goes for 8 to 20 weeks. You may go for a longer or shorter time, depending on your needs.

Other kinds of therapy

There are other kinds of therapy that you can try. Talk with your therapist to see if they can help you. They include:

- **Light therapy.** This is used to treat seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. This is a form of depression that happens in winter. With less sun, peoples’ bodies sometimes make less of the hormone melatonin. During light therapy, you sit in front of a special light that recharges your body.

- **Creative arts therapy.** Music, dance, and painting can be used to help people with their emotions. This kind of therapy is good for people with depression. It can also be used to help people after a serious injury or during a long hospitalization.

- **Play therapy.** Children sometimes need therapy, too. Play therapy uses toys and games to help children feel comfortable. Then, they can talk about their emotions more easily.

Where to find therapy

The first step toward better mental health is finding a therapist. Talk to your doctor or call MetroPlus Customer Services at 1.800.303.9626. Ask to speak to a case manager or a mental health provider. You can also find a doctor by visiting our Find a Doctor tool at [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org).