

MAYBE I SHOULD TALK TO SOMEONE?

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR OWN
THERAPY EXPERIENCE



Welcome



Hi

IT'S SHEILA. THANKS FOR SIGNING UP TO RECIEVE THIS GUIDE TO SUPPORT YOU IN GETTING THE MOST OF YOUR OWN THERAPY EXPERIENCE.

Starting therapy can be a frightening process, it's a good idea to remember why you decided to take these steps in the first place. The goal is to improve your overall mental health, which can affect many aspects of your life, including your physical health.

Mental Health is often overlooked, in the fall of 2020, one in five adults reported moderate to severe symptoms of depression, anxiety or PTSD. This figure increased to one in four by early 2021 and remained consistent into 2023.

It is important to recognize and acknowledge that many people in Canada are facing mental health challenges, you are not alone. Therapy is one of the first steps towards addressing and healing from mental health challenges, but understanding the decision to reach out for help can be a difficult one, often due to the stigma that still surrounds mental health.

Please note this guide was written as general information to support individuals on beginning their therapeutic process. Each therapist can have a different set of requirements, depending on their own governing body and Province of license.

I am offering this information from Ontario, Canada which is the province I am regulated in to practice Psychotherapy and I am regulated by the CRPO.

Let's Talk!

Sheila BRISTOW


*"And the day
came when the
risk to remain
tight in a bud
was more
painful than
the risk it took to
blossom."
~ Anais Nin*



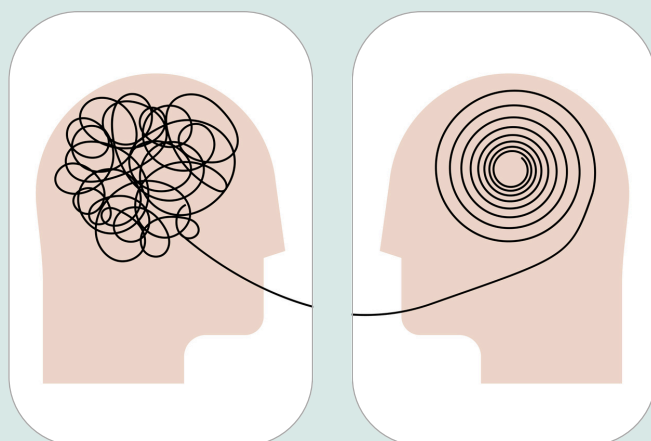
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HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST THERAPY SESSION:

As worthwhile and rewarding as therapy is, the first session can be nerve-wracking; especially if you've never been to therapy before. Preparing for a therapy session is a useful habit to get into, even if you're a seasoned pro. In this guide, we'll discuss several first therapy session tips so you can feel as prepared as possible.

- ✓ **SET GOALS**
Knowing where you are and what direction you want to move into is imperative for making changes in your life
- ✓ **HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**
Understand that the therapy process is not linear, you may sometimes feel like you take a couple steps backwards on your therapeutic journey
- ✓ **GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT**
Kindness and compassion towards yourself is one of the best ways to allow change to unfold, celebrating your small and big wins along the way is essential.



HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST THERAPY SESSION:

- ✓ Schedule Your First Session at a Convenient Time for you, this will support you in feeling prepared
- ✓ Reserve Time for Yourself Before and after your Session
- ✓ Dress comfortably
- ✓ Don't Be Afraid to Ask Questions
- ✓ Be Open and Honest
- ✓ Go Easy on Yourself
- ✓ Taking time to Reflect on Your Session is beneficial for you and will allow you to gain more awareness

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM YOU AS A THERAPY/COUNSELLING CLIENT?

A client is expected to attend each appointment on time, and should you not be able to make your session, cancel within the stated cancellation period or most therapists will charge their full fee for the late cancellation and/or no show.

Clients may need to be open to changes in their therapy goals as the counselling process evolves. Therapists are not judgmental but impartial.

Therapists may ask the tough questions and expect the tough answers in order for growth to take place both personally and professionally, but only as it pertains to the challenges a client working on.

Clients do maintain the right to decide what topics to discuss and to terminate a subject if they don't want to discuss it further. It is important that the client takes ownership of their therapy progress, as they are an expert on themselves, not the therapist.

GOT QUESTIONS?

Please jot down any questions you might have for your therapist after reading working your way through this guide, there are a couple of blank note pages in the back of this guide.

*Therapy is a journey not a destination.
It is about learning and growing, and it
is a process that is continuous.*

WHY PEOPLE MAY CHOOSE TO GO INTO THERAPY:

- ✓ Research supports the benefits of having a safe 'other' in supporting and processing your emotions.
- ✓ It is an opportunity to grow in your self-awareness, emotional intelligence and maturity.
- ✓ Therapy can provide a supportive space for growth and healing.
- ✓ Therapy can be helpful in gaining new perspectives.
- ✓ Therapy is a way to get feedback from someone that is not in your personal life and offers an alternative perspective (rather than their view on life) to your challenging situations.
- ✓ Reflect on Your Session.
- ✓ Go Easy on Yourself.



AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT MAY BE SUPPORTED AND IMPROVED BY SEEKING PSYCHOTHERAPY:

Individual therapy gives you a safe space to explore your thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

The goal of individual therapy is to inspire change and improve your quality of life through self-awareness and self-exploration.

Being in therapy can also:

- ✓ help improve communication skills
- ✓ help you feel empowered
- ✓ empower you to develop fresh insights about your life
- ✓ learn how to make healthier choices
- ✓ develop coping strategies to manage distress
- ✓ supporting you in understanding how you fit into the bigger picture of life

What Therapy *Is* and *Is Not*

	THERAPY <u>IS</u>	THERAPY <u>IS NOT</u>
SCOPE	A SPACE TO EXPLORE ANYTHING FROM PAST, PRESENT OR FUTURE	EXCLUSIVELY FOR 'SERIOUS' ISSUES, INTENSE TRAUMA OR DIAGNOSIS
TIMELINE	AN ONGOING PROCESS THAT LOOKS DIFFERENT FOR EVERY PERSON	A ONE-TIME OR QUICK FIX SOLUTION TO ALL YOUR PROBLEMS
APPROACH	TAILORED AND INDIVIDUALIZED TO MEET YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS	ONE-SIZE FITS ALL
SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND EMPATHY WITHOUT JUDGEMENT	A PLACE FOR JUDGEMENT, CRITICISM OR PERSONAL BIAS
BASIS	GROUNDING IN RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND UTILIZING PROVEN METHODS	AN ASSORTMENT OF TECHNIQUES WITHOUT A SPECIFIC BASIS
PROCESS	GUIDING INDIVIDUALS TOWARDS THEIR OWN EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS	GIVING ADVICE OR IMPOSING DIRECTION
GOALS	WORKING TOWARDS HELPFUL GOALS	A VAGUE OR UNDEFINED PROCESS WITHOUT CLEAR OBJECTIVES
SHARING	CONFIDENCE AND SECURE WITH RELEVANT LIMITS	A SPACE WHERE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION IS SHARED EXTERNALLY
TRAINING	DELIVERED BY TRAINED, LICENCED REGULATED PROFESSIONALS	AMBIGUOUS REGARDING LICENCING AND TRAINING

WHAT IS A TYPICAL SESSION LIKE?

Typically, your first session will be about getting to know you and giving you space to talk and share.

After the first few sessions, you'll begin to build trust with your therapist and will find it easier to open up.

If you want to talk about specific experiences or concerns right away, you can.

Feel free to ask your therapist what you can expect therapy to be like.

VISION & GOALS

Explore what you would like to achieve in your therapy sessions and your desired outcomes.

Think of it like a roadmap, or a GPS inquiry of where you want to go; if you do not know where you are going you cannot get there.



Brainstorming Goals

ACTION BRAINSTORMING CAN HELP IDENTIFY WHAT THINGS ARE HELPING OR STOPPING YOU FROM ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS.

MY GOAL:

STOP
DOING

DO
LESS OF

KEEP
DOING

DO
MORE OF

START
DOING

HOW WE CREATE RESULTS

Your therapist will want to ensure that you get the best results in your therapeutic relationship. Your time is valuable so you will want to be able to work as efficiently as possible. Your investment in this process is important.

Unfortunately, a therapist can only take you so far. You see, it's far easier to be a therapist than a client. After all, you're the one with the challenges. You're the one who needs or wants to change. And change does not come without consistent and sometime difficult work.

The harsh reality is that Therapists don't change people. That's not what therapists do.

The only person who has the ability to change you is you. Your therapist is just there to guide, support, help and inspire your the process.

You are here to learn how to get results in therapy, so let's explore some considerations, here is a list of 9 things you can implement as you start your therapy journey.

1. Come Prepared

Therapy is one of the bravest things you can do.

2. Channel your Inner Sherlock Holmes

Everything is related to everything. Life is a complicated system with lots of moving parts. And when something breaks down, sometimes it's hard to find the real source of the problem.

In therapy, you will be prompted to investigate every aspect of your life. Everything. Childhood experiences. Trauma. Relationships. Emotions. Thoughts. Beliefs. Values.

3. Clearly-Defined Goals

Effective therapy begins with setting goals with your therapist. Otherwise, it's hard to track your progress.



HOW WE CREATE RESULTS - CON'T

4. Keep The Focus On yourself

Often, people go to therapy to fix the people in their lives who should be in therapy but won't go. Whether it's family, friends, co-workers, or spouses, our relationships have a profound impact on our mental and physical health.

It's only natural to want to fix other people. But it's a huge mistake to think you can. What often happens as you create change, our relationships with others also change.

5. Do Your Homework

Therapy is a process that includes far more than your 50/60 minute sessions. It involves actual work, both in and out of your therapist's office.

Often, a therapist will give you homework assignments to complete in between sessions. It's important that you do them.

6. Embrace the "HOW" of Therapy

In the 12-Step community, there's an acronym called HOW that stands for Honesty, Open-Mindedness and Willingness. Those are three traits that every successful person in therapy and/or recovery shares.

7. Don't Miss Any of Your Appointments, Ever

To get the most results out of therapy, you have to make a commitment to it. Treat it like a non-negotiable part of your weekly routine. Short of being sick, you should never ever miss an appointment.

8. Spend Time At The End of Each Session Talking About The Session Itself

This tip is beneficial for both you and your therapist. Give yourself about 5 minutes at the end of each session to review what you have discussed. You can also use that time to give your therapist valuable feedback.

You'll want to let them know two things:

- What worked for you
- What didn't work for you

9. Don't Waste Time With a Therapist You Don't Connect With

Effective therapy is 95% relationship, 5% skill. Your therapist could have 9 advanced degrees and 50 years of professional experience. But if you don't connect with them, none of that matters.

It's nothing personal. Sometimes two people just aren't a good fit.

- Ask yourself the following questions:
- Do you look forward to therapy sessions?
- Do you feel like your therapist respects you?
- Are you comfortable disclosing personal information to them?
- Do you feel supported, validated, and understood?
- If yes, it's probably a good fit. If you answered no to any one of those questions, it may be time to look elsewhere.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM A THERAPIST?

There are many different types of therapy, and every therapist is different. That said, there are a few things you can generally expect.

Your first session - Going to therapy for the first time can make a lot of people nervous. That's normal!

Think of your first appointment as a consultation. It's a chance to meet with the therapist and make sure you're a good fit. Some therapists will even provide a free consultation over the phone before you commit to your first appointment.

During your first session, your therapist will probably start by asking what brings you to therapy, and what you hope to get out of it. They might explain their style of therapy and ask if it sounds like a good fit for you.

- You set your own goals.
- You don't have to share anything before you're ready.
- Therapy is about more than your feelings.
- Sometimes, you'll get homework.



Sharing one of my most favorite poems....



“The truth about our childhood is stored up in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, and conceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday our body will present its bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child, who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth.”

~ Alice Miller



HOUSEKEEPING

Here are some important housekeeping rules that help us to ensure progress:

#1. It is typical to see a therapist weekly in the beginning of your relationship. However there can be many factors that influence your frequency of sessions. If you have to reschedule, all therapists have a late cancellation fee, so please let your therapist know within 24-48 hours before your scheduled appointment, otherwise you will be charge their full fee.

#2. Before your first initial consultation, you will likely be asked to complete a comprehensive intake form. Take this opportunity to allow yourself to reflect on the questions being asked.

#3. To prepare for your appointment, please bring any insights or topics for discussion.

#4. Change happens when we implement new things/ideas. Please set aside time in your week for some quiet time to do some inner reflecting and journaling.

#5. It is common for a therapist to check in with a monthly review, this ensures that both yourself and the therapist know you are benefiting from the relationship. If at any time either of you feels you are not benefiting, its a great time to discuss next steps.

The only journey is the one within.

Kickoff Checklist

COMPLETE THE REQUIRED INTAKE FORM

Within my practice Intake forms will be attached to your email confirmation for your initial appointment and can be completed online, please complete prior to your first appointment. I would recommend you take some time and thoughtfulness to complete this document.

SIGN THE CLIENT CONSENT FORM

This form will also be attached to your first appointment confirmation email. This form is a requirement to proceed with therapy. If you have any questions or clarifications about this consent, please be sure to make a note and address at the beginning of your first session

PAYMENT IS REQUIRED WHEN SERVICES ARE RENDERED

As most therapist do not direct bill insurance companies, payment will be required when services are rendered. A receipt will be issued that can be submitted to your insurance company if applicable.

A victory was achieved the end of June 2024, Psychotherapy services in Ontario became HST exempt.

PLANNING YOUR APPOINTMENTS TO RECEIVE THE MOST BENEFIT

I would encourage my clients to ensure that on days when they are engaging in Psychotherapy, they do not over stretch themselves, leaving some time for self-reflection and journaling as these are great ways to integrate any new learnings.

COMPLETE HOMEWORK AS ASSIGNED

It is important if homework is assigned by your therapist, that you take some time to complete it. Most of your growth will take place outside the therapy office, as you implement new skills.

Tools & Resources

01 THE CENTRED SELF

Coming Soon - a Membership based group that is dedicated to providing a safe and supportive space to, connect, grow and share.

03 MINDFULNESS

An app I find really beneficial and refer many clients to use can be found at:
www.mindfulnessstudies.com/get-the-app

02 WORKSHEETS INCLUDED

Mood/Habit trackers, gratitude journal, setting goals, notes pages for questions and summarizing therapy sessions have been included in this package for you on the following pages.

04 BOOKS

So many to choose from, three of my favorite reads are:

- The Polyvagal Theory - Deb Dana
- Your Brain on Love; Neurobiology of healthy relationships - Stan Tatkin
- What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing - Bruce Perry

You cannot outperform your self-image or beliefs about who you think you are.

Habit Tracker

www.sheilabristow.com

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Mood Tracker

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21	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

KEY:

- ANGRY
- SAD
- NERVOUS
- RELAXED
- HOPEFUL
- PRODUCTIVE
- NEUTRAL
- HAPPY

NOTES:

SUMMARY:

I AM
GRATEFUL
FOR

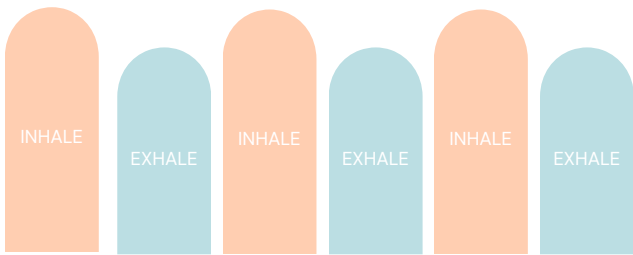
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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5 Minute Gratitude Journal

___/___/___

S M T W T H F S

Breath before writing



3 best thing about today

Three horizontal rounded rectangular boxes for writing the three best things about today.

Things you're grateful today

Five horizontal lines for writing, each starting with a purple asterisk icon.

Describe today in a drawing

A large empty rectangular box for drawing, with a small purple pen icon in the bottom right corner.

Today's Highlight

A large purple oval shape with two purple starburst icons at its ends, intended for highlighting a specific event or moment.

Things that you learned

Four horizontal lines for writing things learned today.

Today's Affirmation

Two horizontal lines for writing the daily affirmation.

POST-THERAPY NOTES



SUMMARY OF SESSION:

THINGS I'D LIKE TO WORK ON:

1.

2.

3.

TOUGH TOPICS:



COPING SKILLS I CAN USE:



TOPICS FOR NEXT TIME:

1

2

3



My hope is this guide will be beneficial in supporting you on your own therapy journey, wherever your path may lead you.

“Psychotherapy...(is) a profession whose mainspring is love. Nearly everyone who visits a therapist has a love disorder, and each has a story to tell-of love lost or denied, love twisted or betrayed, love perverted or shackled to violence.”

~ Diane Akerman

What is your story to tell?

Let's Talk

www.sheilabristow.com

How to Connect

HOW TO REACH ME



In Office and Virtually appointments are available. Contact Sheila directly if you would prefer virtual appointments and we can find a day and time that works best for you.

 Email	info@sheilaibristow.com
 Phone	705-446-4433
 Website	www.sheilabristow.com
 Booking online with Sheila	<u>Bayside Wellness Clinic - In Office Appointments</u>