



Grace Whitman Therapy

Psychotherapy Services Q & A

What Is Therapy?

Therapy is designed to help people solve problems in living by making changes in thoughts, feelings and behaviors. People generally use therapy when other efforts have not brought results they desired.

What Kind of People Use Therapy?

All kinds. Everyone faces problems throughout their lives. Contrary to popular belief, no one easily solves all his or her problems. Today, it is even harder because we live in such a complex and demanding society. It is common now to be faced with problems we have had no chance to prepare for. When that happens, our coping skills can get overwhelmed, leading to "symptoms" of distress in various forms. Such symptoms may have led you to call for today's appointment. Regardless of the "symptoms" that lead people to my office, I have always found that these symptoms were a way people tried to solve normal human problems.

Some people have misgivings about therapy. They believe it is for the seriously disturbed only. It is true that many therapeutic techniques were developed in response to people having severe problems. However, today, these techniques along with others are helpful to anyone struggling with problems which are not responding to other efforts.

What Are The Goals Of Therapy?

The connections between symptoms and the underlying problem are often unclear. One therapy goal is to figure out what problem(s) the symptom is an attempt to solve. Symptoms that lead people to seek therapy are often ineffective ways of dealing with the problem. And they are usually quite painful. Another therapy goal is to find better problem-solving approaches.

How Does Therapy Work?

Therapy involves thinking and talking about your life and problems. We pay attention to your feelings that arise, both in and outside this office. The effects of your behavior on yourself, others and the situations you face are considered. Sometimes we look into your past and sometimes we stick to the present.

Some people come to therapy hoping for a quick fix. While this is understandable, it rarely happens. Few people go to the trouble and expense of therapy without having tried hard to solve the problem on their own.

Some people wait for their therapist to solve the problem. This approach guarantees disappointment. Therapy is hard work. While there are times I ask people to try out

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new ideas or new behaviors, answers to problems will be the result of our mutual exploration and effort.

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There are three ways you can increase the benefit of our work:

1. Push yourself to talk about the things you find hardest to discuss. What you want to discuss least is probably what we need to discuss most. The sooner we get to it, the faster we will finish. Issues "kept in the closet" grow in the dark. Bringing them into the light of day is a big step in making them manageable.
2. Honesty, with yourself and with me is essential. Being dishonest in therapy is like asking a team of surgeons to operate wearing blindfolds. Honesty means, in part, talking about your thoughts and feelings about our therapy process. Mixed feelings can be expected at times.
3. Be willing to experiment with what we discuss in therapy sessions. Changing one's thoughts, feelings or behaviors requires practice "in the real world", not just in the consulting room.

Is Therapy Effective?

Research shows that therapy is helpful to most people willing to invest the required effort. Sometimes, however, it is not. This can be for several reasons:

1. Poor rapport between you and your therapist. If after a few sessions, you are experiencing a dissonance between us, please tell me. Your comfort in sessions may not be a good barometer of therapy's effectiveness. If people are too comfortable, they probably will not change. Change is inherently uncomfortable particularly on the front end. In any case, it is important that you let me know what you are experiencing, especially if you are questioning whether to continue or not. We will try to work it out. If we can't, I will help you find someone better suited to you.
2. There may be a poor fit between the therapeutic method selected and your problem and personality. If you feel this may be the case in our work, please say so.
3. Some problems are not amenable to the kinds of therapy I provide, though this may not be apparent at first.
4. There are some problems in living that are not changeable by therapy. There may be tools, techniques we can develop together to ease the burden of those problems.

Psychotherapy can be painful at times as issues long avoided or hidden are raised. This pain should not be endured for its own sake but only in service of your therapeutic goals. It is unrealistic to expect to feel better after each session. There may be times that you leave feeling somewhat upset or anxious. However, if this happens regularly, please tell me.

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Finally, the limits of one's financial resources can lead to frustration in therapy. While in therapy, you may identify additional goals beyond what first brought you in. While finances may preclude continuing therapy, I make every effort to accommodate peoples' desire to complete therapy at their own pace and meet their goals.