

## **What to expect during your first (individual) therapy session**

Hi everyone, Irina Baechle here- a licensed relationship therapist from [IrinaBaechleCounselingLLC.com](http://IrinaBaechleCounselingLLC.com) and today we are talking about what to expect during your first therapy session. Okay, so let's start off by saying that typically your first initial therapy session, which is also called an intake session, is longer than your weekly regular therapy sessions. So, for example, in my case, an intake lasts 90 minutes whereas the weekly session is 50 minutes and we do so because it really does take a long time for the therapist and the client to explore what needs to be explored and discussed during the initial session and also it takes some time to build that initial rapport with the client.

I used to have 60 minute intake sessions and they really didn't give me enough time to cover what need to be covered, so they are 90 minutes now. Okay, so before we dive in into the logistics of what happens during the first therapy session, I want to take a quick moment to talk about the nature of the therapeutic relationship. Because this relationship between the therapist and the client is a unique kind of relationship, they are not exactly a professional relationship because the professional relationship is the type of the relationship with let's say your child's teacher or is your boss. Because we talk about very deep and personal things here, right, and it's not exactly the social relationship as well because we are not friends, you pay me to be here to do the work, there are some boundaries and regulations I have to follow for example, "if I see you in public I will not acknowledge you unless you acknowledge me first" because I have to protect your confidentiality and things like that. So, it's important to keep in mind when working with a therapist.

I will also not make you lay down on the couch and talk about your childhood dreams, that's not what happens in today's offices and therapy sessions. It's a classic kind of understanding from...like that Freudian and psychoanalytic methodology. These two used to take place in the past, but they doesn't really happen much anymore. It doesn't happen in my office anyway, and sitting in a chair is typically fine.

Also, because we will be covering a lot of different territory and I will be asking you questions and you will be asking me questions, it might feel like we are all over the place and that's totally normal and its totally fine. I always try to validate my clients' experience when they are feeling this because we will be talking about a lot of different things at the same time.

You might be feeling nervous as well, which is very normal. I will probably be a little more quiet during the first session because I try to give my clients an opportunity to tell their story, so to create the space for them to share their story. I will be much more active and focused afterwards, but the first session or two is when I am less active and more passive. I will probably ask you about "your previous therapy experience" and "what worked" and "what didn't", and I do this so that we do more of what worked and we do not do what didn't work.

Another thing I tell my clients is that "I don't fix things for people." What I do instead is that, "I make you work" and I will give your homework and I will call you out if you get lazy and you don't do your part... yep and that's my style and I understand that it's not going to work for everyone, some people love it and some people hate it, that's totally fine. I encourage you to listen to your intuition and inner world and really take advantage of this beautiful therapeutic relationship that you have.

At the end of the session and especially during the first session I typically ask my clients for their feedback and how they feel about the session, what worked and what didn't and I ask for this feedback because we want to do more of what that is working and we don't really want to do those things that do not...make you

feel uncomfortable or you don't feel talking about it or you are not ready to go there-that's totally fine, I am very open, I love feedback...constructive feedback and I will ask you about this almost at the end of every session. So, that's something my clients are very accustomed to and familiar with.

Okay, so here you go...a little information and some examples again on what happens during the first therapy session. Hopefully this was helpful especially if you are looking to get in therapy. Next time we are going to be talking about what to expect during your first couples counseling therapy which is a little bit different than the individual therapy session, so stay tuned and I will see you soon! Bye bye