

# Welcome to **THERAPY**

**A GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED**



*Calhoun*  
PSYCHOLOGY PLLC

SCHOOL-BASED CLINIC  
LEE COUNTY, NC

# WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THERAPY?

Therapy can be helpful for children, teens, and adults who are experiencing mental health challenges, such as those described below. But, it can also be helpful for people who simply want someone to support them as they think through life experiences and work towards personal goals.

Therapy can be helpful for people who are experiencing:

- strong and unpleasant emotions
- stressful or upsetting thoughts
- school or learning problems
- family problems and communication skills
- relationship problems and social skills
- trauma, loss, and other major life events
- difficulty making decisions and setting goals

Therapy can help people manage difficult feelings such as:

- sadness or depression
- anxiety or worry
- intense fear
- shame and guilt
- frustration and anger
- grief
- loneliness



# WHAT HAPPENS IN THERAPY?

At the start of therapy, your therapist will ask questions to get to know you and to make sure they understand how they can best support you. Then, your therapist will help you set goals for therapy and present an initial plan for how you can work toward these goals together. In the sessions that follow, your therapist will give you space to think through any recent challenges, while also helping you stay focused on your larger goals.

## DURING A THERAPY SESSION YOU MIGHT...

**Talk.** Talking about your problems and feelings gives you the opportunity to "think out loud" and make connections you might not otherwise have made. Talking things out also gives your therapist a chance to better understand your problems and offer feedback and guidance that will be most helpful.

**Learn.** Therapists often teach people about development, emotions, thoughts, coping strategies, problem-solving, social skills, and more. The topics reviewed in therapy vary based on each person's specific needs. If there are certain topics you'd like to learn more about, let your therapist know! Your therapist will also want to learn about you! Feel free to educate your therapist on your experiences, interests, preferences, and anything else that they may need to know.

**Practice.** Your therapist may guide you in practicing new skills and strategies during your sessions. They will also help you set goals for practicing new skills and strategies outside of sessions. Frequent practice ensures that you will be able to effectively use strategies when they are needed most.

**Explore your values, strengths, and goals.** Having a good understanding of who you are and what you want can provide direction and boost motivation. Your therapist will help you capitalize on your strengths and improve upon areas of weakness as you work towards your goals



# HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THERAPY:



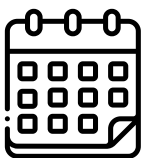
**Show up, open up:** Regularly attending sessions will help you stay on track with your goals. But showing up isn't enough -- you also need to actively participate in therapy for it to be helpful. Be prepared to share updates on successes, challenges, and any shifts in goals or priorities every week.



**Be honest:** Therapy is a place to share personal information, insecurities, problem behaviors, and other information that you might not share with others. Your therapist will provide a nonjudgmental space where you can feel safe and supported in sharing sensitive information. Being honest not gives your therapist a more accurate understanding of your experiences and challenges; it can also feel good to talk about things you haven't shared with anyone else.



**Be willing to try new things:** Sometimes people are hesitant to try new things because these things feel different or odd, but sticking to what you know will likely keep things the same. Remind yourself "for things to change, I must be willing to change, and change requires me to do things differently." Try to be open-minded when your therapist proposes new strategies, and try the strategies before deciding that they won't work for you. Trying a new strategy and providing feedback on why it didn't work is helpful for honing in on what will work for you.



**Hold yourself accountable:** The most important therapy work happens outside of sessions. Your therapist will monitor your progress and hold you accountable to some degree, but it will be up to you to complete learning tasks and practice skills outside of sessions. Telling others about your goals for the week, scheduling time to complete therapy homework, setting reminders on your phone, and keeping your therapy materials organized will help you get the most out of therapy and achieve your goals more quickly.

# IS WHAT I SAY IN THERAPY KEPT PRIVATE?

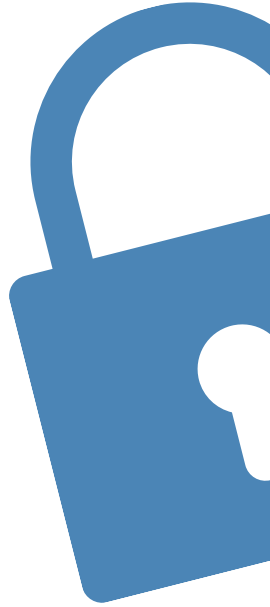
YES! Your therapist will not share information disclosed during sessions with anyone else unless they have your permission. However, therapists are required to inform others in certain situations, including:

1. Intent to harm yourself or others
2. Current or previous abuse/neglect
3. Court order

Should caregivers join a session or speak with your therapist individually, your therapist will work to maintain your privacy in these interactions. You and your therapist will discuss any information to be shared with caregivers beforehand.

**IMPORTANT:** Your therapist is not an employee of Lee County Schools, and they will not share your personal information with school staff without your permission. However, they are required to share information with school staff if they have concerns about your safety or the safety of others.

\*\*\*See the HIPAA Privacy Practices document for more information about confidentiality.



## HOW LONG DOES THERAPY LAST?

The duration of therapy varies based on each person's needs, but on average, people complete around 8-16 sessions. Therapy will continue until you and your therapist decide that it is no longer needed. Once you've achieved your initial goals, you and your therapist will discuss any new/continued goals for therapy and determine if therapy sessions should occur less frequently (biweekly/monthly) or be terminated altogether.



# YOUR RIGHTS AS A CLIENT

## To agree to or refuse services.

Engaging in therapy is your choice. We will not force anyone to participate therapy, even if their parents or school staff think it could be beneficial.

To be listened to fully and non-judgmentally. We encourage you to be yourself in therapy.

You can use your own language and expressions without fear of being judged.

To have your preferences and abilities acknowledged. Let your therapist know if adjustments are needed to better suit your preferences and learning style or abilities.

To be informed about your treatment in a way that you understand. You can ask your therapist for clarification about any information shared with you (e.g., "I don't understand, can you explain that to me again?").

To provide feedback to your therapist and express concerns (e.g., "I don't want to talk about that right now," "I don't feel like this skill is helpful for me"). Therapists appreciate this feedback as it allows them to make changes and better meet your individual needs.

To be treated with courtesy and respect. Should you ever feel mistreated, this should be communicated right away to the therapist, their supervisor, or the clinic director.

To receive therapy that does not negatively affect your school performance. If you feel that your session meeting time is causing problems for you at school, let your therapist know.

To receive care from a person who is trained in research-supported mental health treatment for the specific challenges you're facing. Should your therapist not be able to provide the care you need, we will connect you with someone who can.



To request a different therapist. If your assigned therapist is not a good match with your needs or preferences, we (or Dr. Trysha Mazzola -- Mental Health Coordinator for Lee County Schools), will help you find a different therapist.





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