

Sydney Clinical Psychology: What to Expect

If you are a first-timer to psychology, or to our practice, the points below may help you to get the most from seeing a psychologist:

- The first one or two sessions are usually assessment sessions. In these sessions your psychologist will ask you a number of questions to try and understand the reasons for your visit and how best to help you. The idea of the assessment sessions is really to talk through the problems in detail so that your psychologist can put them into a framework that allows you to move forward. Once the assessment is complete you and your psychologist can then work out a treatment plan, which will include the length, frequency and goals of therapy. After the assessment is complete, we usually write a letter to the person who referred you to us, and we will also include other people in the letter, with your permission, if they appear to be relevant.
- Sessions run for fifty minutes. When you leave, your psychologist will spend the remaining ten minutes of the hour making notes, talking to other people involved in your care where necessary and with your permission, and preparing for your next session.
- Please be on time for your sessions. We cannot give you extra time as this eats into the next person's session. However, if for some reason we are running late, we will ensure that you receive the full session.
- Everything you discuss with your psychologist is strictly confidential. Confidentiality may only be broken under the following circumstances:
 - You tell us about a significant risk of harm to yourself or someone else
 - You tell us about threat to a minor
 - You tell us about the risk of a serious crime being committed
 - We learn information about malpractice by another health provider
 - A court subpoenas your file

In all these instances, we are required by law to report such information to the relevant parties.

Please also note that if you are seeing us under Medicare or through an insurance company, then we will need to write a brief report after our initial assessment, and we will also need to provide progress reports. However, we are happy to discuss these with you if you wish.

- Please remember to give us at least forty-eight hours notice for sessions you cannot attend, otherwise the full amount of your session may be charged.
- Sessions need to be paid for on the day of the session. Most of the time we can immediately process the Medicare rebate electronically for you. If for some reason that cannot happen,

you go straight to Medicare to claim for the session, provided you have a referral from a GP or Psychiatrist. Medicare covers between six and ten sessions per calendar year. Thereafter, you may be able to use private health insurance to claim for sessions.

- At our practice we use an approach that is focused on helping you develop the skills to cope with your problems better. This approach tends to be shorter than some other forms of therapy. It also focuses as much on what you do between the sessions as what goes on in the session. You will most likely be given homework in between sessions (e.g. recording things you feel, think, or do in between sessions, trying out things you've discussed in sessions, reading relevant articles). This homework is very important as it allows you to develop a greater understanding of your problems in everyday life.
- Therapy is a collaborative process, which means that the more you put into each session, the more you will get out! Please let us know what works for you and what doesn't work for you and how we can continually improve our working relationship.
- We very much welcome feedback on our service and how we can improve things. Please help us to help you better.
- We will endeavour to be available to you in times of need. However, the practice is only staffed during working hours and messages are often not checked until the following day. If you have an emergency, please either contact your GP or can also call **Lifeline on 131114**. If problem is more acute, contact **The NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511**, or attend the emergency department of your local hospital.

Finally, welcome. We look forward to helping you.

