

3.6 Talk About Therapy Intherapy

Openly discuss your thoughts and feelings about therapy and your therapist with them during sessions.

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After a few therapy sessions, it's normal to discover you have developed some feelings regarding your therapist. You may feel annoyed at some behavioral quirk, a strong attraction, or even just have recurring random thoughts about them. These thoughts and feelings can be a key gateway into your therapeutic process. They often arise from transference, meaning the unconscious patterns and projections you push onto your therapist. When observed, they can be quite telling and help you make breakthroughs in your process.

Finding time and courage to raise issues that pertain directly to your therapy or therapist can be difficult, and you may be tempted to keep the conversation focused on your life outside the clinic. However, pushing through and discussing these types of issues can be very rewarding because often the same issues you experience outside (in the "there and then") will manifest directly inside the clinic (in the "here and now"). When they do, your therapist will be more than a listener or an observer; they will be a direct participant. This can allow them to see what's really going on, not just what you think is going on.

For the reasons above, this kind of direct interaction can be critical to the success of your therapy. A single session where you open up like this can be more beneficial than countless more traditional sessions.

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- Helps your therapist observe your relationship directly, which can give critical insight into your relationship patterns and help them adjust to your needs.
- Builds stronger bonds with your therapist, which can help you trust them more.
- Helps you develop valuable relationship and communication skills in a supportive and explorative environment.

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- This type of sharing may feel embarrassing or bring up a fear of being judged.
- Some types of information (e.g., sexual attraction, harsh criticism) can be especially difficult to share (but very therapeutically beneficial).
- Might compete with other issues you wish to discuss and seem less important, especially in short-term therapy.

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The first step is to identify that you have certain thoughts or feelings about your therapist. These thoughts can occur in session or in your daily life. If this happens in session, you might want to stop whatever you're talking about and share your observations. If you notice this outside of the clinic,

you should either make a mental note to speak about it in your next session or even set a reminder to yourself to do so. Therapy has a way of going where it wants, so setting a reminder and starting the session with the topic at hand is a good way to make sure it gets discussed.

A good way to start is to let your therapist know that you have something uncomfortable to share. Before you do this, you might be worried that your therapist will become hurt, alarmed, or judgemental. You can share this concern with them to see if they can reassure you that they're going to both handle it and be gentle with you. Experienced therapists have a variety of tools to professionally handle even the harshest feedback with dignity and responsibility.

Next, it's best to just do it: simply say what's on your mind, without filters. After you expose your heart, a good therapist will know how to treat what you've shared with respect, discuss it with you in a way that honors your vulnerability, and use it to pave a therapeutic path forward.

If your therapist responds in a way that's uncomfortable for you, that might mean one of two things. Either this is a normal part of the therapeutic process, which doesn't always feel comfortable, or your therapist might be reacting to their own unconscious issues and projections. This countertransference can manifest in behaviors such as excessive criticism and unsolicited advice giving. While it's not always easy to distinguish between the two, trusting yourself is an important guide in this process. Even though your therapist is responsible for directing this process, it is your responsibility to set boundaries with them and ultimately to decide which therapist is right for you.

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1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transference>.
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countertransference>.
3. <https://www.scribd.com/document/521663424/Winnicott-the-Use-of-an-Object>.