

# AUTHENTIC GROWTH:

FROM SELF-HELP TO THERAPY

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## Foreword: From Seeker to Guide - My Journey into Therapy and Beyond

As I sit down to write this eBook, I am reminded of the transformative power of therapy that has led me to this very moment—the moment of sharing my personal journey with this trusted group of readers. It is a journey that began with seeking answers, finding guidance, and ultimately discovering my passion for helping others embark on their own paths of growth and healing.

In retrospect, it all started with a feeling of restlessness, a gnawing desire to better understand myself and the world around me. Life's challenges and uncertainties became the brushstrokes on my canvas, shaping my understanding of the human condition and our collective search for fulfillment. Like many of us, I sought solace in the pages of self-help books, hoping to uncover the secrets to happiness and success.

Yet, I soon realized that the cookie-cutter solutions offered in those books only scratched the surface of what I truly needed—deep, meaningful connections and a compassionate guide to navigate the layers of my own psyche.

Enter therapy—the portal that opened the door to self-discovery and healing. Through this profound experience, I uncovered the power of a strong therapeutic alliance, where a safe and supportive space allowed me to explore the pentimenti of my own life—those hidden layers of experience that had shaped my canvas.

My journey into therapy began shortly after graduating with my bachelor's degree. It was an eye-opening revelation, sparking an insatiable curiosity about the human mind, emotions, and resilience. It was a transformative experience that awakened within me a newfound purpose—a calling to become a guide for others seeking their own paths to growth and authenticity.

I embarked on a path that led me through various therapy modalities, each contributing to my understanding of the diverse ways healing and growth can manifest. I will discuss these therapeutic approaches in detail, later on in the eBook. At one point, I tried **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** for a couple of sessions, seeking clarity and solutions to my challenges. It wasn't the right fit for me at that moment. Following my intuition, I explored **Person-Centered Therapy**, engaging in its comforting embrace for two years. The empathic, non-judgmental atmosphere allowed me to unravel my thoughts and feelings, leading me towards a deeper understanding of myself. Curiosity and a desire for a holistic approach led me to **Bioenergetic Therapy**. For six months, I

experienced the profound connection between the body and the mind, delving into the release of stored emotions and traumas through embodied techniques. This journey reshaped my perspective on the intricacies of human experience and the interconnectedness of our physical and emotional selves.

Today, I find myself writing this eBook—a labor of love and a lay of the land, drawn from my diverse academic background that spans from Chemical Engineering and Mathematics to Chemistry and Geology. I initially embarked on a quest for a master's degree in mathematics before therapy redirected my path towards counseling. Encouraged by my own therapist to pursue this transformative field, my passion propelled me into an academic journey, culminating in graduate studies in clinical counseling. Armed with a deeper understanding of the neurobiological underpinnings of the human condition, I immersed myself in the art and science of therapeutic practice.

My devotion to this work spans years of working with individuals, couples, and families on their unique therapeutic journeys. This eBook extends to all readers, an earnest offering—an invitation to explore the therapeutic path, much as I did, and discover the beauty of embracing our uniqueness while confronting life's evolving challenges with courage and resilience.

My aspiration is that this eBook acts as a concise map for us analytical thinkers, confidently guiding us into the therapy room, and a wide-open door for heartfelt feelers. Perhaps we find ourselves somewhere in between. Good news, this book is for all of us. It is designed for anyone who has contemplated therapy and seeks a quick and comfortable guide for their initial journey through this valuable resource.

As we venture through the following pages, my hope is that each reader experiences the warmth of a hug—a connection bridging us, seeker and guide, united in our pursuit of growth, healing, and a life authentically and purposefully lived. Together, let us delve into the heart of therapy—the transformative power that resides within each of us.

## Introduction

Today's interconnected world offers a treasure trove of self-help resources to satisfy our desire for a rich, expansive life. From the thoughtful pages of books to the captivating screens of our devices, knowledge and expertise are available. Whether we explore communities on Reddit, engage with content on TikTok, or dive into masterclass sessions, we are immersed in an abundance of advice covering various aspects of life. Topics ranging from home improvement and personal finance to technology troubleshooting offer readily available solutions that are repeatable. Need to fix a slow computer? A step-by-step guide has got us covered. Looking to create a budget? Countless experts are ready to show us the way. Self-help serves as a trusted companion, guiding us through life's external challenges with ease.

Self-help techniques can be truly effective in addressing external challenges. Whether it's handling a leaky faucet or brewing a perfect cup of tea, these tasks naturally follow a set process. By approaching them with patience and taking one step at a time, remarkable evolutions occur. The leaky faucet is restored to a symphony of silence, and as the tea brews, the flavors and aromas blend, creating a delightful balance that awakens the senses. In these simple acts, practical solutions transform into moments of joy, and everyday rituals become sources of comfort.

However, when it comes to our internal psychological challenges, the landscape shifts. Our inner world is a complex masterpiece, uniquely crafted for each individual. A vivid palette of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors form a signature style on the canvas of our being. This creative freedom often carries an internal weight, a sense of responsibility to express ourselves in ways that resonate with others while staying true to our authentic selves. Navigating this challenge can be daunting, particularly when societal expectations prioritize conformity over self-expression.

We first encounter this challenge in childhood. We are often taught to paint by numbers—a predictable approach meant to shelter and guide us during our most formative years. We seek responsiveness, resources, and comfort from those who are willing to support us in our vulnerable moments. However, as we grow, this structured approach, originally designed to keep us safe, starts to feel increasingly constricting. We yearn to break free from the mold, to color outside the lines. Adolescence and adulthood become the playground where we explore different mediums such as watercolor, clay, or the camera on our phone to authentically express our truest selves.

In adulthood we are faced with novel challenges each day that echo our dilemma from childhood, but this time, with more significant consequences. We are tasked with

self-expression to fuel our fulfillment, and we are laden with societal expectations to ensure survival. We do the best we can with what we have at each moment. We wet our brush, ready the clay, poise our phone and perhaps look back to our paint by numbers training in childhood, but it doesn't seem to map onto the complexity of our moment. We feel stuck. We push so hard and sometimes feel like our wheels are spinning. Why do we feel so stuck? Could talking to a mental health professional really help? Perhaps. We first need to understand if the reason we are stuck is because of a lack of practical knowledge, personal insight, or lived experience. Self-help is invaluable for acquiring practical knowledge that enhances our efficiency in tasks. In contrast, therapy offers a transformative journey where we gain deeply personal insights and nurture experiences that reshape how we engage with those very same tasks. It is important to mention here that we would not label a plant that desires to grow as 'stuck,' we simply nurture its growth and watch it blossom. Similarly, therapy is a nurturing journey for personal growth, not just for those who feel 'stuck,' but for anyone with the desire to flourish.

This eBook explores the significance of therapy in navigating life's internal and external challenges, emphasizing the value of professional support. We look at how to partner with a trained professional who serves as a supportive guide and collaborator in our journey toward optimal mental and emotional well-being. There is an emphasis on seeking therapy when challenges consistently impact daily life, emotional well-being, relationships, or personal growth. Trusting one's intuition and recognizing the value of investing in mental and emotional well-being are essential. This eBook also focuses on debunking common myths surrounding therapy, including stigma, exaggerated Hollywood portrayals, and misconceptions about who can benefit from therapy. By addressing these myths, this guide aims to promote therapy as a valuable resource for personal growth and well-being.

We discuss the transformative journey of therapy, unveiling its subjective benefits that empower individuals to overcome challenges, heal emotional wounds, and foster personal growth. We explore the profound impact therapy can have on emotional relief, increased self-awareness, coping skills, improved relationships, empowerment, trauma resolution, and self-compassion. Each benefit is a deeply personal experience, uniquely felt by each individual, making therapy a space for self-discovery, growth, healing, and self-empowerment.

Therapy is a piece of our nation's healthcare system. Healthcare is hardly mentioned in this society without the discussion of affordability. We explore the three tiers of affordability available to individuals seeking mental health support. The tiers include Online Budget Therapy Platforms, Therapists paneled with insurance providers, and Out-of-Network Cash Pay Therapists. Each tier offers distinct benefits and

considerations. Online platforms offer cost-effective and convenient options, while insurance paneled therapists provide reduced costs, albeit with potential limitations. Out-of-network therapists offer flexibility and personalized care but may involve higher out-of-pocket expenses. Navigating these tiers requires assessing financial resources, understanding insurance coverage, conducting thorough research, and seeking recommendations. Ultimately, finding a therapist who aligns with one's needs and values is paramount, making affordability just one aspect to consider in the journey towards mental well-being.

We explore the diverse landscape of psychotherapy modalities, each offering distinct approaches to address mental health concerns. From Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy (AEDP) to Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), this book provides guidance on selecting the right modality that aligns with one's needs and preferences. Factors such as mental health concerns, treatment history, personality, and cultural background are considered in collaboration with a mental health professional to identify the most suitable approach. A strong therapeutic relationship and open communication are vital components in navigating this important decision and embarking on a successful mental health journey.

Finally, we delve into the crucial step of reaching out to therapists and finding the right fit for one's therapeutic journey. Whether we choose to contact therapists through email or phone, this book provides insights on what to expect in the first session, establishing trust, and discussing our therapy goals. Emphasizing the importance of patience, it likens finding the right therapist to dating, encouraging us to trust our instincts and explore multiple options. This eBook prioritizes the importance of a strong therapeutic alliance and the transformative power of therapy. It guides us towards healing, growth, and embracing our authentic self as we navigate life's evolving challenges.

At times we may have felt stuck with the limitations of self-help. Together we can explore the transformative power of therapy—a guide that honors our uniqueness and fosters authentic growth. Let us discover whether self-help truly meets our needs or if therapy is the best pathway to profound growth. I want us to pause for a moment, take a slow and leisurely deep breath, and exhale, before we embrace the opportunity ahead, where these pages and therapy intertwine to weave a powerful narrative of personal evolution.



## Chapter 1: How To Be Healthy, Wealthy, and Wildly Successful

The self-help industry promises transformation, claiming that following specific steps can bring us greater happiness, health, and success. However, in its pursuit of these lofty goals, it often neglects to recognize a crucial aspect of our journey—the starting point. Each of us possesses a unique combination of experiences, thoughts, and feelings that shape our individual paths. What if our definition of "the good life," the life we truly desire, relies on these specific and personal data points? This is where self-help books and videos, with their one-sided communication, fall short. It cannot speak to the intricacies of our lives.

Instead of conforming to prescribed molds dictated by self-help, we have the option to embrace our experiences and take pride in who we are. True growth comes from accepting and nurturing our authentic selves, not from tirelessly working to overcome our inadequacies. Arnold Bessier's wisdom rings true: 'change occurs when one becomes what they are, not when they try to become what they are not.' Let's prioritize true growth, investing in ourselves, and moving away from judgmental premises that pressure us to change into someone we are not. By recognizing our uniqueness and honoring our starting points, we can embark on a journey of true transformation, one that leads to a genuine sense of happiness, well-being, and accomplishment. This is the therapeutic path.

In contrast, I'm curious how many of us have ever read a book on healthy eating? How about day-trading in the stock market? Overcoming anxiety, perhaps? Chances are we have encountered several of these self-help resources. Collectively, we probably notice that they often provide just one path or solution. This can leave us wanting more, looking for further guidance, stuck in our personal growth. There are roughly 15,000 self-help books published in the United States each year, and the self-help genre continues to grow. This is an incredible age we live in – the age of information. With all of the resources available to us, it's imperative to seek out the resources that address our concerns most accurately and precisely.

Of course, self-help books and courses can be helpful for learning practical skills, like installing a sprinkler system, creating a website, or learning to fly fish. But when it comes to personal growth and self-discovery, they fall short. They offer cookie-cutter solutions that may work for some people but not for others, and they often ignore the unique complexities and nuances of each individual's experiences.

This is where therapy comes in. Therapy provides a safe and supportive space for us to explore who we are, process our experiences, and develop healthy coping skills. As a therapist, I don't try to fit clients into a preconceived mold, but instead, I work collaboratively with clients to discover and embrace our authentic selves in tandem. I am obliged to be authentic in the therapy room. Congruence, a popular therapy word, means that my internal reactions to stories shared, must match how I look on the outside. I don't hold back the truth of the moment. Trust and rapport is a two-way street in the therapy room.

Therapy can help us develop self-awareness, which is the foundation of personal growth. Through therapy, we can learn to identify and understand our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and how they contribute to our overall well-being. We can also develop healthy coping skills that allow us to manage stress, regulate our emotions, and navigate life's challenges.

In summary, while self-help promises transformation, it cannot teach us how to be ourselves. With therapy we have a safe and supportive space for personal growth and self-discovery, guiding us to become the best version of ourselves. So let's embrace our experiences and find pride in who we are. With a personalized and evidence-based approach, therapy outshines self-help in the realm of internal exploration. In the following chapters, we'll delve into why therapy may be a better choice and how to find the right therapist based on needs and preferences.

## Chapter 2: Embracing Our Human Nature - Nurturing Growth and Flourishing

In this chapter, we embark on a journey to explore the essence of human nature and delve into my philosophy of counseling, guided by the intriguing concept of pentimento. I want this conversation to feel more like a hug than a lecture, a warm and compassionate exchange of insights as we unravel the layers of our existence.

Pentimento, a term derived from art, refers to the presence of underlying images or changes in a painting, drawing, or other artwork that become invisible over time due to the artist's alterations or revisions. These "ghost" images are remnants of previous compositions that have been painted over or altered by the artist during the creative process. The term "pentimento" comes from the Italian word "pentirsi," which means "to repent" or "to regret," indicating the artist's change of mind or intention during the creation of the artwork. Pentimenti can provide valuable insights into the artist's thought process and the evolution of the artwork, and they are often discovered through careful examination and analysis, such as using infrared imaging techniques or X-rays.

Similarly, the canvas of our lives bears the marks of our past experiences, emotions, and choices. As we journey through life, our canvas evolves with each brushstroke of experience. Challenges, like vandalized paintings, leave a lasting impact, and the dark colors of the past may still bleed through. But through therapy, we can uncover these hidden layers, bringing light back into those places.

At times, we may feel stuck, uncertain of which move to make next. The layers of paint that we cannot see or didn't have context to consider, much like pentimenti, influence our current state. This is where neurobiological evidence comes into play. Studies have shown that our experiences shape the connections between neurons in our brains, forming neural pathways that influence our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. These pathways are not fixed but rather malleable, allowing for change and growth. Therapy acts as an intervention, akin to X-rays, enabling us to explore these hidden aspects of our canvas, gaining insight and understanding of our neurobiological processes.

We may find ourselves looking back to our childhood experiences, where the paint-by-numbers approach prevailed. Yet, as we navigate the complexities of the present, we realize that this simple method no longer fits. Maybe someone told us not to mess up, creating fear that stifled our creative expression. Neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganize and form new connections, provides hope. Therapy can help restore our confidence and repair the damage, so we can continue our creative journey.

Life happens in real-time, and so do brushstrokes. Sometimes, our canvas was damaged or cut, altering the course of our painting. Here also, the role of neurobiological evidence becomes apparent. The brain's ability to adapt and repair itself allows us to heal and grow with the right support. Therapy acts as a skilled restoration artist, aiding us in repairing the damaged paint and encouraging us to keep creating.

Like skilled artists and restorers, therapists provide the care and support needed for our growth and flourishing. We'll learn to honor the layers of our lives, appreciate the beauty of our authentic selves, and embrace the transformative power of therapy.

As we embrace our pentimento, acknowledging the traces of our past and the intricate stories they tell, we'll embark on a journey of self-discovery and genuine transformation. Let us nurture our growth and flourishing, for we are living works of art, evolving with every brushstroke and every layer of life's canvas.

### Chapter 3: Navigating Life's Challenges - Embracing the Potential of Therapy

Life's journey is a complex tapestry woven with moments of joy, triumph, and resilience, as well as challenges that test our strength and understanding. At times, we find ourselves capable of navigating these difficulties with the support of friends and family, relying on their care and love to guide us. However, there are moments when the path becomes murky, and we yearn for a guiding light, a steady hand to help us find our way.

I too once questioned the need for therapy, wondering, "Aren't friends and family enough?" Undoubtedly, our loved ones care deeply for us, yet they too carry their own perspectives and biases, shaped by their unique experiences. In contrast, a therapist is an individual trained for countless hours to set aside their own biases, providing us with a safe space to explore our challenges with unwavering focus on our well-being. They offer a skilled and compassionate presence, free from judgments or personal agendas, allowing us to delve into the depths of our emotions and thoughts.

Before delving further into the realm of therapy, it's crucial to clarify the roles of various mental healthcare providers. On the journey to enhanced mental well-being, individuals often interact with professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists. Let's take a moment to distinguish their roles and contributions:

- Psychiatrist: A medical doctor who specializes in psychiatry during their residency. They receive extensive training in prescribing psychiatric medications but typically have limited training in providing psychotherapy.
- Psychologist: A mental health professional with a doctorate degree who undergoes comprehensive training and supervision in delivering psychotherapy, along with conducting testing and assessments for diagnostic purposes.
- Psychotherapist: A mental health professional with a master's degree who undergoes comprehensive training and supervision in delivering psychotherapy.

While not every hurdle requires professional intervention, there are instances when seeking the support of a therapist proves invaluable. In this chapter, we embark on a journey of self-reflection to discern whether our experiences warrant the assistance of a therapist. We will explore the subtle nuances that distinguish moments of self-guidance from the potential benefits of seeking therapy.

By the end of this chapter, I want there to be clarity and confidence in making an informed decision about whether therapy aligns with our current needs. Together, let us unravel the threads of understanding and embrace the transformative potential that therapy can offer on our path to growth and self-discovery.

### Recognizing the Impact on Our Daily Life

1. Consider the impact our challenges have on our daily life. Are we struggling to perform everyday tasks, maintain relationships, or focus on work or school? Do difficulties persist over an extended period, affecting our overall well-being? If our challenges significantly disrupt our lives, it may be an indication that therapy could be beneficial.

### Emotional Distress and Mental Health Symptoms

2. Pay attention to emotional states and mental health symptoms. Are there persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, anger, or hopelessness? Are we finding it challenging to regulate our emotions or cope with stress? Are we grappling with intrusive thoughts, sleep disturbances, or a loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities? These symptoms can be indicators of underlying mental health conditions, and therapy can provide the support we need to address them.

### Impact on Relationships

3. Assess the impact of our challenges on relationships. Do we find it challenging to connect with others or maintain healthy boundaries? Are relationships strained or consistently experiencing conflict? Therapy can help us develop effective communication skills, improve our relationship dynamics, and navigate challenging interpersonal issues.

### Persistent Unresolved Issues

4. Consider any persistent unresolved issues in life. Are there past traumas, unresolved grief, or unresolved conflicts that continue to affect us? These unresolved issues can manifest in various ways, impacting our mental and emotional well-being. Therapy offers a safe space to explore and heal from these experiences.

### Self-Reflection and Personal Growth

5. Reflect on personal growth and our desire for self-improvement. Are we feeling stuck, unsure of our purpose, or struggling to make important life decisions? Therapy can provide guidance and support as we explore our values, beliefs, goals, and aspirations, helping us gain clarity and move forward in a meaningful way.

### Trusting Our Intuition

6. Our intuition and inner wisdom is trustworthy. If we have a nagging feeling that something isn't quite right or that we could benefit from professional support, it's worth considering therapy. Our intuition often recognizes when we need additional help, even if we can't fully articulate why.

Seeking therapy doesn't mean that our challenges are more significant or valid than anyone else's. It simply means that we recognize the value of investing in our well-being and seeking the support of a trained professional. Therapy offers a unique and confidential space for self-exploration, growth, and healing.

When we find ourselves in a place where we resonate with any of the signs mentioned above or have a strong inclination that therapy could be beneficial, it's worth exploring further. Researching therapists in our area is a helpful step, asking for recommendations, or reaching out to a mental health professional for an initial consultation can prove to be beneficial. Our mental and emotional well-being is important, and seeking therapy is a courageous and proactive step towards living a healthier, more fulfilling life.

## Chapter 4: Debunking Myths: Unraveling the Truth about Therapy

Therapy, despite its proven effectiveness and countless success stories, is still shrouded in myths and misconceptions. Many of these myths find their origin in the father of psychotherapy, Sigmund Freud. My psychology professor shared with the class once, “you can argue against Freud, but you can’t argue without him”. Much of Freud’s work serves as a foundation for modern psychotherapy today. It is also where we find the tropes of “laying on the couch and staring at the ceiling”, “tell me about your mother”, “the oedipus complex”. These misconceptions and tropes can create barriers, preventing individuals from seeking the help they need. In this chapter, we will debunk common myths surrounding therapy, including the stigma associated with seeking mental health support, the fear-mongering perpetuated by Hollywood, and the hyperbolic representations of mental health in the media.

Myth #1 - Therapy is only for "crazy" or "weak" people.

Reality: This myth stems from the stigma surrounding mental health. The truth is, therapy is for anyone facing challenges, seeking personal growth, or desiring a space for self-exploration. Seeking therapy is a courageous and proactive step towards improving our well-being, and it does not indicate weakness or instability. Hollywood has a rich history of depicting mental health struggles in a hyperbolic and pejorative way. There has been so much progress in the past few decades thanks to hard-working mental health advocates.

Myth #2 - Therapy is only necessary for severe mental health conditions.

Reality: While therapy is indeed beneficial for individuals with mental health disorders, it is not limited to them. Therapy can support individuals dealing with various life challenges, such as relationship issues, career transitions, grief, stress, or personal growth. Therapy offers valuable tools and guidance for navigating life's ups and downs, regardless of the severity of the issue. Typically, what distinguishes diagnosable mental health conditions from "normal" human experience is increased frequency, elevated severity, and self-identified distress, often assessed by a therapist asking, "...and is that a problem for you?" If something is not a problem, a good therapist is going to leave that alone.



Myth #3 - Therapy is a never-ending process.

Reality: The duration of therapy varies depending on individual needs and goals. Some individuals may benefit from short-term therapy to address a specific concern [think: Solution-Focused Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy], while others may engage in longer-term therapy for ongoing support and personal development [think: Psychoanalysis, Psychodynamic Therapy, Person-Centered Therapy]. Therapy is a collaborative process, and its duration is determined by our progress and evolving needs.

Myth #4 - Therapy is all about lying on a couch and talking about childhood experiences.

Reality: While some therapeutic approaches may involve exploring childhood experiences, therapy encompasses a wide range of modalities tailored to individual preferences and needs. Therapists employ various techniques, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychodynamic therapy, mindfulness-based approaches, and more. Therapy is a dynamic process that addresses present challenges and supports personal growth.

Myth #5 - Therapy is expensive and only for the wealthy.

Reality: While therapy can come at a cost, there are various options available to make it more accessible. Many therapists offer sliding scale fees based on income, and some organizations provide low-cost or free mental health services. Additionally, some insurance plans cover therapy sessions. It's important to explore these options and prioritize our mental health without assuming it's unaffordable.

Myth #6 - Therapy is only about talking, and therapists give all the answers.

Reality: Therapy is a collaborative process where the therapist serves as a guide and facilitator. They provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for us to explore our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Therapists help us gain insights, develop coping strategies, and identify our own solutions. Therapy encourages self-discovery and empowers us to take an active role in our well-being. Moreover, therapy has evolved to embrace integrative modalities, where approaches are meticulously constructed and undergo peer-reviewed research studies to validate their efficacy and reliability. These integrative modalities may encompass diverse elements, focusing on behaviors,

somatic experiencing, feelings, and thoughts, working systematically to support our growth and healing.

Myth #7 - Therapy is like what we see in movies, with exaggerated portrayals of mental health.

Reality: Hollywood often exaggerates and sensationalizes mental health issues for dramatic effect. It's important to remember that these representations are fictionalized and do not accurately reflect the reality of therapy. Real therapy is a professional, ethical, and empathetic process focused on the well-being and growth of the individual.

By debunking these myths, we aim to dismantle the barriers and misconceptions surrounding therapy. Therapy is a valuable resource that provides support, guidance, and healing for individuals from all walks of life. It's time to challenge the stigma, disregard the fear-mongering, and embrace therapy as a positive and transformative experience for personal growth and well-being.

## Chapter 5: The Subjective Benefits of Therapy: Unveiling the Path to Healing

Therapy is a transformative journey that offers a multitude of subjective benefits, empowering individuals to overcome challenges, heal emotional wounds, and foster personal growth. In this chapter, we will explore the profound impact therapy can have on one's well-being, highlighting the subjective benefits that can enhance and enrich our lives.

### 1. Emotional Relief and Validation

One of the most significant benefits of therapy is the opportunity to express and process our emotions in a safe, non-judgmental space. Therapy provides a supportive environment where we can openly share our thoughts, feelings, and experiences without fear of rejection or criticism. By having our emotions validated and understood by a compassionate and competent therapist, we can experience a sense of relief and gain clarity about our inner world.

### 2. Increased Self-Awareness and Insight

Therapy acts as a mirror, reflecting back aspects of ourselves that may have been previously hidden or unconscious. I think of growing up in our families of origin as knowing relationships in black & white, while therapy upgrades our lens to 8K ultra-high resolution. Through introspection and guided exploration, therapy helps us gain deeper self-awareness and insight into our thoughts, behaviors, and patterns. This newfound understanding allows us to make connections between past experiences and present challenges, empowering us to make conscious choices and break free from unhelpful patterns.

### 3. Enhanced Coping Skills and Resilience

Therapy equips us with valuable coping skills to navigate life's challenges and build resilience. A skilled therapist can teach us practical tools and techniques tailored to our specific needs, helping us manage stress, regulate emotions, and develop healthier ways of coping. These skills become valuable resources that can be applied not only during therapy but also in our daily lives, fostering greater emotional well-being and adaptive functioning.

#### 4. Improved Relationships and Communication

Therapy provides a space to explore and improve our interpersonal relationships. By examining our communication style, relationship dynamics, and attachment patterns, therapy helps us develop healthier ways of relating to others. We can learn effective communication skills, assertiveness, and boundary-setting, which can enhance our connections and deepen intimacy. The insights gained in therapy can positively impact relationships with family, friends, partners, and colleagues.

#### 5. Empowerment and Personal Growth

Engaging in therapy is an act of self-empowerment, as it enables us to take an active role in our own growth and well-being. Through therapy, we gain a deeper understanding of our strengths, values, and goals, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. This newfound self-awareness allows us to make conscious choices aligned with our authentic selves, facilitating personal growth and the realization of our potential.

#### 6. Resolving Past Trauma and Emotional Wounds

Therapy provides a healing space for individuals who have experienced trauma or emotional wounds. It is not uncommon in this life for individuals to experience something that feels deeply unpleasant. These experiences often install protective beliefs into the central processing unit that is our brain. They serve to protect us from any repeat offense. These core beliefs serve to protect the individual from future threats while simultaneously cutting them off from a number of important resources, perhaps loved ones, friends, or even their own internal emotional world. By working through past traumatic experiences, therapy allows for the processing and integration of these events in a safe and supportive environment. Through evidence-based modalities like EMDR, trauma-focused therapy, or psychodynamic approaches, therapy can assist in alleviating the distressing effects of trauma, fostering post-traumatic growth, and restoring a sense of emotional well-being. Remarkably, even those with treatment-resistant PTSD, such as veterans, are experiencing tremendous relief through innovative approaches like phase-3 clinical trials of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, led by organizations like MAPS. While the past cannot be changed, the remarkable plasticity of the brain offers hope for rewiring the reality-generating engine within us, bolstering our sense of safety, reducing our fear response, and regaining a profound sense of power and agency.

## 7. Self-Compassion and Self-Acceptance

Therapy promotes self-compassion and self-acceptance, encouraging us to embrace and love ourselves unconditionally. As we explore our inner world with a therapist, we develop a deeper understanding of our strengths and vulnerabilities. Through this process, we learn to treat ourselves with kindness, understanding, and forgiveness. Cultivating self-compassion and self-acceptance enables us to nurture a healthier relationship with ourselves and enhances our overall well-being.

The subjective benefits of therapy are vast and deeply personal, as they are uniquely experienced by each individual. Therapy has the potential to transform our lives, providing a space for self-discovery, growth, healing, and self-empowerment.

## Chapter 6: The Three Tiers of Affordability in Therapy

In the realm of therapy, affordability plays a crucial role in determining accessibility and options available to individuals seeking mental health support. This chapter will explore the three tiers of affordability in therapy, namely Online Budget Therapy Platforms, Therapists paneled with our insurance provider, and Out-of-Network Cash Pay Therapists. Understanding the distinctions among these tiers can empower us to make informed decisions about our therapeutic journey.

### 1. Online Budget Therapy Platforms:

In recent years, online therapy platforms such as BetterHelp, TalkSpace, and others have gained popularity for their convenience and cost-effectiveness. These platforms offer affordable therapy options through subscription-based models or discounted rates for online therapy. They provide individuals on a limited budget with the opportunity to access therapy from the comfort of their own homes. While these platforms can be an excellent starting point, it is important to research and ensure the qualifications and credentials of the therapists on these platforms align with our needs and standards. Ironically, these platforms often cost approximately the same as our average co-pay to meet with a therapist paneled with our insurance provider.

### 2. Therapists Paneled with Our Insurance Provider (IN-NETWORK):

Definition: Paneled - much like the panels that make up a wall, an insurance provider is like a wall of healthcare made up of a team of healthcare providers who choose to partner with them, the people who choose to partner with them are considered to be paneled healthcare providers. This term is approximately synonymous with a provider being considered (IN-NETWORK) with our insurance company.

Many of us have access to therapy through insurance coverage, which connects us with therapists who are paneled with our various insurance providers. This tier of affordability allows us to benefit from reduced therapy costs, as the insurance plan covers a portion of the fees. While this option can make therapy more financially manageable, it is essential to understand the limitations and restrictions imposed by insurance plans. These may include a limited number of sessions, specific modalities covered, or a requirement for pre-authorization. It is important to verify coverage and understand the potential out-of-pocket expenses associated with this tier.

### 3. Out-of-Network Cash Pay Therapists:

The third tier of affordability involves working with out-of-network therapists on a cash pay basis. This option allows us to have more flexibility and choice when selecting a therapist. While out-of-network therapists may not accept our insurance, they often offer specialized modalities, personalized care, and longer session durations. Opting for out-of-network therapy allows us to have more control over our therapy journey and potentially access therapists who may be a better fit for our specific needs. However, it is crucial to consider the financial implications of this choice, as out-of-pocket expenses may be higher compared to the other tiers.

#### Navigating the Three Tiers:

When considering the three tiers of affordability, it is important to assess our financial situation, therapy goals, and personal preferences. Here are some strategies to navigate these tiers effectively:

1. Evaluate the budget: We must consider our financial resources and determine which tier aligns with our affordability and financial goals. It benefits us to be honest with ourselves about what we can comfortably afford in the long term.
2. Understand insurance coverage: If we have insurance coverage, we can familiarize ourselves with the details of our plan. Take note of the specific therapy benefits, including copayments, deductibles, and limitations on sessions or modalities. This knowledge will help us maximize our coverage and manage costs effectively.
3. Research and compare options: Conduct thorough research regarding online budget therapy platforms, therapists paneled with our insurance provider, and out-of-network cash pay therapists. Consider the modalities offered, therapist qualifications, costs, and other factors relevant to our unique circumstances. An excellent resource for comparing therapists is **PsychologyToday.com**, an online directory of mental health care providers.
4. Seek recommendations and referrals: Reach out to trusted sources such as friends, family, or healthcare professionals who have experience with therapy in different tiers. Their insights and experiences can help us make more informed decisions and find a therapist who is both affordable and well-suited to our needs.

Affordability is just one aspect to consider when choosing a therapist. It is also important to prioritize the therapist's expertise, approach, and the therapeutic relationship. Ultimately, finding the right therapist who aligns with our values,

understands our unique experiences, and supports our mental health journey is paramount, regardless of the affordability tier.

By understanding the three tiers of affordability and considering our personal circumstances, we can make an informed decision about which tier is the most suitable for our therapy needs. Therapy is an investment in our well-being, and finding the right balance between affordability and quality care is key to a successful therapeutic journey.



## Chapter 7: Selecting the Right Psychotherapy Modality

Psychotherapy encompasses a wide range of modalities, each offering unique approaches and techniques to address various mental health concerns. The field was formalized by Sigmund Freud just around the turn of the 20th century. The field has moved through a couple of different phases in terms of approach. One of the most recent phases of therapeutic practice is called, "Eclectic." This approach is characterized by its flexibility and integration of techniques from multiple therapeutic modalities. Therapists who practice eclecticism draw upon a diverse toolbox of interventions, tailoring their approach to the specific needs and preferences of each client. This allows for a highly personalized and effective form of therapy that can incorporate elements from cognitive, behavioral, humanistic, psychodynamic, and other therapeutic traditions, providing clients with a well-rounded and adaptable approach to healing and personal growth.

It's important to note that while these formalized approaches to psychotherapy emerged in the 20th century, humans have been engaging in forms of counseling and healing for centuries, rooted in cultural and religious practices. The study and practice of psychotherapy continue to evolve, with ongoing research and the integration of various therapeutic modalities. This rich history and ongoing development highlight the dynamic nature of psychotherapy, constantly adapting to meet the diverse needs of individuals seeking support and healing.

The latest and most cutting-edge therapeutic approaches are termed integrative. These approaches have sought to formalize the best pieces of eclectic therapy into streamlined and comprehensive frameworks or models. In integrative therapy, the emphasis is on viewing individuals as whole beings, considering their physical, emotional, mental, and even spiritual dimensions. This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of these aspects in promoting mental well-being and personal growth. Therapists utilizing integrative approaches draw from a wide spectrum of therapeutic modalities, weaving them together into a unified tapestry of healing. By recognizing that each individual's journey is unique, these approaches prioritize tailoring therapy to the specific needs, values, and goals of the client. This fosters a deep and transformative therapeutic experience, addressing not only the symptoms but also the underlying factors contributing to mental health challenges, ultimately guiding individuals toward a more balanced and fulfilling life.

In this chapter, we will gently explore different psychotherapy modalities, their underlying theories, their techniques, and provide guidance on how to choose the one that aligns with our mental health concerns and personal preferences. Understanding the essence of these approaches can help us make an informed decision about which modality resonates with our unique needs and preferences. It is important to mention that meta-analysis (a research study that studies many studies) suggests that all major psychotherapy modalities have similar efficacy and the number one predictor of successful therapeutic outcomes for any client is the therapeutic alliance.

### **Therapeutic Alliance**

**Relationship:** This refers to the emotional connection, trust, and rapport between the therapist and the client. It involves the client feeling understood, respected, and valued by the therapist.

**Goals and Tasks:** This aspect involves the agreement between the therapist and client regarding the goals of therapy and the tasks or interventions that will be used to achieve those goals. It includes shared decision-making about the treatment plan.

**Agreement on Therapeutic Frame:** This component relates to the understanding and agreement between the therapist and client about the structure and boundaries of therapy, such as session frequency, duration, and confidentiality.

### **Integrative Modalities**

Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy (AEDP):

AEDP focuses on emotional transformation and healing through the exploration of core emotions and the promotion of secure attachment. It may be beneficial for individuals seeking deeper emotional processing and increased self-awareness.

Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy (EFT):

EFT centers on romantic relationships and aims to restructure emotional responses within the couple. By exploring underlying emotions and attachment patterns, EFT helps partners better understand each other's needs and create more secure emotional bonds. The focus is on fostering emotional openness, vulnerability, and empathy to strengthen the relationship.

#### Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT):

ACT aims to help individuals accept their experiences and develop psychological flexibility. If we are looking to build mindfulness skills, clarify our values, and commit to meaningful action, ACT may be a suitable choice.

#### Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP):

ISTDP aims to resolve unconscious conflicts and promote emotional healing through a focused and time-limited approach. It can be effective for individuals seeking rapid symptom relief and deep emotional insight.

#### Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS):

IFS views the psyche as composed of various internal parts and seeks to establish harmony and healing among these parts. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to understand and integrate their inner complexities.

#### Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):

DBT combines elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy with strategies for emotional regulation and mindfulness. It is effective for individuals struggling with emotion dysregulation, self-harm behaviors, and borderline personality disorder.

#### Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR):

EMDR utilizes bilateral stimulation, such as eye movements, to process traumatic memories and alleviate associated distress. If we have experienced trauma and seek a therapy that targets specific memories, EMDR may be a suitable option.

#### Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP):

ERP is a specialized form of therapy for individuals with anxiety disorders, particularly obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). It involves gradually exposing individuals to feared situations or thoughts and preventing the accompanying compulsive behaviors.

**Bioenergetic Therapy:** Integrating the mind and body, bioenergetic therapy emphasizes the connection between emotional experiences and bodily reactions. By focusing on physical sensations and movements, this modality aims to release emotional tension held within the body. Bioenergetic therapy can promote emotional release, increase body awareness, and facilitate emotional healing.

**Psychedelic Therapies:** Emerging as a promising field, psychedelic therapies use substances such as psilocybin or MDMA under controlled and therapeutic settings. These therapies have shown potential in treating various mental health conditions,

including PTSD and treatment-resistant depression. Psychedelic-assisted therapy focuses on introspection, emotional processing, and accessing deeper levels of consciousness to promote healing and transformative experiences.

Each of these modalities offers distinct perspectives and techniques to address mental health challenges, making the therapeutic landscape diverse and versatile. As we explore the theories behind these approaches, we may find that one modality resonates more strongly with our personal beliefs and experiences, guiding us towards a therapeutic journey that aligns with our unique needs and aspirations.

### **Approaches that combine to form an Eclectic Model**

#### **Psychodynamic Therapy:**

Rooted in the belief that our present behavior and feelings are influenced by unconscious thoughts and past experiences, psychodynamic therapy delves into the depths of the mind. It aims to bring awareness to unresolved conflicts and emotional struggles, fostering insight and self-awareness. Through exploration of early life experiences and the therapeutic relationship, psychodynamic therapy seeks to release emotional blockages, promote healing, and enable personal growth.

#### **Person-Centered Therapy:**

Based on the principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness, person-centered therapy places utmost importance on the therapeutic relationship. The therapist creates a safe and supportive space where clients can explore their feelings and thoughts without judgment. The goal is to facilitate self-discovery, enhance self-esteem, and promote personal growth by fostering a deeper understanding of oneself and one's emotions.

#### **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):**

CBT operates on the premise that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected and can influence one another. It's worth noting that CBT is sometimes preferred by insurance companies due to its focus on symptom reduction and its time-limited nature, which often revolves around specific goals. However, while CBT is designed to address immediate concerns, it's also possible for a skilled therapist and a motivated client to delve deeper. They can collaborate to work on core beliefs or schemas, aiming to create profound shifts that impact not only the surface-level symptoms but also deeply seated issues. In this way, CBT can be a valuable tool not only for targeting immediate challenges but also for initiating transformative change that fundamentally alters how one feels on a daily basis.

## **Adjunctive Approaches and Diagnosis Specific Modalities**

### **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):**

ABA utilizes behavioral principles to understand and modify behavior. It is commonly used to address behavioral issues in individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

### **Art Therapy:**

Art therapy incorporates artistic expression as a means of self-discovery and healing. If we are drawn to creative outlets and find it easier to express ourselves through art, this modality can offer a unique therapeutic experience.

### **Attachment-Based Therapy:**

Attachment-based therapy focuses on exploring and improving attachment patterns, which may be helpful for individuals struggling with relationship difficulties and seeking to develop healthier attachment styles.

### **Bibliotherapy:**

Bibliotherapy involves using literature and reading materials as therapeutic tools. If we find solace in books and enjoy self-guided exploration, bibliotherapy can be a valuable adjunct to our therapeutic journey.

### **Biofeedback:**

Biofeedback uses technology to provide real-time information about physiological responses, enabling individuals to learn self-regulation techniques. This modality can be helpful for those seeking to manage stress, anxiety, and physical symptoms associated with mental health concerns.

### **Brain Stimulation Therapy:**

Brain stimulation therapies, such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), involve the application of targeted electrical or magnetic stimulation to the brain. They are typically reserved for individuals with severe and treatment-resistant mental health conditions.

### **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT):**

CPT is specifically designed to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by addressing cognitive distortions and maladaptive beliefs related to traumatic experiences. If we have experienced trauma and seek resolution and healing, CPT may be a suitable choice.

#### Cognitive Stimulation Therapy:

Cognitive stimulation therapy aims to enhance cognitive functioning and promote social engagement for individuals with dementia or cognitive impairments. It focuses on structured activities and group interactions to stimulate cognitive abilities.

#### Compassion-Focused Therapy:

Compassion-focused therapy emphasizes the cultivation of self-compassion and compassion for others. It can be beneficial for individuals struggling with self-criticism, shame, and difficulties in self-care.

#### Culturally Competent Therapy:

Culturally competent therapy recognizes and respects the cultural background and experiences of individuals. If we value therapy that acknowledges and incorporates our cultural identity, this modality can provide a safe and inclusive therapeutic environment.

#### Dance Therapy:

Dance therapy utilizes movement and dance as a means of self-expression and emotional exploration. If we resonate with embodied practices and find movement therapeutic, dance therapy may offer a unique avenue for healing.

#### Equine-Assisted Therapy:

Equine-assisted therapy involves interactions with horses to promote personal growth and self-awareness. It can be particularly helpful for individuals who resonate with animals and find them comforting and non-judgmental.

#### Existential Therapy:

Existential therapy explores the fundamental questions of human existence, meaning, and purpose. It can be beneficial for individuals grappling with existential concerns, identity issues, and a desire for self-discovery.

#### Experiential Therapy:

Experiential therapy emphasizes the importance of engaging in direct experiences and accessing emotions in the therapeutic process. It can be effective for individuals who prefer a more hands-on and experiential approach to therapy.

#### Expressive Arts Therapy:

Expressive arts therapy integrates various artistic modalities, such as visual arts, music, movement, and writing, to facilitate emotional expression and personal growth. If we are drawn to multiple art forms and seek a holistic approach, expressive arts therapy may resonate with us.

#### Faith Integration Therapy:

Psychotherapy with faith integration incorporates spiritual beliefs and practices to support individuals in their psychological healing and growth, emphasizing the integration of religious or spiritual principles into the therapeutic process.

#### Family Systems Therapy:

Family systems therapy examines the dynamics and interactions within family units to address individual and relational concerns. It can be valuable for individuals seeking to improve family relationships and resolve conflicts.

#### Feminist Therapy:

Feminist therapy acknowledges and addresses the impact of gender roles, societal expectations, and power dynamics on mental health. It focuses on empowering individuals and promoting gender equality.

#### Forensic Therapy:

Forensic therapy combines principles of psychology and the legal system to address mental health concerns within the context of legal proceedings. If we require therapy related to legal issues or forensic evaluations, this specialized modality may be necessary.

#### Gestalt Therapy:

Gestalt therapy emphasizes the present moment experience and the integration of mind, body, and emotions. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking personal growth, self-awareness, and increased authenticity.

#### Humanistic Therapy:

Humanistic therapy emphasizes individual growth, self-actualization, and personal responsibility. It places value on the client-therapist relationship and aims to facilitate self-discovery and personal empowerment.

#### Hypnotherapy:

Hypnotherapy utilizes a trance-like state to access and modify unconscious patterns and beliefs. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to address specific habits, phobias, or traumatic memories.

#### Imago Relationship Therapy:

Imago relationship therapy focuses on healing and transforming intimate relationships by exploring childhood wounds and enhancing communication and connection.

#### Jungian Therapy:

Jungian therapy, based on the work of Carl Jung, explores the unconscious and the individuation process. It delves into symbolism, dreams, and archetypes to facilitate personal growth and self-discovery.

#### Mentalization-Based Therapy:

Mentalization-based therapy focuses on improving the ability to understand and interpret one's own and others' thoughts and emotions. It is effective for individuals struggling with identity, self-esteem, and interpersonal difficulties.

#### Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT):

MBCT combines elements of cognitive therapy with mindfulness practices to alleviate symptoms of depression and prevent relapse. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to cultivate mindfulness skills and develop a more balanced relationship with their thoughts.

#### Motivational Interviewing:

Motivational interviewing aims to elicit and strengthen motivation for behavior change. It is often used in addiction treatment and can be helpful for individuals ambivalent about making changes in their lives.

#### Multicultural Therapy:

Multicultural therapy acknowledges and addresses the influence of culture, race, and ethnicity on mental health. It promotes cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and an understanding of diverse perspectives.

#### Music Therapy:

Music therapy utilizes music and musical interventions to address emotional, cognitive, and social needs. It can be beneficial for individuals who resonate with music and find it therapeutic.



#### Narrative Therapy:

Narrative therapy focuses on the stories we tell ourselves and how they shape our identities and experiences. It can be effective for individuals seeking to reframe their narratives and develop a more empowering perspective.

#### Neurofeedback:

Neurofeedback uses technology to provide feedback on brain activity, helping individuals learn self-regulation and promote optimal brain functioning. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to improve attention, manage stress, and enhance cognitive abilities.

#### Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT):

PCIT aims to improve parent-child relationships and address behavioral issues in young children. It involves teaching parents specific skills to enhance communication, discipline, and emotional connection with their child.

#### Person-Centered Therapy:

Person-centered therapy emphasizes the importance of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness in the therapeutic relationship. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking a non-directive and supportive approach to therapy.

#### Play Therapy:

Play therapy utilizes play and creative expression as a means of communication and healing, particularly for children. If we are a parent seeking therapy for our child or an adult who resonates with playful approaches, play therapy may be appropriate.

#### Positive Psychology:

Positive psychology focuses on building strengths, resilience, and promoting well-being. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to enhance positive emotions, meaning, and life satisfaction.

#### Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE):

PE is a specialized therapy for individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that involves gradually confronting and processing traumatic memories and experiences. It can be effective for individuals seeking resolution and symptom reduction related to trauma.

#### Psychoanalytic Therapy:

Psychoanalytic therapy explores the unconscious and aims to bring unconscious conflicts and dynamics to conscious awareness. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking deep insight into their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

#### Psychological Testing and Evaluation:

Psychological testing and evaluation involve the use of standardized assessments to gather information about an individual's cognitive abilities, personality traits, and mental health concerns. It can be helpful in providing accurate diagnoses and treatment recommendations.

#### Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT):

REBT focuses on identifying and challenging irrational beliefs to promote more adaptive thoughts and behaviors. It can be effective for individuals seeking to change unhelpful patterns of thinking.

#### Reality Therapy:

Reality therapy emphasizes personal responsibility and choice in creating a fulfilling life. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking practical strategies to address their concerns and make positive changes.

#### Sandplay Therapy:

Sandplay therapy uses a sandbox and miniature figures to facilitate self-expression and emotional exploration. It can be beneficial for individuals who resonate with symbolic and non-verbal forms of communication.

#### Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT):

SFBT concentrates on identifying and building upon an individual's strengths and resources to create positive change. It can be effective for individuals seeking a solution-focused and goal-oriented approach to therapy.

#### Somatic Therapy:

Somatic therapy explores the mind-body connection and aims to address psychological concerns through body-centered techniques. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking to integrate their physical and emotional experiences.

#### Strength-Based Therapy:

Strength-based therapy focuses on identifying and utilizing an individual's strengths and positive qualities to promote growth and resilience. It can be effective for individuals seeking a positive and empowering therapeutic approach.

#### Structural Family Therapy:

Structural family therapy examines and addresses the structure and organization of family dynamics to create healthier patterns of interaction. It can be valuable for individuals seeking to improve family relationships and resolve conflicts.

#### The Gottman Method:

The Gottman Method is an evidence-based approach to couples therapy that focuses on improving communication, fostering friendship, and building a stronger relationship foundation. If we are seeking therapy as a couple, this method may provide practical strategies for enhancing our relationship.

#### Transpersonal Therapy:

Transpersonal therapy explores the spiritual and transcendent aspects of human experience. It can be beneficial for individuals seeking therapy that incorporates spirituality, mindfulness, and personal growth.

#### Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT):

TF-CBT is specifically designed to address the needs of individuals, particularly children and adolescents, who have experienced trauma. It combines cognitive-behavioral techniques with trauma-focused interventions to promote healing and recovery.

Selecting the right psychotherapy modality depends on various factors, including our mental health concerns, personal preferences, and therapeutic goals. It is important to consult with a mental health professional who can assess our specific needs and make appropriate recommendations. They will consider our symptoms, treatment history, personality, cultural background, and the therapeutic approaches that align with our goals and values. Therapy is a collaborative process, and finding the right fit is crucial for successful outcomes. Open communication, trust, and a strong therapeutic relationship are key elements in choosing the modality that will best support our mental health journey.

## Chapter 8: Taking the First Step: Reaching Out to Therapists and Finding a Good Fit

Once we have identified therapists within our budget and selected a modality that resonates with our needs, it's time to take the next step and reach out to them. Initiating contact with a therapist can feel intimidating, but remember that therapists are there to support us and guide us through the process. In this chapter, we will explore how to reach out to therapists, what to expect in the first session, and why finding a good fit is crucial for our therapeutic journey.

### 1. Reaching Out: Email or Phone?

When reaching out to therapists, we may have the option to contact them via email or phone. Some therapists offer a complimentary 15-minute phone consultation, allowing us to briefly discuss our concerns and ask questions before committing to a full session. This consultation can give us a sense of the therapist's approach, personality, and expertise. Alternatively, we can choose to send an email introducing ourselves and outlining our reasons for seeking therapy. Remember to provide contact information and specify the preferred method of communication.

### 2. The First Session: What to Expect

The first session, often referred to as an intake session or initial assessment, serves as an opportunity for client and therapist to get to know each other and establish a foundation for the therapeutic journey. Here's what we can typically expect during the first session:

a. Discussion of Background and Concerns: The therapist will ask questions about our personal background, current struggles, and goals for therapy. This information helps them understand our unique situation and develop an appropriate treatment plan.

b. Establishing Trust and Confidentiality: The therapist will explain their approach, therapeutic boundaries, and confidentiality policies. This creates a safe and secure environment for open and honest communication.

c. Therapist's Assessment: The therapist may ask specific questions or administer assessments to gather more information about our mental health concerns. This assessment aids in developing a comprehensive understanding of our needs.

d. Setting Goals and Expectations: Together, client and therapist will discuss therapy goals and establish a plan to work towards them. The therapist can also address any questions or concerns we may have about the therapeutic process.

### 3. Give It Time: Building Trust and Progressing

It's important to know therapy is a process that takes time. While some individuals may experience immediate relief or insights, others may require several sessions before noticing significant changes. Building a trusting therapeutic relationship and making progress takes patience and commitment. It's okay to give ourselves and the therapy process the time needed to unfold and work its magic.

### 4. Finding the Right Fit: Akin to Dating

Finding the right therapist is a lot like dating. It's essential to feel comfortable, understood, and supported by our therapist. In some cases, we may not immediately click with the first therapist we meet, and that's okay. It's perfectly normal to try a couple of therapists for an initial session to determine if they are the right fit for us. We get the opportunity once more to trust our instincts and assess how well we connect with the therapist, their communication style, and their ability to understand and address our concerns.

Finding the right therapist is crucial for our therapeutic journey, and it's worth investing time and effort into finding someone who resonates with us. Being open to exploring different options and trusting that we will find a therapist who can guide us towards healing and growth is so vital.

Reaching out to therapists and finding a good fit is a significant step in our journey towards improved mental health. By taking the initiative to contact therapists, participating in the first session, and allowing the therapeutic process to unfold, we set ourselves up for a transformative experience. Be patient, trust the process, and remember that finding the right therapist is about finding someone who can truly support and guide us on our path to well-being.

## Conclusion

This eBook has taken us on a journey, challenging the conventional wisdom of self-help and shining a light on the power and benefits of therapy. We have explored the complexities of mental health, the limitations of self-help, and the profound impact that therapy can have on our well-being.

We began by recognizing the empty promises perpetuated by the self-help industry, where happiness and success often seem just out of reach. We delved into the illusion of perfection and the importance of embracing our authentic selves, understanding that true growth and healing come from accepting who we are and experiencing our emotions fully.

The journey continued as we examined the significance of our challenges and the threshold that indicates the need for therapy. By understanding how our struggles impact our daily lives and overall well-being, we recognized the importance of seeking professional help when our challenges become overwhelming.

In our exploration, we debunked the myths and misconceptions surrounding therapy. We confronted the stigma and fear-mongering perpetuated by society and the media, realizing that therapy is a powerful and legitimate tool for personal growth and healing. We discovered the subjective benefits of therapy, where the therapeutic relationship, the opportunity for self-discovery, and the safe space to explore our emotions can bring profound transformations to our lives.

We acknowledged the varying tiers of affordability in therapy, recognizing the importance of accessible mental health care for all individuals, regardless of their financial circumstances. From online budget therapy platforms to insurance-paneled therapists and out-of-network cash pay therapists, we understood the need to find the right fit within our means.

Selecting the right psychotherapy modality became a crucial consideration on our journey. We explored the diverse approaches to therapy, ranging from cognitive-behavioral therapy to experiential therapy, and from trauma-focused therapy to couples therapy. Recognizing that different modalities address different mental health concerns, we embraced the idea of finding the approach that resonates with our needs and preferences.

Finally, we discussed the first step in the therapeutic process: reaching out to therapists and finding a good fit. Just as in dating, we understood that establishing a strong therapeutic alliance requires time, patience, and an open mind. We encouraged the exploration of multiple therapists, taking advantage of complimentary consultations, and trusting our instincts to find the therapist who understands and supports our unique journey.

As we conclude this book, it is my hope that we have gained valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the profound impact therapy can have on our lives. Embarking on this journey is a courageous act of self-care and self-discovery. By seeking therapy, we embrace the opportunity to heal, grow, and become the best version of ourselves.

May this book serve as a guiding light, encouraging us to let go of the limitations of self-help and embrace the transformative power of therapy. Let us collectively strive to create a society that values mental health and ensures that specialized care is accessible to all, regardless of income or circumstance.

I am grateful we were able to journey through these pages together. May we find the strength and support we need to navigate the path towards emotional well-being and embrace the beauty of becoming our authentic selves.

With love,

Bart