



# Psychosexual and Relationship Therapy: Practicalities

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**This leaflet gives practical advice and shares tips to help you get the most from your therapy sessions.**

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## Getting the most from therapy sessions

We are aware that many people will have been experiencing difficulties for some time before starting therapy, either because it can be difficult to ask for help, or because you have been on a waiting list. We are keen to ensure you get the most from therapy and hope the following information will be helpful to you.

- **Attend appointments regularly:** Regular therapy will help maintain the focus and momentum of therapy, and help you to achieve your goals as quickly as possible.
- **Allow time between sessions:** You will need to allow time at home between sessions to continue with the exercises discussed in the session. These exercises form a very important part of therapy and many clients have told us how helpful they are in achieving their goals. Therapy sessions can also bring up difficult emotions and thoughts, and it is important to allow time and space to work through these. It can be helpful to consider what adjustments you may need to make in wider life during the course of therapy to allow this time.
- **Come to sessions, even if it feels difficult or you have not been able to do the exercises planned:** It is common to find therapy challenging at times and you may feel you want to put things off or avoid certain exercises. It is important to let us know if this is your experience, or if you have any concerns or questions, so we can support you with this.
- **If you have an appointment at the clinic allow plenty of time for parking:** Parking can be difficult at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Please allow up to one hour to find parking (or 'a parking space').

## How long is the therapy?

Therapy sessions usually last for 50 minutes. The initial assessment is sometimes a bit longer so that the therapist can take a full history of the presenting problem, medical, family and relationship history, and give you time to ask questions about the therapy.

## How often will I be seen?

Most people are seen fortnightly, at least initially, as we find this level of support is most helpful during the initial phase of therapy. Appointments may become more spaced out as therapy progresses, but this will be on an individual basis.

## How flexible are appointment times and dates?

Appointments are available on most days of the week, at various times. All appointments are on weekdays and within the Sexual Health Department opening hours. As with most medical appointments, we are unable to accommodate requests for specific dates and times. Once you have been offered a therapy slot (the day and time will not change from one week to the next), it is important for you to commit to and prioritise the therapy.

## What can therapy achieve?

Some people go to therapy hoping that the therapy will fix all their problems but it is really only you (and your partner, if you are going as a couple) who can make changes in your lives. The therapist can help you think about what you want and how you might go about getting it, but they can't do it for you.

Therapy works best for people who are really committed to it. Try to make time for therapy, and also make time between sessions to think about what you have discussed or to try out ideas. It helps if you are open-minded and ready to think about different possibilities.

Some people with sexual issues think that they are entirely physical problems and don't see the point in talking about their feelings or relationships. It is true that sometimes sexual difficulties are linked to a physical problem, such as a heart condition, multiple sclerosis, or diabetes. Your doctor should certainly examine that possibility before referring you for therapy. However, even in these cases therapy can help you to adjust to those changes and explore what kinds of sex are possible given your condition and any medication you need.

You will get the most out of therapy if you are ready to talk about things like your views on sex, how you feel about your problem, and how you communicate with your partner, if you have one.

## What won't happen

If you go to a psychosexual and/or relationship therapist, you won't be expected to have any kind of medical examination or to take your clothes off unless the therapist is medically trained to undertake medical examination, and there is a need for the examination.

If you decide with the therapist that there is something physical that needs checking out, then they can refer you back to your GP or another specialist doctor for that.

You don't have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with or do any exercises that you don't want to. Sometimes, it takes a few sessions to feel comfortable talking with a therapist, so it may be that you don't say everything straight away.

The therapist is very unlikely to tell you what to do. They may suggest things that have worked for other people, or things they believe you might find helpful but mostly they are there to listen to you and help you find your own way.

More information on therapy practicalities can be found on the College of Sexual and Relationship website <https://www.cosrt.org.uk/therapy-practicalities/>

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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