

[add your practice name and contact information]

Welcome Letter

Dear New Client,

If this is your first experience with therapy, you might feel a bit nervous or apprehensive. This is normal! Beginning therapy means different things to different people, but it's often an act of courage, hope, self-care, and self-determination.

You may have questions. Perhaps you've heard or believe some of the myths about therapy or counseling, such as "It means something is wrong with you," or, "Just don't think about _____ and you'll be fine," or, "Just get over it already!" Know that nothing is "wrong" with you and avoiding problems usually makes them bigger over time. We all benefit from having someone to share our feelings with to help us make sense of life.

You have made an important choice for yourself—stepping into the process of exploring what is stressful, painful, or upsetting. In our sessions you will have a private space to think out loud and make connections between your past, present, and important relationships.

Therapy is a process that allows you the freedom and privacy to discuss issues that are often painful or difficult to discuss with loved ones. In the process of our work together, you can begin to feel more at home within yourself and within your relationships.

You might wonder what happens during sessions. You may question how talking about your feelings could help, or if you will ever feel comfortable sharing your true thoughts with someone else. You might worry that I will judge your choices, or maybe you think you don't have anything to talk about. These are understandable concerns. I will help you take therapy at the right pace for you. We will build a relationship, and I will support you as I get to know you. I'm not here to judge, but to help you make sense of your experiences. You will leave sessions feeling that you have made great strides and sometimes you will worry progress isn't coming quickly enough. I will be your partner on this journey.

If you are returning to therapy, this marks an important step. You may feel like you know what you need out of therapy. You understand what it's like to work with a therapist, and you may have both positive and negative experiences with therapy. I'd like to hear what therapy was like for you. I'm ready to continue what you have found useful and repair what wasn't helpful.

You can ask any question and tell me anything that's on your mind. You can expect me to be kind to you and listen to your perspectives. The first step is to create a trusting environment. I'm happy you have made the decision to work with me.

The following are a few suggestions to help make your therapy experience most effective.

1. Before your scheduled appointments, consider writing down questions, topics, or issues you would like to focus on in each session.
2. Communicate your expectations to me so we work together as a team toward your goals.

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3. Provide ongoing feedback to me so I know how you are doing (i.e., “I want to focus on managing my anger more,” or “I enjoy relaxation exercises”).
4. If you want to increase or decrease the frequency of your sessions, or end therapy, please communicate that to me.
5. If you want to bring a spouse/partner, relative, or friend in with you for your session to work on interpersonal issues, feel free to do so. Please discuss it with me prior to their arrival.
6. If you have another professional involved in your care (e.g., family physician, psychiatrist, chiropractor, etc.), I would be happy to coordinate with them. It is generally not advisable to have more than one mental health counselor or therapist involved in your treatment, at one time.
7. Make a commitment to yourself to remain in therapy and attend regular sessions, for as long as you feel necessary. If you wait until you have a crisis, it will be more difficult to build long-lasting coping skills.
8. If for any reason you would like to see a different therapist, please let me know. I can provide you with names of other therapists I would recommend to meet your needs.
9. If you experience thoughts of harming yourself or someone else, please tell me. It’s my responsibility to work with you to assess these thoughts and to develop a plan with you to maintain your safety. Please tell me if anyone is harming you so we can also work together on a plan to keep you safe.

I look forward to working with you!

Respectfully,

[therapist signature/name]