

# HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR THERAPY

*Be open to the idea that therapy might be a journey with many unexpected, exciting, and sometimes uncomfortable side roads.* There are many ways that therapy might unfold in your particular situation. People often have preconceptions about therapy based on what they have seen in movies and television or other media, which are not necessarily what therapy will look like for you. Be open to the idea that it may be something very different from that.

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*Think about some specific goals you would like to accomplish in therapy.* The more clarity you have about your goals, the more quickly you can set about to achieving them. Goals should involve changing what happens between people, not just what you want to see somebody else change. You may identify a number of things you would like to see happen differently, in which case your therapist will help you sort through and prioritize them. It is natural for people set out with very large and sweeping goals to begin with, in which case your therapist will help you break them down into smaller, achievable goals.

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*Be willing to consider your own participation in the problem.* When people come for therapy it is very common that they look at others in the family as being the problematic ones, and see **themselves as bystanders who are caught in the fallout of other peoples' problems**. This can perpetuate a passive stance, become very demoralizing for everyone involved, and can lead to frustration and reactivity. Therapy is much more effective when everyone puts their energy into trying new options for themselves rather than exclusively blaming others for what is causing the concerns.

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*Be willing to actively work on being a part of the solution.* Therapy can involve creating a forum for everyone to be heard and be a safe place for family members to express themselves, but in order to create lasting changes more is often required. In order to change the problems, family members often have to change the way they relate to each other and how they manage problems. The more everyone in the family works to do their part in creating solutions, the deeper and more lasting the changes will be.

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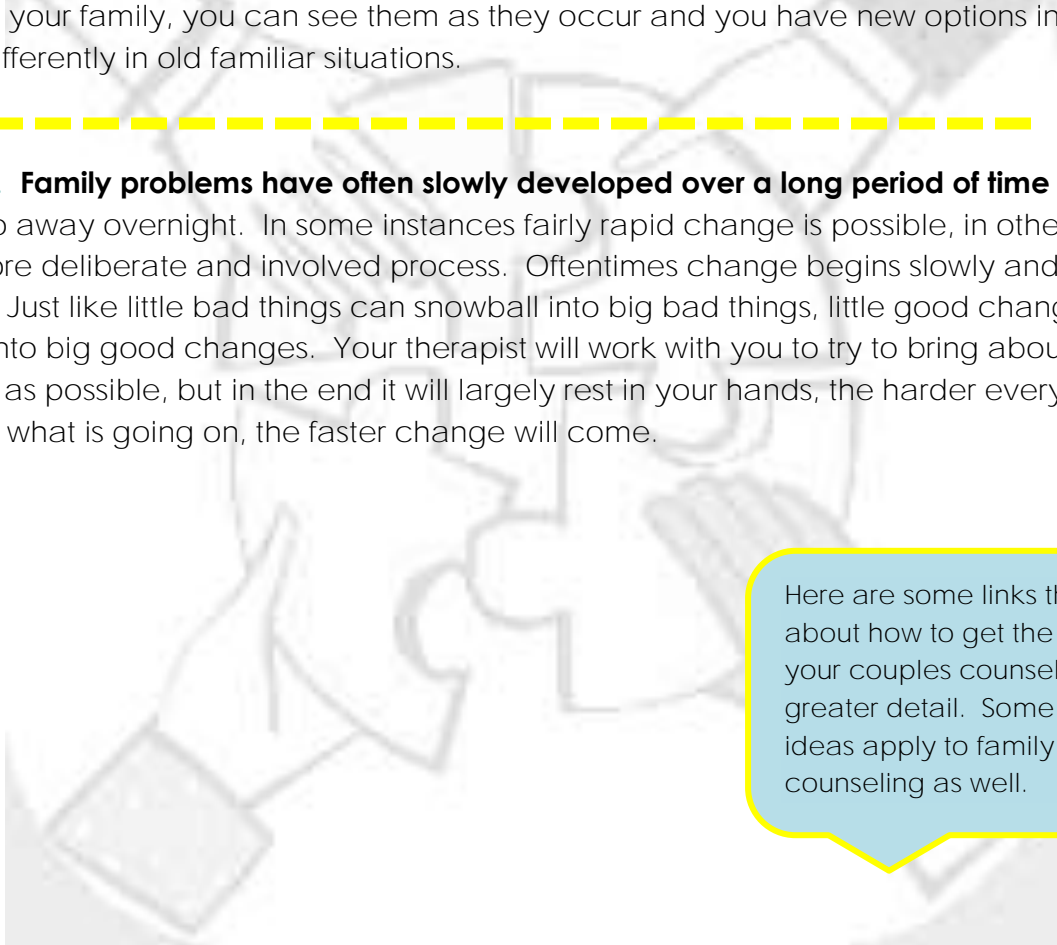
*Be open to considering viewpoints that are different from your own.* Everyone in the family experiences things differently and everyone holds that their own reality is the real one. When family members discount each other's reality and cling too tightly to their own, there is little opportunity for people to take in new information and explore new options. Even if you disagree with other family members' version of what is going on, it is important that you try to understand other members beliefs and experiences.



*Be open to changing your habits of thoughts, speech, feelings and behaviors that contribute to the problems.* Just like individuals can have habits, families can have habits. These are often developed over a long period of time and can become so ingrained that they are almost invisible to the people participating in them. Once you become aware of how these habits play out in your family, you can see them as they occur and you have new options in how to respond differently in old familiar situations.



*Be patient.* **Family problems have often slowly developed over a long period of time and aren't** likely to go away overnight. In some instances fairly rapid change is possible, in others it is a slower, more deliberate and involved process. Oftentimes change begins slowly and almost invisibly. Just like little bad things can snowball into big bad things, little good changes can snowball into big good changes. Your therapist will work with you to try to bring about change as quickly as possible, but in the end it will largely rest in your hands, the harder everyone works to change what is going on, the faster change will come.



Here are some links that talk about how to get the most from your couples counseling in greater detail. Some of these ideas apply to family counseling as well.

<https://www.sextherapyinphiladelphia.com/couples-therapy/>

<http://www.couplesinstitute.com/how-to-get-the-most-from-couples-therapy-tx/>