

What a first session is, and is not

A first session with a psychologist is a conversation, not a test.

You do not need to arrive with a tidy story, a diagnosis, or the right words. The point of the first session is to start where you are. The prompts on page 2 are there so the things that matter to you do not get left out when the time goes faster than expected.

i For your first appointment with a psychologist, or to think before booking one. Use page 2 in your own time, in any order, and only the boxes that help you think.

WHAT TENDS TO BE USEFUL TO BRING

An honest description, and any questions you have

- What is going on, in your own words
- What you would want different, even vaguely
- What has and has not helped before
- Questions, including any concerns about your age

WHAT YOU DO NOT NEED

Clinical terms, a polished story, or a tidy reason

- Clinical naming; your own words are clearer
- A chronological account from the start
- A single reason for being here
- Tools, scales, or self-tests; we use those together

A SAMPLE OPENING SENTENCE

"What has been going on for me is [what]. It started around [when or after what]. What I would most want to be different is [what]."

An opening line takes the pressure off the first minute. You do not have to use this one. The goal is not a polished script. It is a way of not having to find the words while you are also being asked them.

FIVE AREAS PAGE 2 COVERS

None of these has to be answered fully. Bring what comes to mind. Leave what does not. The order does not matter.

1 WHAT BROUGHT ME HERE

The shape of it, and why now

When it started or shifted. What tipped you into making the appointment.

2 WHAT I WOULD WANT DIFFERENT

A direction, not a goal

Even "less of this, more of that" is useful for both of us to know.

3 WHAT HAS AND HAS NOT HELPED

What you have already learned

Previous therapy, medication, your own strategies. What worked a little. What did not.

4 WHAT SITS ALONGSIDE

The context this is sitting inside

Health, retirement, family, a partner, a loss, a move. The life around the difficulty.

5 WHAT I WANT TO ASK

Including the question about your age, if it is there

Questions about therapy at your age are fair, common and welcome. A 2020 review (Cuijpers et al.) looked at therapy for depression across age groups.

TWO THINGS PEOPLE OFTEN WANT TO KNOW

What if I do not know what I want from this yet?

That is a fine starting point, and a common one. Working out what you want is often part of the early sessions. Coming with the question is enough.

Can I bring my partner or an adult child?

Yes, if it is helpful for the first appointment. Some people find it useful, others prefer privacy from the start. Either is fine, and you can change the arrangement later.

REMEMBER Arriving with what you have is enough. The rest is built together in the room. You do not have to share what you have written on page 2. It is yours, and it is there to help you think.

When you have something written, bring it if it helps, or leave it at home.

First session prep, for later life

The first session is a conversation, not a test.

You do not need to arrive with a tidy story. These prompts are here so the things that matter to you do not get left out. Bringing notes can take some of the load off remembering on the day. Use any prompt that is useful. Leave anything blank that is not. A few honest sentences in each box is plenty. You do not have to share what you have written. It is yours.

1 WHAT BROUGHT ME HERE

In my own words, what is going on, and why now?

The shape of the thing. When it started or shifted. What tipped me into making the appointment.

2 WHAT I WOULD WANT DIFFERENT

If something shifted for the better, what would I notice in daily life?

It does not have to be a goal. Even a vague sense of "less of this, more of that" is useful for both of us.

3 WHAT HAS AND HAS NOT HELPED

What I have tried before, and what I have learned about myself from it

Previous therapy, medication, advice from people you trust, your own strategies. What helped, what did not, what felt wrong.

4 WHAT SITS ALONGSIDE

What else is going on in my life right now that may sit alongside this

Health, retirement, family, a partner, a loss, an anniversary, a move. The context the conversation will sit inside.

5 WHAT I WANT TO ASK

Questions I want to ask the psychologist, including any concerns about therapy or about my age

"Is therapy really for someone my age" is a fair question and a common one. So is "what would this look like for me". You are welcome to ask.

WHEN YOU HAVE SOMETHING WRITTEN

Bring this if it helps. Leave it at home if it does not.

You do not have to use any of this. If you would like to talk before booking a first session, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we are the right fit, with no obligation to continue.

MEET AND GREET

Free
15 minutes
Online or in-person
No obligation