FREE GUIDE · 01

Getting Started with Therapy

What to expect before a first session

Ellysa Verdyana, M.Psi., Psikolog.

Clinical Psychologist · Hypnotherapist · Jakarta and online

This guide is general information, not a clinical assessment, and not a substitute for consulting a psychologist or another mental health professional.

Many people delay asking for help not because they do not want it, but because they do not know what will happen. This short guide covers the steps before a first session, how a few approaches differ, and the practical questions people usually ask.

01

Before the first session

It usually begins with a short conversation, around thirty minutes, to get a sense of things: what brings you, what you would like to understand, and whether working together fits both people.

There is no diagnosis and no long-term commitment at that stage. You can ask about how the work happens, fees, scheduling and the limits of confidentiality before deciding anything.

For a first message, the outline is enough. There is no need to write a full history, and it is better not to send sensitive clinical detail over a short message.

02

Counselling, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy

The words are often used interchangeably, but the emphasis differs.

- Counselling: usually focused on one current difficulty, with a relatively limited number of sessions.
- Psychotherapy: works more deeply with repeating patterns, self-understanding and longer-standing difficulties. Usually more sessions.
- Clinical hypnotherapy: a therapy process with focused attention, used as part of a wider treatment plan rather than instead of one. Clear consent and agreed aims are prerequisites.
- Psychological assessment: gathering data with specific instruments to answer a particular question, for example about learning difficulties, cognitive functioning, or personality in a given context.

What shapes the outcome is less the name of the method than the fit between the difficulty, the approach, and your comfort with the therapist.

03

Preparing without over-preparing

A tidy chronology is not required. These are the things that help:

- One or two things that are most difficult right now, and roughly since when.
- How they affect sleep, work or relationships.
- Any previous psychological or medical help, including medication you currently take.
- What you hope will change, in one plain sentence.

If there is something you do not want to talk about yet, that is allowed. Therapy moves at a pace you can follow.

04

Confidentiality and its limits

What is discussed in session is confidential. A limited set of situations changes that, chiefly serious risk to your own or someone else's safety, and circumstances required by regulation. These limits are worth asking about at the start so they are clear.

Clinical notes are kept separately from the forms on this website. The website form records only an initial enquiry — name, contact, and a short outline — so that it is not lost, and it can be removed on request at any time.

05

Fees, scheduling and commitment

Fees, session length and the cancellation policy are stated openly before a first session. There are no hidden costs, and no obligation to continue after the initial consultation.

For online sessions, a reasonably stable connection and a quiet space are enough. For in-person sessions in Jakarta, the time and place are agreed beforehand.

Therapy works through repetition rather than one conversation that changes everything. The agreed frequency is therefore usually set after the first two or three sessions.

06

If it does not feel right

A poor fit is not a failure. Sometimes the approach is not right, sometimes the timing is not right, sometimes the person is not right. All of it can be said out loud.

What helps is naming it directly: what is not helping, and what you need instead. If it still does not fit after that conversation, asking for a referral is a reasonable step.

07

A closing note

Starting therapy is not a sign of giving up; it is another way of taking part in your own situation. You do not need to know the whole route to take the first step.

Written by Ellysa Verdyana, M.Psi., Psikolog. — clinical psychologist and hypnotherapist, practising in Jakarta and online. A free 30-minute initial consultation can be arranged through ellysaverdyana.com.