**EFFECTIVE AND ESSENTIAL THERAPY**

Regardless of the symptoms, problems or desired changes that caused you to want to seek therapy, the following are ESSENTIAL elements of effective therapy. These are things you will want to do outside of the therapy session to help yourself heal, change, develop, learn and renew your current life. Doing these things will help therapy to be more effective, proceed more quickly, and reduce the cost to you in terms of time, money and distress.

These therapeutic elements are based upon years of science and centuries of wisdom. You may use the guidelines listed AND, you may choose to search out other helpful ideas. In the six areas lists, refrain from engaging in fads, hot new ideas or what you read about on social media. Let us trust what we have learned already from science and wisdom.

***TAKE ACTION – DO DIFFERENT***

If you DO nothing, procrastinate, avoid, blame, or excuse > likely nothing for you will change. You already took action by coming in to your first therapy appointment. What will you do next? Sometimes doing anything different than what you have been doing all along will help. Your life is filled with patterns. Your brain is economical in that what you practice becomes easier and easier for you to do. Your brain develops neuropathways (i.e., learns) each time you repeat an action, a thought or engage an emotion. The more you “do” depression, anxiety, get angry, feel jealous, discount yourself, argue - the easier each of these things become and the more entrenched the patterns in your life.

Here are some **ACTIONS** for you to engage:

 **CHALLENGE YOURSELF** – doing what is hard to do will help you become more than you have been.

 **SIMPLY DO DIFFERENT** – If you struggle with impulsivity, slow yourself down. If you struggle with procrastination, then respond within 15 seconds to your thought.

 **ACKNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPT** – change will be hard to do and important to invest in. Stop making excuses for yourself. Be responsible *TO* yourself and *TO* your desired changes or goals.

***SLEEP***

Sleep hygiene is VITAL! Period! We may need differing amounts of sleep (within a certain range). Our brains require QUALITY SLEEP on a regular basis. Once we lose sleep or have poor quality sleep, it cannot be recovered or redeemed.

 **Avoid stimulants (caffeine & nicotine) and alcohol close to bedtime.**

 **Exercise to promote good quality sleep.**

 **Avoid foods and drinks that can be disruptive right before sleep.**

 **Ensure adequate exposure to natural light during the day and darkness during sleep.**

 **Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine.**

 **Develop a structure and pattern to your sleep cycle.**

 **Making sure that the sleep environment is pleasant.**

 **Take a power nap (20-30 minutes) during the day.**

***EXERCISE***

Plain and simple – exercise is an excellent treatment for many of the symptoms, problems and desires that brought you into therapy. Physical work is exertion, though not necessarily exercise. Generally, **30 minutes of exercise, 4-5 times per week.** If you have concerns about your physical health, please talk to me and consult with your physician.

Five easy paths to adding **EXERCISE** to your therapy:

 **WATCH** this video:

 23 and 1/2 hours: What is the single best thing we can do for our health? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUaInS6HIGo>)

 **WALK** intentionally for 30 minutes daily

 Do the the **Scientific 7 Minute Workout** (google this, YouTube, Apps available)

 Get an **APP** to encourage you, support you, create structure, track your efforts

 Get a **PERSONAL FITNESS** tracker (Fitbit, Garmin, etc.)

***NUTRITION***

 You brain needs the best care you can give it for it to function optimally and for you to be your best self. There are also things to be aware of that can be toxic to your brain, body and mental health. You can help yourself and your therapy by following some old wisdom and keeping up on current scientific research.

**FEED YOUR BRAIN:**

 Multivitamins, Omega 3s, Antioxidants

 Focus on Protein

 Fruits & Vegetables – colorful & fresh

 If your grandmother would not recognize it, do not eat it

 If a food has the same name in many languages, do not eat it (Doritos, Hot Pockets, Coke, etc.)

 Buy foods that will spoil, mold or otherwise go bad after 4-5 days.

**CARE FOR YOUR BRAIN:**

Avoid processed foods & convienent foods,

 Avoid additives (preservatives, dyes, sweeteners, etc.)

 Avoid pesticides

 Severe limits on sugar

 Limit alcohol

 Eliminate tobacco

 Discover any allergies you may have

 Discover and treat any other health issues that may affect your brain & well-being

You may also benefit from **MEDICATION** to assist your brain function.

***COMMUNITY/CONNECTION***

It is vital for you to connect with YOURSELF and connect with OTHERS. People are fundamentally relational. Disruptions in your relationship with yourself, your relationship with others or your relationship with the transcendent will cause symptoms and problems for you. The change you are seeking through therapy will be supported and longer lasting as you bring about change in these three key relationships.

**CONNECT WITH YOURSELF:**

This is a significant part of therapy: *LISTENING* to your inner voices; understanding the interplay between your thoughts, feelings and actions; healing your past hurts; and taking charge of your life. Your self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth are all grounded in your relationship with yourself. Spend some time with yourself.

**CONNECT WITH OTHERS:**

The research shows the development of a healthy and dynamic support system can have a huge impact on a person’s well-being. Develop trusted friends, spend time with others in enjoyable activities, improve your empathy skills, and intentionally reach out to others to form new friendships.

**CONNECT WITH WHAT IS TRANSCENDENT:** (the Universe, Karma, God, Higher Power, the Force, the collective Energy of all Life)

Call this whatever you want. This is everything that is not you and not me. What science has yet to discover, what faith and philosophy has yet to imagine. Connecting with what is *transcendent to you* will help immensely with the next essential item.

***PURPOSE/MEANING/SPIRITUALITY***

Why do you exist? What is your purpose? Does your life have meaning? Our life can be very empty and we can feel quite lost without some meaningfulness to our life. Your personal psychotherapy can be helpful in discovering meaningfulness in your life.