Therapy needs worksheet

Share only what you choose. You can use this to start a conversation without describing traumatic events.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What I hope therapy will help with

e.g. Have more freedom in my everyday life.

What I am ready to discuss

e.g. Current difficulties and what support might help.

What I want to leave until later

e.g. Details I do not feel ready to share.

Communication and access needs

e.g. Clear explanations and time to think.

How I would like to pause

e.g. Say 'pause' or raise my hand.

Privacy and practical arrangements

e.g. A private room and a reliable connection.

Support before, after and between sessions

e.g. Agree who I can contact between sessions.

Questions and agreements to review

e.g. How will we choose tasks and review whether they help?

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Using this resource

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What this helps with

You can ask for support without presenting a full account of what happened. A clear plan can help a therapist understand your current needs and make appointments more manageable. It may include communication preferences, privacy, pacing and practical support. This worksheet also creates room to say what has felt unhelpful before. It does not prescribe treatment or make you responsible for managing every difficulty; assessment and planning are shared work.

How to use it

1. Write what is most difficult now and what you hope support might change.
2. Identify information you are ready to share and anything you prefer to discuss later.
3. Note communication or access needs and how you would signal a pause.
4. List practical arrangements before and after appointments, including a trusted contact if wanted.
5. Bring questions about suitability, confidentiality, treatment and support between sessions.

A fictional worked example

Before an online appointment, Daniel wrote that poor sleep and feeling constantly on guard were his main concerns. He did not feel ready to describe the event in detail. He asked the therapist to explain the purpose of questions and agreed a phrase he could use if he needed to pause. He arranged a private room and left some time afterwards before returning to work. His questions included what trauma-focused CBT would involve and what to do if symptoms worsened between sessions. The sheet helped start a conversation; it did not commit him to a particular exercise or require disclosure before he felt ready.

Keep in mind

If privacy cannot be maintained or someone is monitoring your communications, discuss safer contact arrangements with an appropriate service. Current danger and safeguarding needs take priority. This sheet is not a crisis plan; use the support arrangements agreed with your care team when urgent help is needed.

Sources and attribution

NICE. (2018). Post-traumatic stress disorder (NG116).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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