




## WHAT TO EXPECT IN A THERAPY SESSION

Whether you're thinking of talking to a therapist or you've already booked your appointment, thinking about your first session might be nerve-wracking for some. You might go back and forth on whether to even go. Many people schedule, cancel, and then reschedule that first appointment.



You might be wondering questions like: What are they going to ask me? Are my issues too minor to be speaking with a therapist? Will they judge me? Will I be asked to bare my feelings to them?

Not knowing what to expect is often what keeps people from attending therapy in the first place. Being nervous about this is completely normal though. I don't know about you, but I still get a bit nervous about meeting someone for the first time – even a therapist.

To ease those first-appointment jitters you might have, we're going to share what to expect in that first session to demystify the process for you. We'll also share the most common questions a therapist may ask during that initial meeting.



### WHAT TO EXPECT

In broad terms, the therapy process can be broken down to three basic parts: Assess, Goals, and Therapy.

So, let's start at the beginning: **ASSESS**

Think about the last time you met someone who eventually became a trusted friend. You didn't jump into discussing personal issues after meeting them, right? Of course not! They probably asked a few questions, shared a bit about their background and what they do. This all helped you understand if they were a good match for you.

A therapist will use a similar approach. The first appointment is usually called an intake session. During an intake session, the therapist will introduce themselves, ask you to fill out some forms with them, and then ask you some questions. One of those forms is an Informed Consent document that you sign when you agree to do therapy.

This document usually includes:

- Your therapist's information such as their name and credentials
- Their policies such as cancellation and no-show policies
- The fee
- Confidentiality
- Your rights as a client



After that, they'll gather additional information about your medical and mental health history, as well as your family history. Try to be as open and honest as possible! It will help your therapist create a treatment plan that's most beneficial for you. During the intake session, the therapist will introduce themselves to you and ask you to fill out some forms called intake forms.

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

After you've finished filling out the forms, your therapist might ask you a number of questions to help better understand your background and your current and future Goals. ***Some commonly asked questions in a first session include:***

- 🌾 **What brings you here today?** People go to therapy for lots of different reasons. Think about why you are seeking therapy to give the therapist an idea of your goals.
- 🌾 **What do you expect from therapy?** There are a lot of misconceptions about what therapists do. They're not going to tell you how to feel or behave – you've got friends or family if you want that type of advice! Sometimes you need a trusted and objective person to talk things through and to feel supported. Others might be looking to learn better coping skills. Therapists will help you understand yourself, your goals, and how to go about making the best choices for you. And since they're trained, they'll also notice any mental health symptoms and can recommend treatment.
- 🌾 **Have you been in therapy before?** If so, what was that experience like for you? This question will help the therapist understand your background and needs.
- 🌾 **How do you cope with stress?** This information will help the therapist understand what treatments and coping strategies might work best for you.
- 🌾 **What are the goals you want to accomplish in therapy?** Think about the things you want to work on. Maybe it's developing better coping skills to manage stress or improving your relationships.
- 🌾 **Who are the supportive people in your life?** Your therapist will want to understand your support system. That might mean talking about your family. For some, this can be an uncomfortable topic, and you are free to share as much as you are comfortable sharing.





## HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL AFTER THE FIRST SESSION

After the first session, you might feel pretty drained. That's normal! Talking about our emotions – especially if we're not used to doing that – can feel tiring.

You also might be surprised to find yourself opening up to a complete stranger. It's refreshing to talk to someone who is there to listen and support you in a non-judgemental and confidential way.

I really like this image because it reflects how so many of us felt when we first started seeing a therapist. Through questions and answers, a therapist can help you understand yourself, your patterns, and ways to cope.

During the session, you probably got a good sense about how you and the therapist related to each other. If it felt like a good fit, great! If not, no problem. Finding a therapist that works best for you can take time.

But one of the most important things to remember after your first session is that you've made a big step towards improving your health.

## SO, NOW WHAT?


Now that you have an idea of how that first session might unfold, you might feel a bit more relaxed and confident as you prepare for your first appointment.


A few things about therapy to keep in mind:

- Find the right fit
- You get what you give
- Be persistent
- Do the work
- Trust the process



**\*\* If you're thinking about talking with a therapist, here are a few tips:**

 Visit our AgKnow website to read the bios of the members in our **Therapist Network**. These are therapists across Alberta who have experience working with farmers.

 Take a few minutes to read some advice about **choosing the right therapist for your needs**.