

Creating the Best Results in Therapy

Congratulations! You just took your first big step toward creating your best life. You made the decision to seek help, gain information and access resources. Use the list below as a guide to make the most out of the time, energy and money you are investing in your self-healing.

Remember: **“Responsible” means *response able: able to choose your response.***

To achieve the results you desire, you must become the person you wish to be.

- **Align your actions with your values/goals.**
- **Check off each item below once you have addressed it.**

- 1. Begin with the end in mind.** Take a few moments to envision your final day in therapy. How will your life be different? What will you have changed in either thought or action? How do you want to feel? What changes will other’s notice about you? How will you know that you are ready to end your therapy?
- 2. Health care is self-care.** Start with the basics. *If you have not seen a doctor within the past 12 months, make an appointment now.* Ask for laboratory tests to assess any potential medical problems. **Success begins with taking care of your health.**
- 3. Prioritize healthy sleep habits.** One of the fastest ways to improve your health, mood, energy level and mental clarity is to get enough sleep. For most adults, mental health requires 8 or more hours of sleep. Create a regular bedtime routine, stick to it. Acknowledge your body’s need for sleep and you will greatly improve your mood, temper, mental outlook and quality of life.
- 4. Need Meds?** Consider the option of a psychiatric evaluation to discuss symptoms of anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), chronic pain, insomnia or addictions.
- 5. Caution with caffeine.** Excessive caffeine can trigger mood swings, anxiety and panic. For some people, 250 mg or more (three or more servings) of caffeine may cause caffeine intoxication or caffeine withdrawal. **Monitor your daily intake if you have any of these symptoms:** sleep disturbance, insomnia, restlessness, poor concentration, agitation, irritability, heart palpitations, shakiness, headaches, stomach upset, muscle twitching, flushed face, nervousness, increased urination, rambling speech, rambling thoughts.
- 6. Warning! Getting drunk and or high may limit your success.** Alcohol is a depressant. Binge use causes erratic behavior. Marijuana may trigger anxiety and paranoia. Excessive use of pain medication impairs functioning and cognition. All of these substances negatively affect motivation and interfere with health, healing and insight when used excessively. Have a conversation with your therapist or your physician about healthy limits regarding these substances.
- 7. Improve your nutrition and eating habits.** Food allergies and poor nutrition negatively affect your overall health including your mood, energy level, concentration and sleep. Choose healthy food to fuel your body. Recognize hunger signals in your body. Eat only when you feel hunger. Avoid using food for emotional comfort or self-sabotage. If healthy eating in moderation is very difficult for you, consider the possibility that you may be suffering from food addiction. <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-food-addiction>

- **8. Let's get Physical! Sedentary lifestyles are linked to stress, mood illness and even early mortality.** Physical activity reduces stress and produces “feel good” brain chemistry. Create a plan to become the most physically active version of yourself. Consult your physician as needed.
- **9. Create a safe house for you and your family.** Decide to stop all name-calling, blaming, shaming, yelling and screaming. Choose to stop all spanking, pushing, slapping and hitting. **Refuse to tolerate or participate in abuse of any kind.** You will not feel healthy while living with verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- **10. Educate yourself.** Open your mind and heart to new ideas. Use the Internet or your public library, or get an app for that! Visit www.TED.com or watch the great resources is on my website: www.TelkaArend-Ritter.com or my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TelkaArendRitter.LMSW
- **11. De-clutter, clean and organize your living space.** Your environment strongly influences your mood and energy level. Need help? Google the word “declutter”. You have so many choices!
- **12. Self-first is not self-ish.** To achieve maximum success in your personal and professional life, you must take responsibility for your own emotional, spiritual and physical health. Align your time with your values. The choices you make reflect the value you place upon yourself.
- **13. Create support, use resources and ask for help.** For every problem in life, there are people who have overcome similar obstacles. Reach out to healthy, supportive role models. If you don't have any, research options in your community. Still stuck? Check out <http://www.Meetup.com>
- **14. Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness refers to self-awareness without judgement. Notice your thoughts and emotions in a calm and accepting manner. Begin journaling, meditating or mindful breathing practices to increase awareness.
- **15. Begin a new hobby or rekindle an old one.** Do something that you have always wanted to do or revive some of those childhood interests you used to love. Explore, play and renew a variety of your personal interests. (Arts, sports, music, crafts, nature....this isn't about spending money, it is about reconnecting with yourself and exploring your interests.)
- **16. Treat yourself like a beloved.** In every thought and action, ask yourself if you are responding to yourself in the same way that you would respond to a loved one. Are you coaching yourself through distress with the same compassion and care you offer to others? Living the advice that you would give your best friend? Enjoying the same standards and expectations you set for loved ones?
- **17. Make decisions based on your values, not based on your emotions.** Examples of emotional decisions: “*I did it because I was upset, angry, tired, worried, afraid, lonely*” etc. Values based decisions: “*I did it because I believed in it. It was the right thing to do. I am a role model.*”
- **18. Decide to stop codependent focus:** “*A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with that person's behavior*” (Melody Beattie). Replace codependence with coping skills: Ask yourself “Who owns this problem? Do I have the right to get involved in this—is it my business? Am I treating others the way I wish to be treated? What am I role modeling? What is my intention?”
- **19. Be the change you seek.** Ghandi
- **20. Breathe.**