

How to Get Creative with Therapy Sessions

Falling into a routine with patients is fairly common, especially when you've been in practice for a while. When you add the fact that therapy sessions have been primarily held online since early 2020, you might feel like you're in a bit of a rut. If that sounds uncomfortably familiar, don't worry – you're not alone and help is here. We've provided a few practices you can easily incorporate to liven up your therapy sessions.



1. Movement

Movement is a fundamental part of life – and an important contributor to mental health. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that movement is not only beneficial to the body, it also has positive effects on the brain and mental health. Some of the benefits include improving mood, self-esteem, and cognitive functions plus reducing stress, depression, and anxiety.

There's also an additional benefit that movement offers – it can liven up your therapy sessions and help you – and your patients – get out of a rut.

You can add movement to sessions in a variety of ways. Movement can mean doing something as simple as arm circles, neck rolls, or even jazz hands. (That's a fun one!) To take it up a notch, you could have clients stretch, sway from side to side, or jump up and down. You might even incorporate a bit of dancing (either in a chair or standing up) for less inhibited clients.

Movement is a great way to start therapy sessions – it helps relax patients and improves their mood so they're more willing to share. It's also an excellent addition to

your toolbox because it can easily be done either in-person or during a teletherapy session.

2. Walk and Talk

Walk and talk is a great way to revitalize lagging therapy sessions, release tension, and stimulate new thoughts. This type of therapy is exactly what it sounds like; you and your patient walk during your session instead of sitting down across from one another. Ideally this would be done in-person and outside, but it's also possible to walk and talk during a Zoom or phone session.

Just like with movement therapy, walking during your session reduces your patient's anxiety, stress, and depression while improving their mood, cognitive functioning, and self-esteem. (And yours, too!) Walking may also make it easier for your patients to share because they're walking side-by-side with you instead of sitting directly across from you and having to sustain eye contact, which can make some people self-conscious.

If you do decide to incorporate walk and talk therapy, remember that the walking speed should always be set by your client. This is a therapy session, not a workout session – walk at whatever pace your patient feels comfortable with.

3. Sand Play

If you're looking for a playful way to make therapy sessions more interesting, you should try incorporating a bit of sand play. You might think that playing in a miniature sand box would be a tactic used explicitly for children, but you would be wrong. Though it was originally conceived by a British pediatrician as a mode of therapy for children, sand play has been successfully used with patients of all ages.

Here's how sand play works: patients are provided with a large tray that's typically painted blue on the inside and filled with sand along with various figurines to choose from. Patients then use the figurines to create their own world in the sand tray. The figures that are used and the way the sand is arranged can prompt discussion and provide insight into the inner workings of the client's mind.

There are several reasons why sand play works. For starters, clients find playing with sand soothing and become more relaxed. As a purely creative activity, playing with sand also bypasses the logical and intellectual parts of the brain, allowing patients to express themselves without having to find the right words. While sand play in person is certainly easier, there are [online sand trays](#) that can be used during teletherapy sessions.

4. Music

Music has the power to move us – it changes our mood, makes us reflect, and relieves stress. It's also makes for a great addition to stagnant therapy sessions. You can use music in several different ways, but one of the most powerful is to have your patients tell you about a song that deeply resonates with them. You can even listen to the song together then discuss why it has such a powerful effect on them.

Another way you can incorporate music into your therapy sessions is to have your patient create a playlist that reflects a situation in their life. This playlist can provide insight into the patient's thought process and emotions that you might not have had access to otherwise.

Music can also be used in therapy sessions as part of a mindfulness activity. You can play some soft music and combine it with breathing exercises to help relax patients in the beginning of the session (at any time the client becomes anxious.) This is an effective way to help patients relax, destress, and shift their focus away from disruptive thoughts and emotions.

5. Visual Art

Visual art can also be a useful – and interesting – addition to your therapy sessions, whether being held in-person or online. There are various ways to use visual art in therapy. One of the most common approaches is to have patients draw their feelings. You can have them portray either their current feelings or you could prompt them by asking, "How did you feel when...?" or "How would you feel if...?"

Visual art could also be used in therapy sessions by having the patient show you a photograph, painting, or sculpture that speaks to them. Then, you could ask what it means to them, why it's important, what it represents, how it makes them feel, etc. Another option would be for you to present some visual art to the client then ask for their reaction.

This is a great addition to any therapist's toolbox because it livens up dull sessions and spurs creative responses that you otherwise wouldn't have received. Plus each of these visual art activities could easily be conducted either in-person or via Zoom therapy, making them an even better option.

Keep it Creative

Just because you get into a rut with therapy sessions doesn't mean you have to stay there. With a little creativity and the willingness to try something new, both you and your patients can enjoy livelier and more interesting sessions, reaping a multitude of benefits.