



Key Ideas in Therapy

Being Present in Therapy

Narrator:

No matter how good a therapist is, how many books they've read or letters appear after their name, they do need to turn up to sessions.

And that's not just physically, it's emotionally. A good therapist knows how to be present - to give their full attention, no matter what the client's like or how difficult the subject matter.

They don't always drift off and get distracted. They don't make clients feel like only certain sides of them are okay.

A good therapist can sit with the client, whoever they are, and whatever they bring.

We're often taught that some feelings are okay and others aren't; which stops us navigating our emotions comfortably.

By tolerating whatever a client brings, the therapists can show them a healthy way to relate to their own emotions.

You can practice 'being present' through mindfulness, which comes from Buddhist teachings from over 2000 years ago.

The Buddha taught that human suffering is rooted in craving: trying to hold onto what we want and get rid of what we don't want.

The Buddha stressed the importance of just being with our experiences, noticing them without trying to change them.

Mindfulness is about being present in your whole experience, whatever you're doing, thinking or feeling.

Therapists have to be present with themselves, before they can be present with others.

Some therapists teach their clients mindful techniques, such as meditation.

Here you sit comfortably and breathe, letting all of your sensations, thoughts and feelings come and go. Don't try to hold onto them or get rid of them. Just notice how they bubble up and drift away.

It's not easy and you'll definitely get distracted. When this happens, just notice it and come back to the present moment and the feeling of your breath. It's important to be gentle and kind with yourself.

You can practice being present during everyday tasks too, like washing up, brushing your teeth or walking the dog.

The idea is to gradually shift your habit of trying to grasp what you want and hurl away what you don't want, so that you can be more open to the whole of your experience.

And it all starts with this very moment... now!