

CREATING A HEALING ENVIRONMENT

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When in therapy, difficult emotions and memories may surface as realities and past experiences are processed (this is normal...don't give up!). To help manage these feelings, it can be therapeutic to create a peaceful environment that is conducive with healing. Consider these suggestions...

1. Establish And Maintain Boundaries

This often looks like saying "no". When soldiers are wounded in battle, they leave the battlefield for a season of healing. This requires saying "no" to additional fighting in order to allow the brokenness in their bodies to mend. It's hard to heal in the same environment that made you sick. What do you need distance from, maybe not forever, but for a season? Would it be a person, work, community/church responsibilities, etc.? Would a vacation, a visit to loved ones, or limiting your to-do list help to protect the healing environment you create?

2. Fill Your Surroundings With Serenity

Play soothing music day and night, light candles, or diffuse essential oils. Find a quiet place in your home or yard to retreat to daily. There are so many healing qualities to nature so take walks on the beach, fish in the lake, visit a garden, or hike in the woods. When we are really struggling with hard emotions, sometimes beauty is the only relief. What is beautiful for you? Choose a few options from my list of strategies for creating a healing environment on the next page.

3. Slow Down

Carve out time in your day to think and reflect on the reasons you began therapy, and then purposely apply the skills you learn in sessions to your thoughts and behaviors. A ten to fifteen minute daily "quiet time" can be helpful for evaluating thoughts, relaxing your body, taking slow, deep breaths, reciting positive affirmations, or engaging in spiritual activity like scripture, prayer, or worship. Consider taking a full day to disconnect from anything stressful.

4. Communicate Your Needs To Others

Find a way to verbalize what you need from the people in your life. There will be times when you need space, and times when you need people close. If you are heavily mercy-oriented, it may feel selfish to express when you need distance, a hug, or a conversation, but your needs are just as important as the needs of others. We cannot pour from an empty cup, so any investment into our own health will benefit our relationships as well. The healthier we are, the healthier our relationships will be.

1. Daily quiet time for self-reflection, relaxation, or spiritual health.
2. Increase social support.
3. Meet with counselor, coach, pastor, or mentor once a week.
4. Reconnect with old friends.
5. Exercise (this should be on every treatment plan for depression).
6. Do deep breathing.
7. Eat healthy and clean.
8. Journal or draw feelings.
9. Read books about setting boundaries.
10. Declutter living space.
11. Ask for a hug from a safe and trusted person.
12. Turn off devices. (Consider restricting screen time first/last hour of the day.)
13. Practice assertive behavior and kindly saying “no”.
14. Play music that is calming, peaceful, or inspiring for you.
15. Join a support group.
16. Study helpful resources for your particular struggle (articles, podcasts, etc.)
17. Remind yourself of past victories.
18. Reduce work hours if possible.
19. Schedule potential stressful events early enough in the day to allow time to move the body before bed. Don’t go to sleep with unreleased cortisol.
20. Limit outside commitments while in therapy.
21. Hire help or barter/swap for childcare, housecleaning, or meal preparation.
22. Carve out and protect uninterrupted time to focus on your therapy skills.
23. Create something-build a flower bed, bake a cake, draw/paint a picture, make a vision board, take photographs, etc.
24. Take naps/rest.
25. Find a peaceful outdoor setting to evaluate thoughts, pray, and work on therapy.