

What should I expect from Psychotherapy?

As a therapist still early in my career, I encounter a diverse range of clients, each offering a unique experience. Despite the common perception of psychologists as a 'blank slate,' the intertwining of our professional and personal lives means that both the client and therapist undergo transformation during psychotherapy. Many clients come to therapy seeking answers they don't yet have. The role of the psychoanalyst is to hold the anxiety of the unknown despite the temptation to demonstrate being knowledgeable and competent. Renowned psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1974:13) aptly noted that "in every consulting room there ought to be two rather frightened people; the patient and the psychoanalyst. If they are not, one wonders why they are bothering to find out what everyone knows." I recall how, during our master's program, my colleagues and I were in awe of our professors' deep understanding of psychotherapy, which seemed vast compared to our own knowledge. We didn't realize then that even our lecturers and senior supervisors strive to maintain an openness to new insights by embracing a state of not-knowing. You might wonder why you should go to therapy if your therapist doesn't have all the answers. Veteran author, Patric Casement cautioned against confusing a state of not-knowing with ignorance. Your therapist will bring unconscious material to your awareness when it is meaningful and relevant for you. Until then, both of you must be patient and allow insights to emerge naturally within the therapeutic relationship. For now, we both stay in the moment and wait...

Written by: Nokubonga Ngubane, May 2024