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The Best Advice from Therapists, From 50 Different People

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Therapy is expensive and, often times, it can be tough to find a therapist that your insurance plan covers. But the idea of going to therapy can also feel so intimidating and shrouded by stereotypes that people avoid it altogether. Hearing about other people's experiences with therapy, and the best advice their therapist has given them, can be encouraging, and take away some of that stigma.

Teen Vogue spoke with 50 people of different races, genders, ages, sexualities, and identities about the issues they grapple

with in therapy, and the best advice their therapist has given them. Some tackled self perception and expectations, while others drew inspiration and betterment from sessions focused on [relationships](#). Some discussed their [mental illness](#), though not all of the following have one — as is mistakenly assumed of those seeking help. Despite their differences, each has a story of devoting part of their week to mental health and hope that, by way of their transparency, someone may be inspired to sit down with a trusted professional who is trained to help. And if not? Well, then maybe these lessons can teach you something anyway.

Billie

Therapist's advice: “You seem to always talk about what you should and shouldn’t do, how you should or shouldn’t be. How do you actually feel?”

Billie's thoughts: “For the first time, I realized that I was so focused on aligning with what I thought was ‘right’ that I was suppressing/invalidating my feelings. This doesn’t mean to act on every emotion, but it’s important to acknowledge that the emotions you feel do exist and to find the root to why they exist in order to figure out how to best manage them.”

Amaris

Therapist's advice: “You’re not used to having consequences.”

Amaris' thoughts: “I was at a point in my life when I felt like everything was out of my control, so I was doing things that obviously had repercussions, but I felt like it didn’t matter. I realized then that it was something I’ve always done when things get bad because it was just my coping mechanism. It wasn’t

helping me, but instead it was just kind of making things worse. Now I'm just more aware of my actions."

Ethan

Therapist's advice: "When I get home, I get excited about using a new soap I bought for washing my dishes. Things we look forward to make us happy for a reason and that will always be important."

Ethan's thoughts: "It made me realize that we get happy about things when we live for ourselves."

Sofia

Therapist's advice: "If you want a 10, you have to work like a 10. That's OK if you do it in one situation, but you want to be a 10 at everything and the reality is that you just can't. So whenever confronting a task, ask yourself how much of yourself you're willing to give and how much is healthy for you to give."

Sofia's thoughts: "I'm a perfectionist, so I want everything to be the best it can be, and am pretty demanding of myself and I don't want to rest until it's just how I want. That is totally exhausting. Now, whenever I'm about to do a task, I ask myself, 'How much am I willing to give to this task?' because sometimes I want that big, beautiful A, but I'm not willing to work for it, so I lower my expectations according to my mental health, and what I know is best for me."

Jessica

Therapist's advice: "There will always be someone having a harder time than you but that doesn't mean what you're going through is any less hard."

Jessica's thoughts: "I have a hard time acknowledging my challenges and a lot of times I feel guilty because it could always be worse — so I tend to keep everything to myself. After my therapist and I had a long talk about how my challenges are just as valid, it helped me open up and talk about things I previously believed to be petty. They're important to talk about in my journey to recovery."

Eden

Therapist's advice: "You live in a gray area, and shouldn't label yourself as either good or bad."

Eden's thoughts: "I would often go on and on about how awful I am, the choices I've made, the thoughts I have and the ways I've hurt people I love. The idea of a gray area, though, is calming and realistic. It's something I can use to forgive myself."

Julian

Therapist's advice: "Seek out help whenever you need to after graduation."

Julian's thoughts: "I felt like all of my problems would be solved in just a few months, but I have since realized that I am always going to require some consistent form of therapy. At first, I worried that that meant something was perpetually wrong with me, but now I see getting help more as a sign of strength than one of weakness."

Deja

Therapist's advice: "Make mental lists of all the things you can control in a situation and put positive power to those."

Deja's thoughts: "If someone was making decisions that upset

me, I wasn't able to change what they were doing, but I could change my response to that behavior. Or I can change the amount of communication I have with that person."

Evelyn

Therapist's advice: "Change your perspective and everything else will fall into place."

Evelyn's thoughts: "I would make situations out of nothing, speak impulsively and had moments where I would be screaming to get my point across. A lot of it stemmed from not feeling that I was up to my family's standards. My therapist made me realize that it's my mindset that has to change and my overall outlook on my natural abilities to succeed."

Domonique

Therapist's advice: "Trust yourself."

Dominique's thoughts: "It stopped me in my tracks. I grew up with the message that 'I don't know what's best' for me, or that, 'I'm incapable of knowing,' and it took going to therapy and getting that reminder to guide me back on track."

Phyllis

Therapist's advice: "If a plane goes down, you have to put your mask on before you help someone else."

Phyllis' thoughts: "During my junior year, I was taking a lot of responsibilities for myself and my family. Often times, my family obligations went above my own needs. My therapist was trying to convey the message that, in order for me to get to a place where I can take care of my family, first I had to focus on my needs and take care of myself."

Fernando

Therapist's advice: "As long as it makes sense to you, that's all that should matter."

Fernando's thoughts: "I felt empowered to take the reigns of my life."

Tiffany

Therapist's advice: "You cannot control every situation you enter, but you can control how you react to the situation."

Tiffany's thoughts: "My therapist is never afraid to call me out on my stuff."

Heather

Therapist's advice: "Always come back to you. Others' actions are not personal, they are simply looking through the lens of their own past."

Heather's thoughts: "We feel like the world is happening TO us. We don't realize that we can still find peace and happiness in chaos. Finding that place means having a connection within. It's been absolutely life altering to take this power back."

Alandria

Therapist's advice: "We don't try, we do!"

Alandria's thoughts: "I remembered that we always have a choice in life. Every day we have to make a conscious effort to better ourselves through the choices we make."

Milynn

Therapist's advice: "You never know what doesn't feel right for you until you've experienced it."

Milynn's thoughts: "It really helped me calm my anxieties and realize that I could not have planned for, or even known, what I don't know until I've felt it and went through it."

Ilyssia

Therapist's advice: "Choose your own power in daunting situations."

Ilyssia's thoughts: "I felt like I didn't have control, like things were happening to me or happening around me and I could only witness it. There are some things I really can't change, but at all times I have agency."

Marie

Therapist's advice: "A lot of people tend to want the good that comes with growth, but aren't willing to sacrifice for it."

Marie's thoughts: "It really struck me because I like being accountable for my actions and, at the same time, I wasn't making the right decisions. I was hanging with the wrong crowd, and I ended up being in a tight spot due to those choices."

Jennifer

Therapist's advice: "Why do you think you're so special?"

Jennifer's thoughts: "I got defensive and told him that I don't, but he insisted that I do. I asked him why he thinks that and he told me it was because I constantly preach about the advancement of science the importance of mental health while denying to do the other steps myself like seeing a psychiatrist. I