

## Topics to Discuss in the First Few Meetings

1. **Why you are seeking therapy and your current situation.** It is important that I understand the particular problem that has led you to enter therapy at this time. I will also want to know about your personal history. I encourage you to be open and honest about your feelings. And if you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask.
2. **Fit.** One of the most important parts of therapy is the relationship between therapist and client. Therefore, both people need to feel good about meeting together. This means that we will discuss the “fit” and make a decision about working together.
3. **Time and Length of Meetings.** In general, it is best for appointments to be at the same time every week and sessions are normally 45 minutes.
4. **Payment.** Money is a reality in a professional relationship; therefore it is important that payment be discussed in a straightforward and reasonable way. The fee will be discussed in the first session or over the phone. If it will be problematic to pay the fee, please discuss this with me immediately. I rarely work with managed care companies, because it has become nearly impossible to provide ethical therapy under managed care arrangements.
5. **Diagnosis of Record.** As a matter of basic respect, psychiatric diagnosis will be discussed. The basis for the diagnosis will be shared and explored together, along with treatment recommendations appropriate for the diagnosis. In this way the diagnosis process can be a consensual therapeutic process with the therapist sharing expertise and the client sharing specific knowledge about themselves. There may not be a diagnosis that feels like an exact fit, but the process can help both therapist and client know more about the client’s experience.
6. **Dynamic Formulation and Focus.** A full dynamic formulation goes way beyond the diagnosis, to describe the client’s *current difficulties* and the *origins* and *functions* of the problems. In addition the formulation will contain some idea about how therapy, given this tentative understanding, will attempt to address these problems. In order for therapy to be effective, we will use the formulation to stay focused and achieve growth.
7. **Importance of talking about the therapy relationship.** Although it can be uncomfortable, it is important to talk about the therapy relationship. If you have thoughts and feelings about what Dr. Slater does or says, please share them. In fact, those thoughts and feelings can be the keys to major steps in therapy. The therapy relationship can feel like other relationships in the client’s life, a microcosm of the larger world.
8. **Questions about the therapy process.** Please let me know if you have any questions about therapy, my training, or what to expect.