

## **Staying Well When Reducing Therapy**

These are strategies to help maintain care of your mental health when you are **ending, pausing, or tapering therapy**.

1. Before you end therapy. A client has the right to end therapy at any time, but planning ahead with your therapist can make for a smoother transition. Consider:
  - a. Discuss the relative benefits of ending therapy entirely, reducing session frequency, or scheduling a “booster”/follow-up session in 1-6 months to check in.
  - b. If you plan to find a new therapist, your therapist can make a direct referral or suggestions for where to look.
  - c. Make or update a [safety plan](#) if you have concerns about self-harm or suicide.
  - d. If you won't be able to easily reconnect with your therapist, decide in advance how you will manage any time-sensitive mental health needs. Identify local crisis services and people who could support you if your therapist is unavailable.
  - e. If you're having difficult feelings about ending therapy, share and process these.
  - f. Make a plan for routine mental health maintenance, along the lines of this doc.
2. During the time you're not in therapy, here are ways to export the benefits of therapy into a self-help context.

**Protecting time and energy for mental health.** Schedule regular “sessions” with yourself, and set an agenda each time. Use the time for any of the below practices, or for [constructive worry](#). You might also reallocate the money you had been spending on therapy for something else that's supportive of your mental health (e.g., hobbies, gym membership, travel budget).

**Skills practice.** Keep an inventory of the mental health skills you worked on in therapy (your therapist can help with this), and practice asking when a stressor arises, “What skills would be a good fit here?” Then actually manually practice the skill. Do this until the emergence of a stressor is enough to remind you of a skill. If you're at a loss, start with this [coping cribsheet](#) and don't forget to [take care of the organism](#).

**Goal-setting and accountability.** Keep a running log of mental health goals. You might review these weekly, share them with loved ones, or use a service like [FocusMate](#) or [Beeminder](#) to increase accountability. If you're not sure of your goals, try reflecting on your [values](#) or do a [functional analysis](#) of behaviors you'd like to change.

**Social support and validation.** Look for opportunities to nurture your sense of being witnessed and supported. Spend time with friends, family, or pets; in spaces that help you feel connected (e.g., online forums, public events); or validating yourself with [self-compassion](#).

**Insight.** Consider ways to remain in touch with new and flexible perspectives. Try journaling, asking for feedback from trusted loved ones, or self-help resources (your therapist can give

recommendations). And it's surprisingly effective to converse with yourself aloud or in writing: take the perspective of your "shoulder therapist," a friend, or multiple [parts of yourself](#).

**Monitoring for changes in your needs.** Consider your own "check engine lights," i.e., signs that you need additional support. These could include consistently worsening anxiety or depression, withdrawing from valued activities, lapsed self-care, a relapse of unhelpful behaviors, or thoughts of suicide. Decide in advance how you will respond, including consulting this handout, using your safety plan, outreaching social support, meeting with a psychiatrist, contacting your therapist for a booster session, or finding a new therapist.