

## 6 Ingredients for Self-Growth & Development

Welcome to your new journey of self-discovery and growth! Therapy is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach so our sessions together will be uniquely tailored to you and your needs. However, there are a few key elements that I emphasize with all clients that you can look into now to enhance your growth throughout counselling. Take some time to explore these concepts/resources and we can discuss further in session if you have any questions.

### 1. SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion is an important quality to develop when you are on your healing journey. In this 6-minute video called “The 3 Components of Self-Compassion” Dr. Kristen Neff defines the concept further: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11U0h0DPu7k>

While engaging in therapy, it is important to be kind to yourself. Try to be gentle with the fact that you are struggling and instead of turning away from difficult emotions/thoughts, meet them with kindness and compassion. We often go into problem-solving mode when we experience unwanted/difficult emotions/thoughts- we try to “fix” them. But by learning to be more self-compassionate, we can start to give ourselves permission to acknowledge our pain and grow from it.

You can read more about self-compassion on her website [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org) and also engage in mindfulness meditations and self-compassion practices in the “practices” section.

### 2. MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness can be defined as bringing conscious awareness to the present moment (thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations) without judgement. Mindfulness is a hard skill to learn; but with consistent practice, our ability to be fully present will improve.

Here is a 3-minute video briefly explaining what mindfulness is, benefits, and how to practice it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjtfyuTTQFY>

There are lots of great videos on Youtube you can follow for various guided meditations (e.g., try searching “deep breathing” or “body scan”) as well as free apps for your phone/tablet. I recommend downloading a free app called Insight Timer and searching in the “guided”

section for various meditations. You can filter by time or by category. To dip your toes in mindfulness-meditation, I recommend going to the “sleep” category and looking for a meditation to try before bed. Try this meditation called [Breathing into Sleep](#) , found by filtering for 20-minutes or under the sleep category.

### 3. ATTACHMENT STYLES

Knowing and understanding your Attachment Style is important in the therapeutic process as it affects how we relate in our relationships and can explain many relational issues. Here is a 5-minute video briefly explaining the 4 Attachment Styles and how they may affect your life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyV0NksMbiE&t=26s>

There are several free questionnaires online you can take to get a better idea of which attachment style you have. Here is a quick and simple test:

<https://www.attachmentproject.com> \*Your email is only required if you want the full report. This website also has good information on attachment in general.

### 4. GRATITUDE: HARDWIRING HAPPINESS

Gratitude is a “positive” (using quotation marks here because all emotions are natural, not “positive” or “negative”, per se) emotion that involves focusing on the good in our lives and feeling thankful for what we have. Take a look at this short video explaining the science behind gratitude and ways to practice it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMd1CcGZYwU>

### 5. VALUES AND GOALS

Discovering and clarifying your values is an essential part of truly living an authentic, rich and meaningful life. We tend to confuse “values” with “goals”, and when we are in constant pursuit of unattainable and unrealistic goals, we often feel unfulfilled.

Take a moment to watch this short video on Values vs Goals that is based on the book The Happiness Trap (highly recommend reading it):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiPxLpYlw4I&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiPxLpYlw4I&feature=emb_logo)

The idea of living a value-driven life vs a goal-drive life comes from the therapeutic framework called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (brief video explanation [here](#)). My practice is

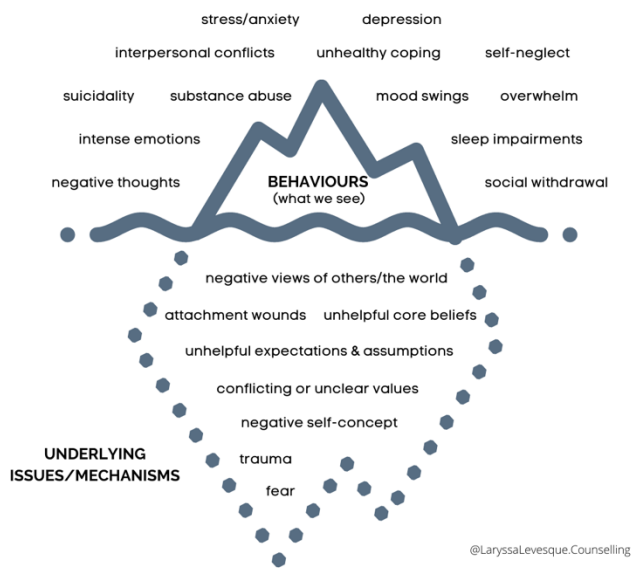
informed and heavily based on this framework, so when working with me you can expect a focus on acknowledging and accepting your pain and suffering (rather than trying to avoid it or suppress it) and making committed actions towards living the life you want to lead.

## 6. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

There tends to be a common misconception that if you start going to therapy, you will solve all of your problems quickly just based on the sheer fact you are seeing a therapist! We will of course work together to help resolve your challenges and evoke meaningful change in your life, but I want to highlight that therapy is not *always* a linear progression in improvement. In other words, sometimes things may *feel like* they are worse (maybe there are some situational changes in your life, or we are stirring up uncomfortable thoughts/emotions you have been avoiding), before they are better.

Also, people tend to come to therapy for specific issues, but we usually don't always stick to addressing them so you might be in therapy longer than anticipated. Why? Well, let's explain using an iceberg as an analogy:

### REASONS PEOPLE GO TO THERAPY



On the surface are the sorts of things that typically bring people to therapy, but underneath there are often much deeper issues that need exploration. We typically work on developing and enhancing coping skills to address surface issues (i.e., problematic behaviours), but underlying issues and mechanisms take time and effort to understand and change. This is why therapy can be short-term (target the surface issues) or long-term (dig deep to address root causes).

A therapy session typically lasts 50-minutes; however, in order to get the most out of it, it's important to reflect on your intentions and

goals. Keep a journal, reflect on your last session, prepare for your next one, and generally pay attention to your thoughts and feelings throughout the week. You'll have much more material for your sessions, and you'll find that you are applying the work to your everyday life.

Showing up to therapy is only part of the equation to therapeutic success! Arguably, the majority of the work takes place outside of our sessions together, so by putting in the work on your own time, you'll be well equipped on your journey of self-growth and development!